EXAMINING THE IMPACTS OF RELOCATING USDA RESEARCH AGENCIES ON AGRICULTURE RESEARCH

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON
BIOTECHNOLOGY, HORTICULTURE, AND RESEARCH

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED SIXTEENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

JUNE 5, 2019

Serial No. 116–8

Printed for the use of the Committee on Agriculture
agriculture.house.gov

U.S. GOVERNMENT PUBLISHING OFFICE

36–729 PDF WASHINGTON : 2019

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EXAMINING THE IMPACTS OF RELOCATING USDA RESEARCH AGENCIES ON AGRICULTURE RESEARCH

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 5, 2019

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON BIOTECHNOLOGY, HORTICULTURE, AND RESEARCH,
COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE,
Washington, D.C.

The Subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 9:30 a.m., in Room 1300, Longworth House Office Building, Hon. Stacey E. Plaskett [Chair of the Subcommittee] presiding.

Members present: Representatives Plaskett, Delgado, Cox, Harder, Van Drew, Schrier, Carbajal, Lawson, Dunn, Hartzler, LaMalfa, Yoho, Comer, Baird, and Rouzer.

Staff present: Kellie Adesina, Brandon Honeycutt, Keith Jones, Bart Fischer, Patricia Straughn, Jeremy Witte, Dana Sandman, and Jennifer Yezak.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. STACEY E. PLASKETT, A DELEGATE IN CONGRESS FROM VIRGIN ISLANDS

The CHAIR. This hearing of the Subcommittee on Biotechnology, Horticulture, and Research entitled, *Examining the Impacts of Relocating USDA Research Agencies on Agriculture Research,* will come to order.

Thank you all for being here. This is the first hearing of the Subcommittee on Biotechnology, Horticulture, and Research. And myself and the Ranking Member, Mr. Dunn, are excited about the possibilities and the issues that we are going to be looking at during our time here with you all in this 116th Congress.

I want to thank you for joining us to examine the impacts of relocating the Economic Research Service and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture. The decision to relocate ERS and NIFA lacks transparency and is not supported by an overwhelming majority of the stakeholders who partner with the agencies.

Secretary Perdue's claim that the research agencies are better served elsewhere are misconstrued. Any reforms to USDA's research agencies must have clear benefits to ag research and be conducted in a transparent manner. Secretary Perdue's proposals lack both.

As the Virgin Islands Congresswoman, I represent the University of the Virgin Islands, a land-grant university, and it has skin in the game, as do the territory's small-scale producers who benefit

from fully staffed agencies. Not only were stakeholders entirely cut out of this process, they were blindsided by the announcement from USDA last August. And to date, the actual benefits to ag research or an economic analysis of this proposal have not been conveyed.

ERS and NIFA are already understaffed well below their appropriated staffing levels. Instead of pushing forward a proposal that will only exacerbate staff losses, USDA should be working to adequately staff these agencies. The agency is still catching up from a 35 day shutdown. Further reducing staff only weakens the agencies' ability to operate or respond to future events. Staff losses directly translate into a loss of critical institutional knowledge and decrease capacity to implement the very programs we just authorized in the 2018 Farm Bill.

This proposal will undermine the integrity of these agencies and their ability to operate, and it was followed by a Fiscal Year 2020 budget request which proposed cutting the number of ERS employees in half. This relocation announcement seems to me like a step towards an overall goal of staff reduction.

Relocation will limit the agencies' ability to coordinate and cooperate with other Federal entities based in the National Capital Region, such as other Federal departments, the National Academies, the National Science Foundation.

Agriculture research does not take place in a vacuum, and modern science is complex and interdisciplinary. We should be encouraging collaboration, not isolating agencies.

In consultation with the Ranking Member and pursuant to Rule XI(e), I want to make Members of the Subcommittee aware that other Members of the full Agriculture Committee may join us today.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Plaskett follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. STACEY E. PLASKETT, A DELEGATE IN CONGRESS FROM VIRGIN ISLANDS

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Secretary Perdue's claim that the research agencies are better served elsewhere is misconstrued.

Any reforms to USDA's research agencies must have clear benefits to ag research and be conducted in a transparent manner. Secretary Perdue's proposal lacks both.

As the Delegate for the Virgin Islands, I represent the University of the Virgin Islands, a land-grant university, and it has skin in the game, as do the territory's small-scale producers who benefit from fully staffed agencies.

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In consultation with the Ranking Member and pursuant to Rule XI(e), I want to make Members of the Subcommittee aware that other Members of the full Committee may join us today.

The CHAIR. With that, I will recognize the Ranking Member, the distinguished gentleman from Florida, Mr. Dunn, for any opening remarks he would like to make.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. NEAL P. DUNN, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM FLORIDA

Mr. DUNN. Thank you very much, Chair Plaskett.

This Subcommittee has jurisdiction over biotechnology, pesticide regulation, plant, pest, and disease programs, all policy areas that will have a profound impact on the future of American agriculture.

And while I am excited the Committee is holding its first hearing, it absolutely baffles me that our first topic is USDA office relocation. I don't understand the obsession with the Secretary's decision. And some of the claims that I hear from the opponents to this move are making no sense to me at all.

In February, Secretary Perdue sat at the table and told this Committee that one of his top reasons for the relocation is talent. According to *U.S. News & World Report,* four of the top five richest counties in the United States are located in the Washington, D.C., suburbs. Let's face it, it is expensive to live and raise a family in this area. And USDA cited that as a fact, as one of the biggest reasons why it is difficult to attract top talent and why the Department struggles to fill its positions.

In response to the relocation, my Democratic colleagues have introduced H.R. 1221, the Agriculture Research Integrity Act of 2019. And while billed as a response to the Administration's proposed relocation, this legislation would actually require the Secretary to relocate thousands of personnel to the Washington, D.C., area at enormous expense.

The Agricultural Research Service has about 4,500 researchers and other staff working in facilities throughout the nation, outside Washington, D.C. If this bill were to become law, several ARS research stations throughout the country would actually close.

This bill alone makes it abundantly clear that the Majority's focus is on obstructing the work of the Administration, except that in this case, the obstruction actually would devastate the ARS infrastructure that we have worked for decades to build throughout the United States.

I am proud to have joined a letter by Ranking Member Mike Conaway and Congresswoman Vicky Hartzler and signed by every Republican Member on the House Agriculture Committee in support of the Secretary's decision. Additionally, there are several other letters signed by both Democratic and Republican Members in Congress in support of the relocation.

Contrary to the tone that we will hear today, Secretary Perdue has broad support to move forward with this relocation.

I recognize that Congress must exercise its oversight authority, and I am supportive of an honest and thoughtful conversation about the direction that USDA agricultural research programs take; however, it is not the purpose of this hearing. In this Congress, we have consistently seen that if the President and his team propose something, the Majority will automatically oppose it. The topic seldom seems to matter.

Instead of tackling real issues that impact the true stakeholders of USDA, it is unfortunate that some of our colleagues continue to play politics. The Secretary has laid out a measured and deliberate plan for the relocation, has taken steps to help the affected employees. And I am confident of his execution.

This is a fight that exists only in the Washington, D.C., Beltway bubble, and in ivory towers across the country. When I talk to folks back home, most everybody agrees that the farther you are away from Washington, D.C., the better off you are. I look forward to moving on to the real issues that face American agriculture.

And, Madam Chair, I yield back.

The CHAIR. Thank you very much.

As Chair, I would request that other Members submit their opening statements for the record so that the witnesses may begin their testimony to ensure that there is ample time for questions.

[The prepared statements of Mr. Baird and Mr. Rouzer follow:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. JAMES R. BAIRD, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM INDIANA

As a proud Hoosier farmer, I am honored to see Indiana as a finalist to serve as the new home of the USDA's ERS and NIFA offices. I want to strongly express my support for West Lafayette, which is easily accessible through both the Indianapolis and Chicago airports and is home to Purdue University, a world-class land-grant university.

With three World Food Prize laureates on faculty, the most advanced plant phenotyping center, and the No. 1 agriculture and biological engineering program, Purdue is already a leader in cutting-edge agricultural research and innovation. USDA would benefit immediately from the knowledge base already at home in West Lafayette and the nearly 700 students who graduate annually with agriculture degrees would be eager to fill current vacancies at ERS and NIFA.

Further, West Lafayette would provide tremendous benefits to existing ERS and NIFA staff. The U.S. Department of Labor Statistic recently announced Tippecanoe County is number one in the country for the largest year-over-year weekly wage growth. The area has also been recognized as a "Best Place to Live" by *Forbes Magazine*. With top-ranked K–12 schools, less time spent in traffic, and a much lower cost of living than Washington, D.C., I am confident ERS and NIFA employees will appreciate everything Hoosier hospitality has to offer.

As the "Crossroads of America," Indiana would serve as an excellent median location for meeting the needs of the ERS and NIFA offices while addressing the challenges they currently face in Washington, D.C. Situated roughly halfway between Indianapolis and Chicago, USDA employees will never be far from direct flight to Washington, D.C. or the farmers, researchers, and land-grant universities they serve.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. DAVID ROUZER, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM NORTH CAROLINA

Thank you to my friend for Florida for yielding.

My great State of North Carolina is a leading state in the agriculture industry and our triangle region is known for our premier universities and a world-class workforce. Though I don't agree, I understand my colleagues concerns about relocation of the Economic Research Service and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture. The Triangle's rich educational and research resources, as well as our cli-

mate of innovation, are just a 4½ hour drive from Washington, D.C. and a mere twenty minute drive from Raleigh-Durham International airport.

If you drive in any direction from the Triangle's unmatched concentration of domestic and global agricultural biotechnology companies, you will quickly find our highly diverse agricultural industry that includes more than 47,000 farms growing 90 different commodities in 400 different soil types. The 8 million North Carolina acres in farm use are fertile ground for a partnership with USDA.

The CHAIR. And I just want to make everyone aware that under the Rules of the Committee, the record of today's hearing will remain open for 10 calendar days to receive additional material and supplementary written responses from the witnesses to any questions posed by a Member.

I would like to welcome all of our witnesses. Thank you for being here today. At this time, I will introduce our first witness, Dr. Jack Payne. Dr. Payne is a Senior Vice President for Agriculture and Natural Resources at the University of Florida in Gainesville, Florida.

Mr. Yoho, is that near you?

Mr. YOHO. Yes, ma'am, it is.

The CHAIR. I thought so.

Mr. YOHO. I am going to take a picture of him. I am a Double Gator.

The CHAIR. I know it, I know it.

The second witness is Dr. William Tracy. Dr. Tracy is a Professor of Agronomy at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

And we will also hear from Ms. Elizabeth Brownlee. Ms. Brownlee is the owner and operator of Nightfall Farm, a diversified livestock operation in Crothersville, Indiana.

We will now proceed to hearing the testimony. You will each have 5 minutes. When 1 minute is left, the light that you see will turn yellow as a signal for you to start wrapping up your testimony. All right?

Dr. Payne, please begin when you are ready.

STATEMENT OF JACK M. PAYNE, PH.D., SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT FOR AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES, UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA; ADMINISTRATIVE HEAD, INSTITUTE OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURAL SCIENCES, UF, GAINESVILLE, FL

Dr. PAYNE. Well, good morning, Chair Plaskett, Ranking Member Dunn, and Members of the Committee. And besides Congressman Yoho being my Congressman for where I work at the University of Florida, Congressman Dunn is my Congressman where I live. So it is great to see both of them.

I am Jack Payne, the University of Florida's Senior Vice President for Agriculture and Natural Resources and Administrative Head of UF's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, or what we call UF/IFAS. However, I come before you on behalf of myself. I am not representing the University of Florida.

Our nation's winter fruit and vegetable supply depends on the support of the National Institute of Food and Agriculture and the Economic Research Service for UF/IFAS' innovation and discovery. Florida farmers, fishers, foresters, and ranchers succeed in part because of what NIFA and ERS do, and they succeed because of

where NIFA and ERS do it. Right here, not 600 or 1,000 miles from here.

Relocation moves NIFA away from its primary partners, Federal science agencies, leading scientists, policymakers, and experts. The move risks impeding NIFA's core mission to be a vital contributor to science policy, decision-making, and an integral part of the Federal effort to address the most pressing local and global agricultural problems of our day.

We have solved the easy problems in agriculture. In today's world, we are working on complex challenges that require multiple disciplines working together on solutions. You get the best science when you can bring different disciplines together to examine a problem from many angles. The Federal Government can incentivize this interdisciplinary work by combining funding for multiple agencies.

Bringing diverse scientific expertise together is extremely difficult, even among departments that share a building at the University of Florida. It would be so much harder if those departments were in different states.

The nation's capital is the best place to address the nation's agricultural research needs. There is no place better for NIFA to coordinate with other funding agencies, call attention to the national need for more agricultural research, and to meet with representatives of what its website calls its chief partner, the nation's land-grant universities.

Farmers are among the ultimate beneficiaries of NIFA-funded science. USDA has an efficient network of land-grant university extension agents and research stations, over 500 of them, to provide information to those farmers in their communities and across the country. It is a proven model that can instantaneously disperse vital scientific discoveries and new methods to farmers who can use it.

To say ERS and NIFA need to be geographically closer to farmers is to miss how effective this network is in delivering innovation to farmers nationwide.

Furthermore, NIFA and ERS have other important customers: USDA, land-grants, Congress, and other Federal science agencies such as NIH and NSF. Relocation would put the agencies farther from these more direct customers.

I have dedicated most of my professional life to land-grant universities. I am a product of one. That set me on a career course of public service producing and disseminating science that improves people's lives. I have worked at five land-grant universities and served as the policy chair for the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities Board on Agriculture Assembly. In that role, I was able to contribute to the creation of NIFA in the 2008 Farm Bill.

Today, I have the privilege of leading IFAS. We have a budget of more than $400 million to operate a College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, an extension service with offices in all 67 Florida counties, and a network of 17 research stations. All this supports the $160 billion a year agriculture.

And I see that my time is almost over, so I am going to jump to my concluding paragraph. I want to thank Chairman Bishop of

the Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee for including bill language for the Fiscal Year 2020 blocking the relocation proposal.

And in conclusion, I thank the Committee for examining the critical role of NIFA in support of agricultural innovation and resiliency and for taking the time to hear directly from NIFA's primary partners, the scientific and educational community, and about the impact of this relocation of NIFA outside the Greater Washington area.

I appreciate your leadership on this important issue, and I am pleased to respond to any questions from the Committee. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Payne follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF JACK M. PAYNE, PH.D., SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT FOR AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES, UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA; ADMINISTRATIVE HEAD, INSTITUTE OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURAL SCIENCES, UF, GAINESVILLE, FL

Good morning, Chair Plaskett, Ranking Member Dunn, and Members of the Committee. Thank you for holding this important hearing. I'm Jack Payne, the University of Florida's Senior Vice President for Agriculture and Natural Resources and Administrative Head of UF's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, or UF/IFAS. However, I come before you on behalf of myself and am not representing the university.

The nation's winter fruit and vegetable supply depends on the support of the National Institute of Food and Agriculture and the Economic Research Service for UF/IFAS innovation and discovery. Florida farmers, fishers, foresters, and ranchers succeed in part because of what NIFA and ERS do. And they succeed because of ***where*** NIFA and ERS do it. . . . Right here, not 250, 600, or even 1,000 miles from here.

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Furthermore, NIFA and ERS have other important customers—USDA, land-grants, Congress, and other Federal science agencies. Relocation would put the agencies farther from these more direct customers.

I have dedicated most of my professional life to land-grant universities. I'm a product of one. That set me on a career course of public service, producing and disseminating science that improves people's lives. I have worked at five land-grant universities and served as the policy chair for the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities Board on Agricultural Assembly. In that role, I was able to contribute to the creation of NIFA in the 2008 Farm Bill.

Today I have the privilege of leading UF/IFAS. We have a budget of more than $400 million to operate a College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, an Extension

service with offices in all 67 Florida counties, and a network of 17 research stations. All of this supports the $160 billion a year enterprise that is Florida agriculture.

With NIFA's support, we discover and disseminate knowledge for Florida's farmers, foresters, fishers, and ranchers. Land-grant universities are the bridge between farmers and NIFA, which funds agricultural research and sets the national research agenda.

It's puzzling that land-grant leaders were not consulted a year ago when USDA was conceiving a plan to relocate NIFA and ERS.

Since we've only been given a chance to react, not participate, all that land-grant leaders have been able to use our voice for is to oppose the move. We've done so in letters to the House Agriculture Committee, in visits with Congressional staff, in op-eds, and in meetings with our commodity leaders.

The Washington Capital Region has a highly educated workforce and a vibrant employment sector that is attractive to two-career families. That gives NIFA and ERS a large talent pool to draw upon to fill mission-critical vacancies.

The proposal to relocate NIFA and ERS is already doing harm before it's even implemented. We're witnessing a brain drain as Federal employees faced with the prospect of suddenly moving their families to Kansas City, North Carolina, or Indiana are choosing to leave NIFA or ERS instead. My understanding is that more than 100 positions are vacant, and we can expect vacancies will accelerate after the location of the move is announced. What has been presented as a way to *attract* talent is doing just the opposite.

The Washington Capital Region is a hub for so many agencies, associations, nonprofits, higher education institutions, and private firms. It is a dynamic interaction with all of these scientific and policy-making partners that feeds our cycle of innovation and discovery.

Innovation keeps us globally competitive in agriculture. Anything that slows the pace of discovery and dissemination will hurt farmers served by land-grants and give additional advantage to our competitors.

A good example is citrus greening. One of our most promising lines of inquiry into stopping citrus greening is funded jointly by NIFA and the National Science Foundation. The two agencies' cooperation is accelerating our scientists' work on using CRISPR to edit the citrus genome to create more disease-tolerant fruit.

If the loss of so much expertise at NIFA delays consideration and distribution of research grants, that could spell further doom for Florida orange juice. NIFA funding is essential to the beat-the-clock effort to curb a disease that threatens to bring down my state's iconic citrus industry.

Such grants will be much more difficult to arrange with NIFA located far away from potential co-funders. Less coordination could also result in duplication of efforts. All this will play out at more than 100 land-grant universities across the nation.

I appreciate the House Appropriations Committee including bill language for FY 2020 blocking the relocation proposal.

I ask for your continuing help so that I can get back to working ***with*** USDA instead of delivering testimony like today's.

In conclusion, I thank the Committee for examining the critical role of NIFA in support of agriculture innovation and resiliency, and for taking the time to hear directly from NIFA's primary partners, the scientific and educational community, about the impact of the relocation of NIFA outside the greater Washington area. I appreciate your leadership on this important issue, and I am pleased to respond to any questions from the Committee.

The CHAIR. Thank you.

And the next witness that we have, our second witness, Dr. William Tracy, you may begin. You will have 5 minutes for a statement.

STATEMENT OF WILLIAM F. TRACY, PH.D., PROFESSOR, DEPARTMENT OF AGRONOMY, UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON, MADISON, WI

Dr. TRACY. Thank you.

Good morning, Chair Plaskett, Ranking Member Dunn, and Members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for holding this hearing, and thank you for inviting me to give my views on the proposal to move NIFA and ERS.

In my role here today, I am not speaking for the University of Wisconsin-Madison, but my views do reflect the thoughts of many of my scientific colleagues around the country. In fact, I haven't actually talked to another scientist that actually thinks this is a good move.

Over my career, I have frequently referred to publications; as a matter of fact, weekly I get reports from the Economic Research Service. I use them in presentations in classrooms. And as an active agricultural researcher, I have had numerous interactions with NIFA over the years and have received multiple grants from NIFA.

A little bit of history: When I started teaching my course in 1985, I would say with pride, that the U.S. produced more than 50 percent of the world's corn and soybeans. Today, we produce 34 percent. This reduction is not because we are producing less. We are producing probably twice as much as we did in 1985. The reduction is because our competitors are producing much, much more.

We cannot produce our way out of this dilemma, and so in order to save family farms and improve our environment, we need more publicly-funded agricultural research. And I believe that the proposed relocation of the National Institute of Food and Agriculture and Economic Research Service will diminish our capacity to deliver that research.

A couple of particular concerns: I am very much concerned that the move will actually decrease communication with other agencies, as Dr. Payne mentioned. I have received grants from the National Science Foundation as well as NIFA, and many of my colleagues receive grants from the National Institutes of Health. Many of my agricultural colleagues receive grants from the National Institutes of Health, EPA, DOE, and other agencies. All of these agencies actually work together on agriculture, and having the key, as Dr. Payne said, the key partner of the land-grants move away from these other groups is really going to reduce communication.

I believe there is certainly some discussion about moving these agencies so they would be closer to constituents. Really, we are kind of talking about just a small group of constituents. Other people, this would move further away from them. I would say that often when we are talking to NIFA, we meaning researchers, we often bring farmers with us and coming to D.C., and then we can meet with folks from NIH, DOE, and places like that, as well as NIFA.

The one other thing that I want to mention, and it has already kind of popped up, it is happening now, is perception of bias. Having had the honor of serving as an AFRI grant panel manager through NIFA, that is the person who chooses other panelists and assigns proposals for review, I know firsthand how hard the national program leaders work to make sure there is no hint of bias or favoritism. This is not just toward research proposals from colleagues or panelists, but making sure that there is no hint of regional bias, ethnic diversity, or states. This is very, very important, and I admire the hard work that they do.

I believe it is already happening, but people, if we move NIFA out of D.C., people will perceive bias, even if there is no favoritism, even if there is no change in how they do business. People are

going to say, "Well, they favor Wisconsin because that is where they are and that is where they are being influenced."

I really think that keeping them here will actually reduce that possibility of bias, or at least the perception of bias. I think that is very important to its mission.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Tracy follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF WILLIAM F. TRACY, PH.D., PROFESSOR, DEPARTMENT OF AGRONOMY, UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON, MADISON, WI

Good morning, Chair Plaskett, Ranking Member Dunn, and Members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for holding this hearing and for giving me the opportunity to provide my perspective on the impacts of relocating and reorganizing two U.S. Department of Agriculture research agencies, the Economic Research Service (ERS) and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA). In my role here today, I am not speaking for the University of Wisconsin-Madison, but my views do reflect the thoughts of many of my colleagues around the country.

I am Bill Tracy and I have been a faculty member in the Department of Agronomy at the University of Wisconsin-Madison since 1984. I served as Chair of the Department of Agronomy for 14 years from 2004 to 2018, and as interim dean of the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences. Prior to that I worked for private-sector seed companies. At Madison, I teach a course in principles of crop production and a graduate level course in agroecology. My research area is plant breeding, genetics, and genomics of sweet corn, and I have developed varieties grown commercially on every continent. Over my career, I have frequently referred to publications and information distributed by ERS and have used their work in publications and classrooms. As an active agricultural researcher, I have also had numerous interactions with NIFA over the years and have received multiple NIFA grants.

We all recognize that U.S. agriculture and farmers are under severe stress right now. In Wisconsin, we stand in disbelief as our friends and neighbors, good farmers, are losing their dairy farms—25% in the last 5 years, 638 farms in 2018, and already 302 this year. The extreme weather events this year have been particularly devastating, as have commodity prices. But these problems are not due simply to extreme weather or trade policies. The world of agriculture and America's place in it are changing rapidly.

When I started teaching my course in 1985, I would say with pride that the U.S. produced more than 50% of the world's corn and soybeans. Today we produce about 34%. This reduction is not because we are producing less, in fact, we are producing more than ever. The reduction is because our competitors are producing much, much more. We can't produce our way out of this dilemma, and so in order to save our family farms and improve our environment we need more publicly-funded agricultural research. Not just production research, but economic research, utilization research, agroecological research, and more. I believe that the proposed relocation of the National Institute of Food and Agriculture and the relocation and reorganization of the Economic Research Service will diminish our agricultural research capacity at one of the most critical times in U.S. agriculture in recent history.

Specific areas of concern.

1. **The continued reduction in American food and agriculture public research capacity.** As reported in 2017, China has overtaken the United States as the top government funder of agriculture research. I have visited China a number of times over the last 15 years. The investments in agricultural research infrastructure and people is astonishing. They have created an agricultural research juggernaut. Simultaneously, the two USDA Budget proposals released during Secretary Perdue's tenure (FY 2019 Budget and FY 2020 Budget) proposed significant reductions to the USDA Research, Education, and Extension budget. ERS was hit particularly hard in the Administrations FY 2020 Budget, with a proposed 30% cut to the overall ERS budget and a 52% cut to ERS staff years. Further, the USDA's science agencies have been chronically under-funded for many years. For example, in 2016 the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) only awarded 24% of the grant applications it received. A 2013 grant panel on which I served as panel manager could fund only seven out more than 90 submitted proposals. Despite this, the scientists and staff continue to provide great service to the American people. It is entirely unclear how a relocation that will cost both time and

money will improve the ERS or NIFA, particularly when resources for both are already stretched so thin. Indeed, the reason I agreed to come here is that I believe, as do many of my colleagues, that moving NIFA and ERS would harm U.S. agricultural research and reduce the vital services that they provide to U.S. farmers and eaters.

2. **The reduction in service and information exchange with other agencies, constituents, and farmers.**

Communication with other agencies: As mentioned above, in my role as a public plant breeder and agricultural researcher, I have interacted frequently with NIFA staff. I have received funding through various programs, including the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI), the Specialty Crops Research Initiative (SCRI), and the Organic Research and Extension Initiative (OREI). I have also received grants from the National Science Foundation (NSF) and many of my agricultural colleagues receive grants from the National Institute of Health (NIH), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the Department of Energy (DOE). All of these agencies and departments have specific mandates and responsibilities, but they often work on overlapping issues, in a synergistic way, producing novel solutions to challenges that farmers face on a daily basis. All of this collaboration contributes to publicly-funded agriculture research being at the forefront of solutions to modern challenges. Yet it is easy to see that if NIFA was moved out of the National Capital Region this collaboration could be severely limited. For example, NIFA could not as easily participate in White House or interagency meetings related to science and agriculture. This would result in NIFA—and consequently millions of farmers, research, and eaters—losing their place at the table.

Furthermore, the data generated by NIFA and ERS, especially ERS, is critical to the work of other government agencies, to Congress, researchers, industry, and to farming organizations. Scientists rely on this data for understanding problems, and predicting needs and trends that inform our priorities. There is substantial concern that this relocation will dramatically decrease staff capacity to carry out this important work.

In summary, coordination and collaboration with other agencies and departments, including statistical agencies, is essential to NIFA and ERS's work. These collaborations will be difficult and expensive to accomplish if these agencies are relocated outside the National Capital Region.

Communication with constituents and farmers: NIFA and ERS work with other agencies as mentioned above, but also with non-Federal researchers, NGOs, advocacy groups, farm groups, and basically anyone who wants to contact them.

Over the years I have been involved in the NIFA granting process, as have many colleagues. Often, to inform USDA agencies or groups of key agricultural priorities, groups will organize conferences in Washington, D.C. to discuss critical research needs. When I have been involved in such conferences, we have invited farmers and other non-researchers from throughout the country, so that their voices could be heard. We also invite researchers and managers from relevant Federal agencies as well as Members of Congress so that everyone who wishes to participate can be at the table.

These meetings are very valuable in that diverse perspectives are shared and important contacts are made. Most organizations, businesses, and universities don't have the resources to fly to various parts of the country to meet with different Federal Governmental staff, especially if they wish to fund farmer trips. Relocation would make it difficult for agricultural organizations and businesses to efficiently meet with multiple agency staff and decision makers in the National Capital Region, thus limiting communications and in many cases cutting off a critical feedback loop.

3. **Perceived Regional Biases and Politicization of ERS:** Having had the honor of serving as an AFRI grant panel manager (the person who cho[o]ses other panelists and assigns proposals for review), I know first hand how hard the national program leaders work to make sure that is no hint of bias or favoritism. This is not just toward research proposals from colleagues of panelists, but making sure there is no hint of bias regarding national regions, states, ethnic diversity, and other factors. This is very important and I admire the effort to keep things as fair as possible.

There are marked differences in agricultural production across the U.S. By moving the agencies outside Washington some types of agriculture may be favored over others when it comes to research and funding. Even favoritism is

untrue it is likely that some will see bias. Keeping the agencies in Washington helps ensure prioritization of all types of agricultural research and maintains trust in the fairness of the granting process.

Furthermore, while this hearing is primarily focused on the physical relocation of ERS and NIFA—it is important to note the politicization of agriculture research that could result from moving ERS to the Office of the Chief Economist (OCE). Moving ERS into the OCE within the Office of the Secretary would have lasting and negative impacts on scientific and statistical integrity and runs contrary to the 1994 USDA Reorganization Act.

4. **The loss of institutional knowledge and highly qualified staff at NIFA and ERS.** The scientists and staff I know are professional, hard-working, and committed to the missions of ERS and NIFA. They have tremendous institutional knowledge and an understanding of how to provide the best service they can to the farmers, citizens, and constituents. It is my understanding that the reorganization proposal has already caused staff to leave USDA in significant numbers. While I don't know any one personally who has left, I do know many people are under a great deal of stress due to the unknown and due to the fact that they are working in low-staffing conditions and with low staff morale. I think it is very unfortunate that dedicated public servants have to undergo these conditions when, to my knowledge no one has provided data on how these agencies and their farmers would benefit from this move.

To summarize: I see serious downsides of the proposal to move NIFA and ERS out of the National Capital Region. I am very concerned about the diminishment of the voice of the agricultural research community in the national agenda, and I am very concerned about the potential for regional biases hurting the NIFA's standing in the community. At that same time, I have heard no compelling justification or benefit by following through on this plan. Thank you for your attention, and I look forward to answering your questions.

The CHAIR. Thank you very much.

And to our third witness, Ms. Brownlee, welcome again, and please begin.

STATEMENT OF ELIZABETH J. BROWNLEE, OWNER AND OPERATOR, NIGHTFALL FARM; PRESIDENT, HOOSIER YOUNG FARMERS COALITION; MEMBER, NATIONAL YOUNG FARMERS COALITION, CROTHERSVILLE, IN

Ms. BROWNLEE. I would like to thank Chair Plaskett, Ranking Member Dunn, and Members of the Subcommittee for having me today. My name is Liz Brownlee, and I operate Nightfall Farm in Crothersville, Indiana, with my husband Nate.

We run our business on my family's 250 acre farm, and this is our sixth season raising pastured livestock. We are members of the National Young Farmers Coalition and the Indiana Farmers Union, and we recently helped found the Hoosier Young Farmers Coalition. We have been at it for 3 years being a local chapter of the National Young Farmers Coalition, and I now serve as President.

As a beginning farmer, that is someone in their first 10 years farming, I am concerned that relocating ERS and NIFA may negatively impact farmers and ranchers. Relocating ERS and NIFA will make it more challenging for farm groups to collaborate with these agencies, and it may jeopardize your ability to craft evidence-based effective policy for farmers like me.

The work these agencies do is critical to the next generation of farmers, and I want to tell you about that. We face serious obstacles to launching and growing our farm businesses. My parents grew up on farms. They bought our farm in 1971, and with the 1980s farm crisis, they couldn't make the farm profitable. They

stopped farming the land and started renting it out, but I had a shot, and I started farming our land in 2014.

But new farmers, like me, we are urgently needed. The average farmer is 59, as you probably know, and farmers over 65 actually outnumber farmers under 35 by six to one. That is a problem for our country. But young farmers can't find and afford farmland, student debt is crippling our ability to capitalize our businesses, and increasingly severe weather is making it harder to farm.

Moving ERS and NIFA outside of D.C. is only going to make it more difficult for Congress and USDA to respond to these challenges. And in my written testimony, I talk about the problems with relocating ERS, like delays to urgently needed research on climate change and farmland access. But I would like to focus my conversation today on NIFA.

NIFA's structure and location already work effectively for farmers like me. I have worked with two other grant programs, BFRDP, that is the Beginning Farmer Rancher Development Program, and SARE, that is the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program.

My husband and I worked on farms in Maine and Vermont for about 5 years. And then when we moved home to Indiana to farm, the BFRDP program was critical to us launching our business. We learned about grazing practices and marketing and business plan development, but we also learned that there were farmers from all across Indiana running thriving farm businesses. And we realized that this connection with other farmers, a chance to learn together was critical, and we needed more of it. Farmers learn best from their peers. We launched the Hoosier Young Farmers Coalition to create a space for farmers to learn together, with help from the BFRDP and the SARE grant.

In our first year, we organized over 20 events and we reached 800 Hoosier farmers, and today, we host potlucks and farm tours and policy roundtables, and we regularly reach over 1,100 Hoosier farmers and food advocates. And the BFRDP and SARE grants helped us create a space for farmers to learn and have a sense of camaraderie as we build Indiana's food economy.

But, NIFA helps make these grants a reality, but we never called NIFA to have these grants, right. We worked with local partners, our land-grant universities and local SARE officials. NIFA kept working hard in D.C. Moving NIFA might make it harder for stakeholders to work with them. Even if NIFA and ERS were in Indiana, I wouldn't interact with them regularly. I need to be on my farm, running my business.

That is why I am a member of the Young Farmers Coalition and the National Farmers Union. They amplify my needs and my voice along with other farmers from all across the country, and they work with NIFA and ERS and other parts of the USDA. This equation stops working if NIFA and ERS are moved out of D.C. The farmer organizations that I belong to can't simply up and establish a second and third office in Kansas City and Indiana. That is inefficient and financially wasteful.

It is especially true for groups that serve under-served farmers, like beginning farmers and socially disadvantaged farmers. These farmers need their voices heard by Congress and USDA. It is log-

ical to keep these agencies in Washington, D.C., where policymaking happens.

It is critical for this Subcommittee and other Members of Congress to ensure that USDA is creating sound science working closely with researchers like Dr. Payne and Dr. Tracy and addressing urgent research needs that farmers like me need to be in the farm bill.

I don't need NIFA and ERS in my community. I do need NIFA and ERS working hard for me in Washington, D.C., and serving policymakers like you. This work is best done in our nation's capital.

Thank you for your time and the opportunity to testify today.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Brownlee follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF ELIZABETH J. BROWNLEE, OWNER AND OPERATOR, NIGHTFALL FARM; PRESIDENT, HOOSIER YOUNG FARMERS COALITION; MEMBER, NATIONAL YOUNG FARMERS COALITION, CROTHERSVILLE, IN

First, I would like to extend my thanks to Chair Plaskett, Ranking Member Dunn, and the Members of the Subcommittee for the invitation to testify here today. Thank you for holding this hearing and for the opportunity to provide a perspective on the importance of agricultural research and its importance for new and beginning farmers, such as myself.

Nightfall Farm and the Hoosier Young Farmers Coalition

I am Liz Brownlee. I operate Nightfall Farm in Crothersville, Indiana, with my husband, Nate. We are lucky to run our business on my family's farmland, consisting of 250 acres of forest, pastures, and wetlands. This is our sixth season raising pastured livestock, and we practice rotational grazing to build healthy soils on our pastures. We sell meat to chefs and directly to consumers at farmers markets and through our community supported agriculture program. We are also both members of the National Young Farmers Coalition (Young Farmers) and National Farmers Union (NFU). We helped found the Hoosier Young Farmers Coalition, our local chapter of the National Young Farmers Coalition, and I now serve as President. The Hoosier Young Farmers Coalition is a group of young farmers and food advocates working to recruit, support, and promote young and beginning farmers throughout the state of Indiana. Our members raise vegetables, livestock, grain, and many other products to sell to both local and international commodity markets.

New and Beginning Farmers

As a beginning farmer, I am concerned about the impact to farmers and ranchers that may come with the relocation of the Economic Research Service (ERS) and the National Institute [of] Food and Agriculture (NIFA), two key agencies producing research and administering programs that are critical to the success of the next generation. The relocation of ERS and NIFA will make it more challenging for farm groups to collaborate with these agencies and may jeopardize the ability of policy makers in Washington, D.C. to craft evidence-based, effective policy solutions for the next generation of farmers and ranchers.

Young and beginning farmers face serious obstacles to launching and growing their farm businesses. I grew up on my family's farm, but from day one there was a clear message: you can't make a living farming. My parents both grew up on farms and bought our 250 acre farm in 1971. They raised corn, beans, cattle, and hay until the early 1980s. In the 1980s farm crisis, they could not make the farm profitable, and started renting the land instead of farming it themselves. Although I was a 4–H member and an officer in Future Farmers of America (FFA), becoming a farmer was never discussed as a viable career option. Farms and small towns in Indiana were dying, not prospering. I was encouraged to get an education, and I assumed that I would leave Indiana when I became an adult.

Although the 1980s farm crisis has ended, I face different challenges from my parents' farming generation. The average age of a farmer is now 59, and farmers over 65 outnumber farmers under 35 by six to one.[1] Young farmers cannot find or afford farmland; student debt is compromising our ability to capitalize our businesses; adequate labor and staff are difficult to recruit; health insurance is unaffordable; and

[1] USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service. *2017 Census of Agriculture.*

increasing severe and unpredictable weather make production more challenging than ever.[2] Federal and state policies are not adequately addressing our needs, and many young farmers are not accessing the programs designed to help.

The ability of Congress and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to respond to our challenges will only be delayed and made more difficult with the relocation of ERS and NIFA. Farmers and ranchers are often not working directly with these agencies, but have a stake in the work that they do. NIFA houses a number of key programs for beginning farmers such as the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BFRDP), the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Extension (SARE) grant program, and the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Advisory Committee. ERS is leading research critical to the agricultural economy, measuring the economic impacts of USDA conservation programs and demographic trends in rural America, to name a few. Their research will shape farming and farm policy for decades to come.

National Institute [of] Food and Agriculture Grant Programs

Two grants administered by NIFA were instrumental in the creation of the Hoosier Young Farmers Coalition, the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BFRDP) and a Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education grant (SARE). These two programs helped build the Hoosier Young Farmers Coalition into a statewide network of farmers who can learn together to build better businesses, contribute to their local economies, and grow quality food for Indiana. We are working to make our communities in Indiana stronger, more vibrant, and healthier. The story of our Coalition's origin perfectly illustrates how NIFA programs are helping farmers and why NIFA is most effective when it is located in Washington, D.C.

My husband and I started working on farms in Maine and Vermont, and we fell in love with farming. We decided to move home to Indiana, to put our new skills to work for our community. We knew it would be difficult to turn my family's corn and soybean fields into a thriving farm business, and we knew that the local food economy in Indiana was not as mature as those in the Northeast. But when we moved home, we quickly realized that our biggest need was for a community of sustainable farmer peers to share with and learn from. Without the NIFA programs to help build that community, our farm would not have prospered.

We found other beginning farmers in Indiana thanks in large part to a program funded by BFRDP. The grant funded a series of farm field tours, conferences, and other activities, where we met and learned from other beginning and experienced farmers. We learned about grazing practices, marketing strategies, and business plan development, all of which we have used on our farm. But more importantly, we quickly realized how many other beginning farmers were out there, running thriving businesses across Indiana. We realized how much we needed this connection with other farmers, to learn together and from one another. Farmers learn best from their peers. As the BFRDP grant came to a close, we launched the Hoosier Young Farmers Coalition, a chapter of the National Young Farmers Coalition. Our goal was to create an ongoing community of farmers to continue to build our knowledge and Indiana's local food system.

The BFRDP grant still had funds available to help build farmer groups' capacity, and these resources made our chapter possible, in combination with a SARE grant, in 2017. BFRDP funds helped create our website, e-newsletter, and promotional materials. The grant also funded our first events and allowed us to bring beginning farmers together to learn and connect. Last but not least, BFRDP funds paid for our leadership team to set out a plan of action for how to build up the beginning farmer community in Indiana so that our farm businesses could thrive.

BFRDP and SARE have continued to be an asset to our chapter. Funds from those programs helped us lay a strong foundation. In our first year, we were able to organize almost 25 events and engage with over 800 Hoosier farmers. Today, we work with farmers across the state with a small board run by young farmers and ranchers. We host potlucks, farm tours, and policy round tables. We cosponsor conferences where farmers gather and learn, and offer scholarships to other farming conferences. The BFRDP and SARE grants provide opportunities to beginning farmers to network with other farmers and learn skills to take back to the farm to improve their business. Most importantly, we are creating a space for farmers to find a sense of camaraderie as we build Indiana's food economy. BFRDP and SARE are two of the most critical farm bill programs for beginning farmers, because they are targeted at building the next generation.

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[2] National Young Farmers Coalition. *Building a Future with Farmers II: Results and Recommendations from the National Young Farmer Survey.* 2017.

We have also utilized SARE on our farm. Last year, my husband and I received a SARE Farmer-Rancher grant to examine the feasibility of opening a butcher shop to support farmers who sell directly to customers. Access to quality meat processing is a problem throughout the Midwest. We are partnering with nearby farmers and a chef, and hope to open the butcher shop in 2020. All of our research (floor plans, cash flow analysis, *etc.*) will be open source and available for other farmers to utilize in their own communities. NIFA helps make these grants a reality—but we never called NIFA. We worked with regional SARE staff to ask questions as we crafted our grant application, and recently, when they were doing site visits to learn from local grant recipients, it was local SARE staff who visited our farm, not NIFA staff from D.C.

USDA has proposed that the relocation will move NIFA closer to the farmers, but I have seen firsthand how NIFA programs already have highly effective ways of working closely with farmers. For 3 years, I served on the Review Committee for the SARE Farmer-Rancher grant. I was one of about 25 farmers that helped select on-farm research projects from applicants across the Midwest. This is just one way that NIFA programs are already grounded in farming communities: farmers are selecting the applied research they need, by region. This system is highly effective, and does not require moving an entire USDA agency.

In fact, moving NIFA may make it harder for stakeholders to work with them. I do not regularly take the train to Washington, D.C. to testify in front of Congress or meet with USDA. I have too much to do on the farm, running our business. Even if NIFA and ERS were located in Indiana, I would not have the time for regular engagement with those agencies. That is why I am a member of the National Young Farmers Coalition and the National Farmers Union. They amplify my needs and my voice, along with other farmers from across the country, and work with NIFA, ERS, and the other agencies of USDA. This equation stops working if the NIFA and ERS offices are moved out of the National Capital Region. The farm organizations that I belong to, and others that I support, cannot simply establish a second or third office in Kansas City or even Indiana. That is inefficient and financially wasteful. That is especially true for groups that work with under-served farmers, including beginning and socially disadvantaged farmers, and these farmers need our voices heard by Congress and USDA. It is logical to keep these agencies in the nation's capital, where policy making happens, where farmer organizations have established offices, and where farmers like me can rest assured that sound research and policy work is happening.

Economic Research Service

I am equally concerned about the relocation and realignment of ERS. Their mission is to anticipate trends and emerging issues in agriculture, food, the environment, and rural America and to conduct high-quality, objective economic research to inform and enhance public and private decision making. Currently, they are conducting research on beginning farmers and the transition of farm businesses to the next generation, as well as the barriers and challenges farmers face in finding and affording farmland. They also examine demographic shifts and how that impacts rural communities, as well as the efficacy of policies designed to protect the environment and combat climate change.

ERS is working on the challenges farmers and rural communities are facing now. This year, we have had to delay our grazing season by a month. The grass was green and ready for livestock, but the ground was too wet to move the animals from the barn to the pastures. Grain farmers in our area are weeks behind in planting because the fields have been too wet. While conservation programs can help to mitigate the impacts of severe and unpredictable weather, the research ERS does can help us better understand the most cost-effective methods to mitigate and adapt to a changing climate. These extreme weather events impact my finances, and my ability to plan to grow my business.

In many ways, I am an unusual beginning farmer, because I had access to my family's farmland when I wanted to start my business. According to the National Young Farmers Coalition 2017 Young Farmer Survey, many young farmers do not come from a farming family and do not have access to farmland. In fact, land access was the number one challenge reported by young farmers. In the 2018 Farm Bill, ERS was tasked by Congress to examine the barriers beginning farmers and farmers of color face in finding and affording farmland. They are also tasked with identifying how Federal programs can reduce those barriers. If we want our rural communities to flourish, we need to make land affordable and accessible for new farmers, and we need to make sure all farmers and ranchers have access to Federal farm bill programs. ERS plays a vital role in developing sound, evidence-based policy solutions for the challenges young farmers face. To complete this research, ERS will

need to work with farmers and ranchers all over the country, not just in Indiana, and primarily, with policymakers like yourselves.

Research on these topics is urgently needed, and it is needed by policy makers to design policies and programs that will impact my farm and my business for decades to come. I do not work directly with ERS, but Congressional staff, USDA, and many other Federal agencies do. Relocating ERS and NIFA out of Washington, D.C. impacts the ability of these agencies to properly do their job, provide quality research to policy makers, and may jeopardize your ability to write farm policy that supports the next generation. Moving the agencies farther from policy makers will only create more silos and disconnects between the agencies and policy makers. It will also make it more difficult to coordinate with other departments, such as Education or Labor, that are end users of ERS and NIFA research products.

Numerous economists have already left ERS this year. With the lost institutional knowledge and staff capacity, it will be more challenging for these institutions to complete existing projects and start up new ones. In the year following the farm bill, USDA not only has the challenge of running programs, but also the challenge of writing new regulations and crafting new research projects as mandated in the bill. For instance, the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Advisory Committee has not met in over a year. This committee advises the Secretary of Agriculture about how to equip beginning farmers for success. Our country needs all parts of the USDA to function efficiently, but especially those impacting the next generation of farmers. Losing key staff will only slow down USDA's ability to provide quality research, so you, the policy makers, can help farmers like me.

Conclusion

I, and farmers like me, do not need NIFA and ERS to be in the field in my community. I do need NIFA and ERS to be working tirelessly to produce the best research, products, and policy to support us in our mission to feed our communities. That work is best done in Washington, D.C. As the agriculture industry continues to struggle with depressed prices, lost market share, and floods and severe weather, I believe it is critical for this Subcommittee and other Members in Congress to ensure USDA is creating sound science, working closely with all stakeholders, and addressing the urgent research needs to shape current and future farm bill policies. I need NIFA and ERS to be productive, efficient, and effective—and that means they need to be in our nation's capital, doing research that serves our nation's farmers. Thank you for taking the time to examine how the proposed relocation will impact farmers and ranchers, and allowing me the opportunity to testify today.

The CHAIR. Thank you very much for all of our witnesses for your testimony.

Members are going to be recognized for questioning in the order of seniority for Members who were here at the start of the hearing. After that, Members will be recognized in order of arrival. Since we are anticipating first votes shortly, I previously discussed with the Ranking Member limiting questions to 3 minutes to ensure we get to as many Members as possible, and he has agreed.

Are there any objections?

Hearing none, Mr. Yoho, you don't have any objection, do you?

Mr. YOHO. No, ma'am. I was waving to Al.

The CHAIR. Oh, okay. Because I know how you like to talk. I thought maybe you wanted your 5 minutes.

But I like his talking. We have great conversations. I don't want you all to think that way.

Hearing none, I will now recognize myself for 3 minutes.

I wanted to first ask any of the witnesses, in the press release, USDA justified the relocation proposal by saying that it wanted to move USDA resources closer to stakeholders. To date, have you ever felt that you were disadvantaged by ERS and NIFA's location in Washington, D.C.? And if any of you can respond to that, do you believe that you will be disadvantaged or, and conversely, would you be disadvantaged if ERS and NIFA moved to smaller cities that are farther from you, and how? Dr. Payne?

Dr. PAYNE. Yes. I think that is a specious argument because NIFA and the ERS has never worked with farmers and ranchers. There are extension services in this country almost in every county in America. There are over 500 research labs associated with 107 land-grant universities. We work with farmers and ranchers. NIFA and the ERS works with us.

Even if it was true, why disadvantage 49 other states and put these agencies in one state? But it just doesn't make sense.

Today, agriculture is so interdisciplinary. I come to Washington a lot. I come to meet with my Federal partner, NIFA. But I also come to meet with the Department of Defense, Department of the Interior, EPA, USAID, the Forest Service, my Congressional delegation, FDA.

We get funding from all those agencies and interdisciplinary projects, and a lot of times NIFA is the convener. They sit with us, the Assistant Secretary of REE, they bring in Federal scientists from across the Federal spectrum to help us craft our proposals to address the interdisciplinary needs of agriculture today.

The CHAIR. Thank you.

Dr. PAYNE. You are welcome.

The CHAIR. Anyone? Dr. Tracy or Ms. Brownlee?

Dr. TRACY. Yes. I agree with Dr. Payne. Washington, D.C., is one of the easiest places to get to in this country. It is easier for me to get here than it would be to get to West Lafayette, Indiana, from Madison, Wisconsin. I don't really buy the distance argument.

But more importantly, I do agree with Dr. Payne regarding the fact that we work with NIFA here, but we come here to talk to them and the other agencies. If NIFA was not in Washington, we would have to go to wherever it was to talk with them, and then we would have to come back here anyway and talk to NIH or NSF or Members of Congress. I don't really see this as an argument.

The CHAIR. Thank you.

And I am actually running out of time, I will now recognize Mr. Dunn, for your 3 minutes, sir.

Mr. DUNN. Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I will be brief. I would like to point to a couple of statistics. Out of the 105,000 USDA employees, 97,000 of them work outside the National Capital Region. Currently, the National Institute of Food and Agriculture and Economic Research Service are the only two USDA agencies that do not have staff presence outside of the capital region.

I also want to highlight four letters supporting the Secretary's relocation effort and note that we will be submitting these for the record. First is a letter by Ranking Member Mike Conaway and Representative Vicky Hartzler and signed by myself and 29 other Members, including every Republican Member of the House Agriculture Committee; a letter signed by the bipartisan Indiana Delegation; and a letter signed by the bipartisan Members of Kansas and Missouri; and a letter signed by the bipartisan group of Members from North Carolina.

And given the timing constraints today, I would like to yield the remainder of my time to my colleague from North Carolina, Mr. David Rouzer.

Mr. ROUZER. I thank my friend and colleague from Florida, the Ranking Member of the Subcommittee.

And I want to point out that with every disagreement, there is always a really nice, happy compromise. And I have never known anybody to not want to come to North Carolina, and certainly when they have been to North Carolina and the Research Triangle area, they don't want to leave. And the statistics show that in terms of the population growth there.

As most folks know, the Triangle Area is one of the areas under consideration for the relocation of both. It is only a 4.5 hour drive from D.C., hour flight. RDU Airport is right there within 20 minutes of the Research Triangle area, just minutes of it.

You have numerous ag biotech companies. NC State's Centennial Campus is a real leader in public-private partnerships. North Carolina has 47,000 farms growing 90 different commodities, and more than 400 different soil types. It is the perfect place for the relocation if it is to happen.

And I just appreciate the Ranking Member for allowing me to make that quick plug. I have a statement for the record and some supporting documents as well that I would like to submit for the record at the appropriate time.

Thank you very much. I yield back.

[The prepared statement referred to is located on p. 4; the letters referred to are located on p. 41.]

The CHAIR. Thank you.

At this time, I will recognize the gentleman from New York, Mr. Delgado.

Mr. DELGADO. Thank you, Madam Chair. And I thank each of the witnesses for your testimony.

Ms. Brownlee, last week, I met with my agriculture advisory committee in district to talk about issues impacting farmers today, and one of the issues that we spoke about is climate change and its impact on soil health, an ever-increasing problem for farmers, especially young farmers who will be dealing with a change in climate for decades to come.

Today, farmers in the Northeast and Upstate New York, where I serve, Hudson Valley, Catskills, as well as the Midwest, are weeks behind in planting. With such an urgent need for research to help farmers adapt to and mitigate climate change, how would this move impact your ability to mitigate climate change on your farm?

Ms. BROWNLEE. Thank you, Congressman. This move would hurt my ability to build my business. Climate change is one of our most pressing needs. We need research to address how are we going to adapt our farm, what trees should we be planting in our orchards, how do we build soil health and sequester carbon over the next 3 or 4 decades.

And the reality is that if these agencies move, their research is going to be delayed, which means that answers and policies are going to be delayed, and that means that it is affecting my bottom line, because I can't respond as quickly if I don't have sound science to guide my decisions on my farm.

We are a month behind in grazing on our farm. We have had unceasing rain this spring. Our animals are ready to go out to pas-

ture and our grass was as tall as me actually right now ready to be grazed, but it is too wet. The grain farmers, the commodity farmers around me in southern Indiana, it is the same. They are 3+ weeks behind on planting because it is so wet because the soils are just saturated.

We have to figure out how to respond to climate change. It is a problem right now, and we need NIFA and ERS working hard here in D.C. to make that research available to all of our farmers, not just in North Carolina or Wisconsin or Indiana.

I am not the primary stakeholder of either of these organizations. The researchers who are doing the work and you all crafting the policy are. I need these groups here helping me adapt to climate change.

Mr. DELGADO. I appreciate that.

I don't have a lot of time, but I do want to squeeze in one more question, Dr. Tracy, about the regional bias you talk about in your statement. You talk about how the production across the different parts of the country are different based on the regional makeup of the climate in some regards, right. Can you speak a little bit more about the potential for bias by taking these programs out of Washington, D.C.?

Dr. TRACY. The big issue really is the perception of bias or perceived bias, in the sense that if they are in Madison, nearby the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and folks will think that UW-Madison actually has more influence with the people who make the decisions about where the grants go.

This is the biggest granting agency for agriculture. And people are people, and people are going to say, "Oh, those Madison folks, they have NIFA in their pocket." And I am sure they wouldn't. I am sure that wouldn't happen, but that will be the perception and the jealousy.

The CHAIR. Thank you very much.

Mrs. Hartzler of Missouri, your time for questioning.

Mrs. HARTZLER. Yes, thank you, Madam Chair.

And I want to say that being from Missouri and an alma mater of University of Missouri, one of the land-grant universities in the Midwest, I wholeheartedly support this move to bring these agencies out closer to the farmers, closer to the consumers. And I am excited about what this can mean for our country and in general. Certainly, we have a large pool of talented individuals.

I have a letter here that I would like to submit for the record that was received yesterday from four of our land-grant universities, including Iowa State University, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Kansas State University, and the University of Missouri, in full support of this.

And they point out in their letter that since 2017, these institutions graduated more than 150 Ph.D.s in agriculture, and there is no other location in the United States that offers such a similar cluster of diversity and qualified employees. And I know that has been an issue here. And one of the reasons that the Secretary wants to move this agency out is so that we can attract the talent to the Midwest that will be important for this mission.

In the Midwest, we have over 400,000 farming operations with an average farm size of 600 acres. The Midwest also provides sav-

ings of low-cost, high quality of life, convenient access to transportation, and it just is a very positive opportunity that we have.

And I support what the Secretary is doing, and look forward to ensuring that the USDA is the most effective, most efficient, and most consumer-focused agency in the Federal Government, and trust that the USDA will support its existing future employees throughout the process, moving forward.

And with that, I yield back and submit my letter.

[The letter referred to is located on p. 40.]

The CHAIR. Thank you.

Without objection, the letter is submitted.

At this time, Mr. Cox of California, your 3 minutes.

Mr. COX. Thank you so much, Madam Chair.

Public research is a vital partner for American agriculture and even so much more so in my district where the majority of specialty crops rely on public research and investment to be able to readily combat pests, disease, and address changing climate conditions.

And so, really, for each one of the witnesses here today, in your opinion, how can we best improve research agencies like ERS and NIFA? I mean, is it through relocation outside of Washington? Increased funding? And where should we as a Subcommittee be focusing our efforts to improve agricultural research and best support your work?

Dr. PAYNE. I will start. The best way that Congress can help solve these problems is to increase the AFRI budget. It is really an embarrassment in our country today when food security is as challenging and threatening worldwide and to our own people that there is over $42 billion in NIH budget to solve important things like cancer and heart disease. There is over $8 billion in NSF for basic research, but just $440 million in AFRI to solve some of the biggest problems we are facing in the world. That is the issue.

We shouldn't be spending money moving our major partner out of Washington where over 100 people, scientists have already left the agencies, morale is terrible. And it will be years to get them back to where they are. Instead, we should all be working together to increase the funding for agriculture research that NIFA provides land-grant universities.

Dr. TRACY. Yes. I would like to add to that. And that would be my number one thing is increasing the AFRI budget. But I will read from my testimony just very briefly.

"As reported in 2017, China has overtaken the United States as the top government funder of research. I have visited China a number of times over the last 15 years. The investments in agricultural research infrastructure and people is astonishing."

Building new universities, total campuses where they did not exist before are there now. And it is all about agriculture for them. And we are falling behind, and they are a juggernaut. And they are rising in terms of agricultural research, and we are falling back.

I would also point out that in 2013, I was a grant panel manager for AFRI, and that year, we received 170 preproposals. We knew we could only fund seven grants. We told the folks who put in the preproposals that we could only fund seven, so we got 90 proposals, full proposals. We could still only fund seven. And we let many good grant proposals go by.

Ms. BROWNLEE. I would just like to add that I need you to invest in beginning farmers and carry out the promises to beginning farmers from the 2018 Farm Bill.

Thank you.

Mr. COX. Thank you.

The CHAIR. I just want you all to know that they have called votes, and I understand that there are quite a number of Members that are going on CODELs immediately after the votes. We are going to ask Members to submit their questions for the record, and we will adjourn.

But I just wanted to leave with some quick closing remarks and allow the Ranking Member, if he has any, as well.

The hearing takeaways that I have at this time is that the proposal is not supported by its stakeholders. Individuals who are going to be in the areas where the research are—may be supportive of this; but generally, particularly small farmers, disadvantaged farmers, and those who need these agencies to be here in Washington, to be their voice, to be the research, to do the rapid research, are concerned.

Benefiting one state will disadvantage others, and all stakeholders depend on objective, impartial research. We should be fully staffing agencies, not increasing staffing losses through misguided relocations.

And I am grateful to you all for your testimony, for being with us here this morning.

And, Mr. Dunn, if you have any closing statements you would like to make?

Mr. DUNN. Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I just want to respond to one comment I heard here today that there won't be anybody left in D.C. to visit. That is not true. The Secretary has already said the agency leadership will remain in Washington, D.C., and I encourage the Secretary to move forward on his work and applaud his efforts.

And with that, I yield back.

The CHAIR. As I stated earlier, the record will remain open for 10 calendar days for individuals to submit questions, statements. And this meeting is adjourned. And we ask that you all have a pleasant afternoon.

[Whereupon, at 10:11 a.m., the Subcommittee was adjourned.]

[Material submitted for inclusion in the record follows:]

SUBMITTED LETTER BY HON. KIM SCHRIER, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM WASHINGTON

December 14, 2018 [1]

Hon. K. MICHAEL CONAWAY,
Chairman, Committee on Agriculture,
United States House of Representatives,
Washington, D.C.;

Hon. PAT ROBERTS,
Chairman, Committee on Agriculture,
United States Senate,
Washington, D.C.;

Hon. COLLIN C. PETERSON,
Ranking Minority Member, Committee on Agriculture,
United States House of Representatives,
Washington, D.C.;

Hon. DEBBIE STABENOW,
Ranking Minority Member, Committee on Agriculture,
United States Senate,
Washington, D.C.

Dear Chairs Roberts and Conaway and Ranking Members Stabenow and Peterson,

We write to express our profound concern for USDA's plan to relocate the Economic Research Service (ERS) and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) outside of Washington, D.C. and to realign ERS out of the USDA Research, Education, and Economics (REE) mission area. We believe the restructuring will undermine our food and agriculture enterprise by disrupting and hampering the agencies' vital work in support of it—through research, analyses, and statistics. We are also deeply troubled such a major upheaval of the USDA research arm would be carried out with such haste and without the input and prior consultation of the USDA research stakeholders.

In the best interests of American agricultural, food, and rural sectors, we respectfully request that you intervene to stop the restructuring of REE at least until there has been a comprehensive independent study and full consultation with the stakeholder community.

We write from the perspective of current and former university agricultural administration leaders and former USDA chief scientists. Our positions in land-grant universities (LGUs) as well as our broader experience and leadership in food and agriculture provide us a unique and important perspective on the U.S. food and agriculture enterprise. LGUs and the broader academic network work hand in hand with the USDA to identify priorities, carry out research and analysis, and disseminate results to the broader community. An integral part of USDA's support for our food and agriculture enterprise along with ERS, NIFA takes an integrated approach to support programs to find innovative solutions to the most pressing local and global problems to ensure the long-term viability of agriculture.[2] The mission of ERS complements that of NIFA by anticipating "trends and emerging issues in agriculture, food, the environment, and rural America and to conduct high-quality, objective economic research to inform and enhance public and private decision making."[3]

Through the partnership of LGUs, USDA, other Federal research funding agencies, and the private sector, agricultural research has increased many-fold the productivity of our farms and farmers, despite the continual challenges of disease, pests, extreme weather, and invasive species. The progress and accomplishment are by design, through the leadership and vision of many in the USDA, LGUs, and larger private-sector community over the past many decades.

The engagement of the broader scientific funding research community—the National Science Foundation (NSF), the USDA Agricultural Research Service (ARS), the National institutes of Health (NIH), and many more—has also been integral to the impressive progress. For example, NIFA partnered with NSF, NIH, and the Department of Energy to launch the Plant Genome Initiative. This initiative has sequenced the genomes of economically important plants and led to improved bean, potato, tomato, wheat and barley cultivars while at the same time training thousands of undergraduate and graduate students who will be the next generation plant scientists and breeders.

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[1] This letter was originally sent November 27 with 21 signers. It is being updated as additional signers are added. The current count is 81. Note also an *identical version of this letter has been sent to appropriators* (*https://www.amstat.org/asa/files/pdfs/BuchananWotekiBlueRibbonPanel.pdf*).

[2] *https://nifa.usda.gov/about-nifa*.

[3] *https://www.ers.usda.gov/about-ers/*.

To further exemplify the advances that have come from multi-agency involvement, consider the Porcine Reproductive and Respiratory Syndrome (PRRS) virus, which was first detected in the U.S. in 1987 and that costs North American farmers more than $660 million annually. A collaborative effort between land-grant universities and the private-sector supported by NIFA and NSF has resulted in the breeding of pigs that are not harmed by the disease. Another example is a university-ARS collaboration supported by USDA–ARS, NIFA, and other Federal funding agencies to create soybean oil with no trans-fats.

The advances that have occurred because of the close collaboration of numerous research funding agencies have been greatly facilitated by their proximity. This is because of the close collaboration that must occur between the agencies, researchers, and university leaders like ourselves. University agricultural leaders and researchers make regular visits to Washington, D.C. to meet with USDA offices, research funding agencies, our Congressional delegations, and other farm and research organizations based or meeting in Washington. Locating NIFA outside the Washington, D.C. area will hamper our work and the effective integration of NIFA with other research agencies and stakeholders.

Such integrative science is essential for meeting the challenges of the next 50 years. For example, NIFA is currently partnering with NSF on an Initiative at the Nexus of Food, Energy and Water Systems to significantly advance our understanding of how these three interrelated systems interact and function with the objective of increasing their resilience and ensuring long-term sustainability.

We are also concerned the relocation of NIFA will undermine USDA funding of research, which has stagnated for the last 40 years. Since 1976, it has lost ⅔ of its purchasing power.[4]

With NIFA being relocated outside of Washington, we worry it will become less relevant and therefore more susceptible to further degradation of its budget.

In addition, the relocations are likely to weaken the coordination of NIFA and ERS with their sister REE agencies, the ARS and the National Agricultural Statistics Service. This would set back the work of Congress over several farm bills and appropriations bills to ensure more coordination and integration between the agencies. Equally important, it will remove ERS and NIFA from the important role of bringing science to bear on the work of the USDA frontline program agencies, all of which will also remain in Washington. Separating the agencies between a new location and Washington, D.C., with leadership and some staff of each agency being kept close to USDA headquarters, could also undermine the respective internal operations and coordination.

For the ERS specifically, we believe the relocation will set back the agency for 5–10 years and undermine its independence as a Federal statistical agency. In a major relocation, there will be substantial staff loss because of either an unwillingness or other preventing circumstances to move. Given the ERS's highly specialized work, it will be a long process to replace the loss of experience and expertise. We also believe ERS's work is served well in D.C. where its many of its primary audiences, partners, and collaborators are located.

ERS also thrives both in its independence and its work in REE thanks to the leadership of the USDA chief scientist and the synergies it enjoys with the other REE agencies. Congress was wise in placing ERS within REE, and it would be most unfortunate to allow that deliberative choice to be undone by administrative fiat.

Given the decades of planning and adjustments to optimize the work of REE, we are troubled the USDA seeks to dismantle the research arm in such a major way in a matter of months without a confirmed chief scientist, consultation of current or former REE, NIFA, and ERS leaders, prior engagement and input of the greater research community, and other good-government procedures. Indeed, there seems to be little evidence of any planning or study before the announcement to make the relocation.

Making changes in a successful enterprise should be based on two criteria: (i) to fix a real problem that jeopardizes future success; or (ii) to ensure further improvements for the system. The ERS–NIFA moves satisfy neither. In addition, stakeholders have been waiting for a cost-benefit analysis of the proposal to be presented and an explanation of how this move relates to REE's existing long-term strategic plan. For these reasons, it is premature to allow any final action to be taken in the absence of basic good government practice.

In closing, as leaders in the USDA agricultural research partnership committee, we have deep concerns about USDA's upheaval of its research mission area without broader consultation. The Research, Education, and Economics mission reached its current make-up following years of planning, adjustments, and optimization in-

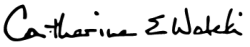
[4] *https://www.aaas.org/sites/default/files/s3fs-public/TotRes%253B.xlsx.*

formed by consultation, study, and public comment. We see no justification that it should be restructured on such a large scale on USDA's short timeline and without proper study.

We urge you to intervene to ensure the integrity of our food and agriculture enterprise over the next 50 years.

Sincerely,

GALE BUCHANAN,
Former USDA Chief Scientist and Under Secretary of Agriculture for Research, Education & Economics; Dean and Director Emeritus, University of Georgia, College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences



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Former USDA Chief Scientist and Under Secretary of Agriculture for Research, Education & Economics

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Former USDA Chief Scientist and Director of National Institute of Food and Agriculture

SONNY RAMASWAMY,
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THEODORE G. ANDREADIS,
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AUFA'I APULU ROPETI ARETA
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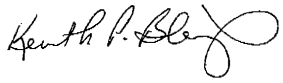

KEN BLEMINGS,
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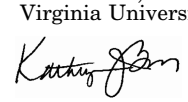

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CHARLES BOYER,
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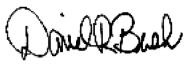
DOUGLAS D. BUHLER,
Director, MSU AgBioResearch & Assistant Vice President for Research and Innovation, Michigan State University



DANIEL BUSH,
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NEVILLE CLARKE,
Director Emeritus, Texas Agricultural Experiment Director; Former Executive Director, Southern Association of State Agricultural Experiment Station Directors; Chair, Experiment Station Committee on Organization and Policy (ESCOP)

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Vice President for Agriculture, University of Arkansas System

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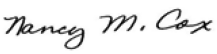

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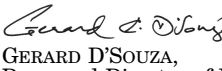

GERARD D'SOUZA,
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HELENE DILLARD,
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DAN DOOLEY,
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ROBERT EASTER,
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CAMERON FAUSTMAN,
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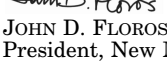

JOHN D. FLOROS,
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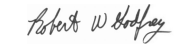

ROBERT GODFREY,
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ALAN L. GRANT,
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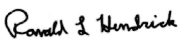

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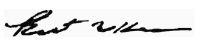

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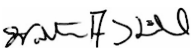

WALTER A. HILL,
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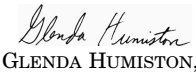

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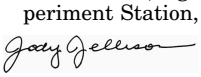

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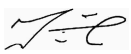

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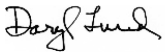

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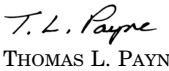

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CHUCK ROSS,
Director, University of Vermont Extension

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FRED SCHLUTT,
Vice Provost for Extension and Outreach and Director of Cooperative Extension Service, University of Alaska Fairbanks

MILO SHULT,
Vice President for Agriculture, Emeritus, University of Arkansas

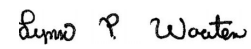
ROBERT W. TAYLOR,
Dean, College of Agriculture and Food Sciences, Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University

ANDREW J. THULIN,
Dean, College of Agriculture, Food, and Environmental Sciences, California Polytechnic State University

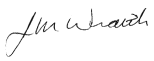
THOMAS VOGELMANN,
Dean, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, University of Vermont

CHRISTOPHER B. WATKINS,

Associate Dean, College of Agriculture & Life Sciences and College of Human Ecology and Director, Cornell Cooperative Extension, Cornell University



LYNN WOOTEN,
Dean, The Charles H. Dyson School of Applied Economics and Management, Cornell University



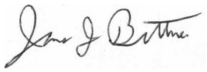
JON WRAITH,
Dean, College of Life Sciences and Agriculture and Director, NH Agricultural Experiment Station, University of New Hampshire

ANDRÉ-DENIS GIRARD WRIGHT,
Dean, College of Agricultural, Human, and Natural Resource Sciences, Washington State University

Delegates to the Council for Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching (CARET)

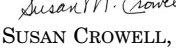
NATHAN ANDRÉ, Ohio

LINDA AMEROSO, New York



JAMES J. BITTNER, New York

JAMES G. BROWN, JR., Tennessee



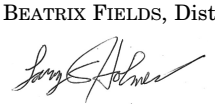
SUSAN CROWELL, Ohio

WILLIAM J. CUTTS, New Jersey

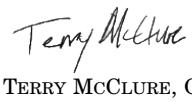
JEREMY DREW, Nevada

KRISTIN HUGHES EVANS, Virginia

BEATRIX FIELDS, District of Columbia



LARRY HOLMES, Virginia



TERRY MCCLURE, Ohio

MICHAEL A. MELLANO, California

ROBERTA A. MOSELEY, New Jersey

MADELINE MELLINGER, Florida

KENNETH NICEWICZ, Massachusetts

CAIRD REXROAD, West Virginia (also former Associate Administrator, ARS, USDA)

CHRISTOPHER M. STREETER, New Hampshire
ERIC TANOUYE, Hawaii
OSCAR TAYLOR, Texas

JAKE TIBBITTS, Nevada

SUBMITTED STATEMENT BY HON. CHELLIE PINGREE, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM MAINE; ON BEHALF OF ROGER JOHNSON, PRESIDENT, NATIONAL FARMERS UNION

Chair Plaskett, Ranking Member Dunn, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for holding a hearing to examine the impacts on agriculture research that will result from relocating the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Economic Research Service (ERS) and National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA). NFU opposes USDA's proposed relocation of ERS and NIFA, and its planned reorganization of ERS.

National Farmers Union (NFU) represents approximately 200,000 family farmers, ranchers and rural residents, and works to protect and enhance the economic well-being and quality of life for family farmers and ranchers and rural communities across the country. NFU first adopted a position against the proposal and sent a letter to Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue in September 2018 articulating our concerns. NFU remains troubled by the proposed relocation and reorganization because the process has lacked meaningful public input, the proposed changes may diminish the objectivity of each agency, and the proposal devalues public agriculture research.

NFU's Policy and Background Information

NFU is a strong supporter of public agriculture research that is unbiased, data-driven, and free from political influence. Our member-driven policy "supports increased funding for public agricultural research" and notes that reductions in state and Federal funding for agriculture research and the "increase in private research has reduced the sharing of information and increases costs of production inputs." [1]

[1] National Farmers Union. *Policy of the National Farmers Union.* March 2019.

ERS and NIFA are integral to our public agricultural research system and play major roles in helping farmers and ranchers improve productivity, natural resource stewardship, and access global markets. In the face of great economic and environmental challenges, the work of these agencies in helping family farmers and ranchers succeed is critical. Moreover, the USDA Research, Education, and Economics (REE) mission area invests approximately $3 billion[2] annually in publicly funded food and agriculture research, including through ERS and NIFA, which benefits millions of people across the country. Thus, any changes made to these agencies has far-reaching consequences.

A Process Without Strong Public Input Or Justification

The process to relocate these agencies has lacked meaningful public input that would better inform decision-making. The proposal was developed without stakeholder input or a cost-benefit analysis. Additionally, to-date, USDA has not been forthcoming and transparent with all of the metrics it has used to develop and carry out its proposal.

The proposal does not adequately address how USDA will improve the agencies' effectiveness in serving family farmers and ranchers through the relocation process. In USDA's initial announcement of its intention to relocate the agencies, it cited difficulty recruiting employees to the Washington, D.C. area due to high cost of living and long commutes.[3] However, no strong evidence has been provided for these recruitment challenges, and to date the relocation process has resulted in significant loss of knowledgeable and experienced staff. Ultimately, this loss of staff may lead to disruptions in NIFA's grant and program delivery and ERS's research, analysis, and reporting. Disruptions to the functioning of these agencies could have significant detrimental impact on family farmers and ranchers.

A Threat to Independent, Science-Based Research

We are also deeply concerned that the relocation and reorganization will jeopardize each agency's objectivity. In addition to the relocation plans, USDA intends to move ERS from the REE mission area and place it under the Office of the Chief Economist (OCE). The Chief Economist's role is to advise the Secretary on the economic impact of USDA's policies and programs, while the office of the Under Secretary for REE and the Chief Scientist are explicitly charged with upholding scientific integrity.[4] Given that ERS's mission is to conduct "objective economic research" for the benefit of the public, placing ERS directly under the Chief Economist's purview may diminish the scientific integrity and objectivity of the agency's research and analysis. Relocating NIFA at or near entities applying for grants may also create conflicts of interest in the grant awarding process.

Devaluing Public Agriculture Research

Physically locating ERS and NIFA away from the Washington, D.C. area could significantly reduce the access important decision makers have to these agencies, thus diminishing the importance and influence of these agencies and their work. The President's own FY 2020 Budget Proposal clearly states that ERS's "key clientele includes White House and USDA policy officials; program administrators/managers; the U.S. Congress; other Federal agencies; state and local government officials; and organizations, including farm and industry groups interested in public policy issues." Since the majority of these stakeholders are located in Washington, D.C., the proposed relocation would serve to diminish agency effectiveness and cross-collaboration.

Also troubling is that the President's FY 2020 budget request, which includes the directive to relocate ERS and NIFA and reorganize ERS, also includes a discontinuation of research at ERS that is vital to farmers, ranchers and rural communities. In particular, the budget request states that "ERS will discontinue research relative to farm, conservation and trade policy, and on investments in agricultural research and development."[5] Also proposed is the elimination of research and extramural agreements such as drought resilience, new energy sources, local and regional food markets, beginning farmers and ranchers, invasive species, markets for environ-

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[2] Jim Monke. Congressional Research Service (CRS). "Agricultural Research: Background and Issues." October 6, 2016.

[3] USDA. "USDA to Realign ERS with Chief Economist, Relocate ERS & NIFA Outside DC." August 9, 2018. *https://www.usda.gov/media/press-releases/2018/08/09/usda-realign-ers-chief-economist-relocate-ers-nifa-outside-dc.*

[4] *Code of Federal Regulations,* Title 7—Agriculture, Sec. 2.69. *https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CFR-2018-title7-vol1/xml/CFR-2018-title7-vol1-part2.xml#seqnum2.21.*

[5] USDA. "2020 Budget: Explanatory Notes for Committee on Appropriations, Volume 1." Page 16–6. *https://www.obpa.usda.gov/USDA2020CJ.pdf.*

mental services, and on food safety. Food and nutrition issues and all research and statistics related to the rural economy are also proposed for removal from ERS's purview.

Conclusion

We thank the Committee again for the opportunity to submit testimony. We believe the proposal and process to-date is broadly detrimental to family farmers, ranchers, and rural communities, and we oppose the relocation of ERS and NIFA and the reorganization of ERS. NFU stands ready to provide any additional support or information the Committee may need in evaluating and considering USDA's proposal and process to-date.

Sincerely,

ROGER JOHNSON,
President.

SUBMITTED LETTERS BY HON. NEAL P. DUNN, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM FLORIDA

LETTER 1

March 27, 2019

Hon. SANFORD D. BISHOP, JR.,
Chairman,
House Appropriations Committee,
Subcommittee on Agriculture,
Washington, D.C.,

Hon. JEFF FORTENBERRY,
Ranking Minority Member,
House Appropriations Committee,
Subcommittee on Agriculture,
Washington, D.C.

Dear Chairman Bishop and Ranking Member Fortenberry:

We write in strong support of Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue's goal to improve customer service, strengthen offices and programs, and save taxpayer dollars by relocating the Economic Research Service (ERS) and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) outside of the National Capital Region.

Key functions of the USDA such as the Agricultural Research Service (ARS) and the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) are already located outside of the Washington, D.C. area and have a strong track record of providing quality service to America's farmers, ranchers, rural communities, and research and extension stakeholders. We believe relocating ERS and NIFA would build upon USDA's capacity and improve the agency's ability to recruit top talent from universities across the nation while being closer to rural America and reducing taxpayer expenditures.

We commend the Secretary for his commitment that no ERS or NIFA employee will be involuntarily separated during this transition, and that employees will be offered relocation assistance and will receive the same base pay as before. We also appreciate USDA's notice and attention to its important research, extension, and education mission. It is clear that the Secretary remains committed to mission-delivery both during this transition and once the relocation effort is complete.

For the above mentioned reasons, we request that no relocation limitation be included in the FY 2020 Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill.

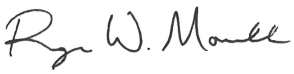
While we understand Congressional oversight is appropriate, we are ready to work with you to ensure any logistical complications or issues that may arise are overcome. We appreciate your time and attention to this matter and strongly support this effort.

Sincerely,

Hon. VICKY HARTZLER, (MO–04);

Hon. K. MICHAEL CONAWAY, (TX–11),
Ranking Minority Member, Committee on Agriculture;

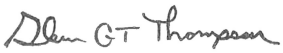
Hon. NEAL P. DUNN, (FL–02);
Ranking Minority Member, Subcommittee on Biotechnology, Horticulture, and Research;



Hon. ROGER W. MARSHALL, (KS–01),

Hon. ANN WAGNER, (MO–02);

Hon. TRENT KELLY, (MS–01);

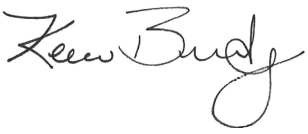


Hon. GLENN THOMPSON, (PA–15);

Hon. DON BACON, (NE–02);

Hon. MIKE BOST, (IL–12);

Hon. JOE WILSON, (SC–02);



Hon. KEVIN BRADY, (TX–08);

Hon. RALPH LEE ABRAHAM, (LA–05);

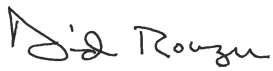
Hon. ERIC A. "RICK" CRAWFORD, (AR–01);

Hon. DOUG LAMALFA, (CA–01);

Hon. JAMES COMER, (KY–01);

Hon. SAM GRAVES, (MO–06);

Hon. BILL FLORES, (TX–17);



Hon. DAVID ROUZER, (NC–07);

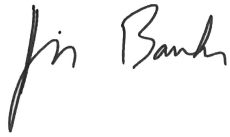
Hon. DUSTY JOHNSON, (SD–AL);

Hon. JACKIE WALORSKI, (IN–02);

Hon. AUSTIN SCOTT, (GA–08);

Hon. TED S. YOHO, (FL–03);

Hon. JIM HAGEDORN, (MN–01);



Hon. JIM BANKS, (IN–03);

Hon. SCOTT DESJARLAIS, (TN–04);

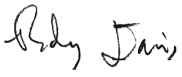
Hon. JAMES R. BAIRD, (IN–04);

Hon. TREY HOLLINGSWORTH, (IN–09);

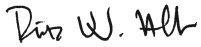
Hon. BLAINE LUETKEMEYER, (MO–03);

Hon. GREG PENCE, (IN–06);

Hon. DENVER RIGGLEMAN, (VA–05);



Hon. RODNEY DAVIS, (IL–13);



Hon. RICK W. ALLEN, (GA–12).

LETTER 2

April 3, 2019

Hon. SONNY PERDUE,
Secretary,
U.S. Department of Agriculture,
Washington, D.C.

Dear Secretary Perdue,

We were pleased to see the State of Indiana included in your latest shortlist to host the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Economic Research Service (ERS) and National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA). We strongly endorse the Indiana State Department of Agriculture, AgriNovus Indiana, and Purdue University's proposal and urge you to give it careful consideration.

As one of the top agriculture producing states in the country, farming runs deep in Hoosier veins. The industry contributes an estimated $31.2 billion to Indiana's economy each year with 56,800 farming operations with an average farm size of 259 acres. Ninety-seven percent of farms are family-owned or operated. Relocating ERS and NIFA to Indiana would give USDA a greater presence in the agriculture heartland of our country, ensuring that resources are never far from the farmers, growers, farm supply, and university researchers who can provide real-time feedback and assist in the policymaking process.

Indiana is also home to Purdue University and the nationally and internationally ranked College of Agriculture. Purdue boasts three World Food Prize laureates on the faculty, is the #1 Agriculture and Biological Engineering program in the country, and is the home to the only plant phenotyping facility at a U.S. university.

Holding the title the "Crossroads of America" is something we take seriously. Thanks to our proactive and innovative state leaders, Indiana has made unparalleled investments in infrastructure, elevating Indiana's economic competitiveness and quality of life. The Indianapolis International Airport, with direct flights to Washington, D.C., has been the top airport in North America for 7 straight years.

USDA employees will be pleased with the affordable living costs and one percent capped residential property taxes. According to C2ER's Cost of Living Index, a person earning $100,000 in Washington, D.C. would only need to earn $60,253 in Indiana to enjoy the same level of living. Additionally, Indiana commuters spend 46 fewer hours per year in traffic congestion than in Washington[,] D.C., per INRIX Global Traffic Scorecard. Indiana has spent years adopting sound fiscal policies, and today Indiana is one of only a handful of U.S. states with a AAA credit rating and an annual budget surplus.

We hope you will visit Indiana once again as part of the deliberative process and see for yourself why moving NIFA and ERS to Indiana is the right choice. We stand ready to assist you as you consider your options to ensure the USDA is the most effective, most efficient, and most customer-focused agency in the Federal Government.

Sincerely,

Hon. TODD YOUNG,
United States Senator;

Hon. MIKE BRAUN,
United States Senator;

Hon. JAMES R. BAIRD,
Member of Congress;

Hon. PETER J. VISCLOSKY,
Member of Congress;

Hon. JACKIE WALORSKI,
Member of Congress;

Hon. SUSAN W. BROOKS,
Member of Congress;

Hon. ANDRÉ CARSON,
Member of Congress;

Hon. LARRY BUCSHON,
Member of Congress;

Hon. TREY HOLLINGSWORTH,
Member of Congress;

Hon. JIM BANKS,
Member of Congress;

Hon. GREG PENCE,
Member of Congress.

LETTER 3

May 20, 2019

Hon. SONNY PERDUE,
Secretary,
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Washington, D.C. 20252

Dear Secretary Perdue,

Thank you for including the Greater Kansas City Region on the short list of possible locations for the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Economic Research Service (ERS) and National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA). We write to express our strong support for the selection of Kansas City to be the future home of these agencies.

We share your commitment to uphold the critical missions of ERS and NIFA during the relocation process and in the future. Agricultural research is one of the most critical functions of USDA. We must ensure the relocation supports and strengthens the research functions that are essential to the agriculture industry. As you continue to evaluate the finalists, we are confident you will find Kansas City to excel in each of the criteria considered by USDA: capital and operating costs, workforce, logistics and quality of life for employees.

We appreciate your focus on reducing the cost of government and making USDA more responsible stewards of taxpayer dollars. You will find capital and operating expenses in Kansas City to be lower than Washington, D.C. and competitive nationally.

Kansas City is home to a highly-skilled workforce, including to approximately 5,000 USDA employees and contractors. The Kansas City Animal Health Corridor, stretching from Manhattan, Kansas to Columbia, Missouri, is the largest concentration of animal health companies in the world. Kansas is the future home of the National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility (NBAF), the nation's foremost animal disease research facility. Over a dozen land-grant universities and research institutions are located in close proximity of Kansas City. This concentration of animal health companies, NBAF and land-grant universities will not only complement the research capabilities of ERS and NIFA, but continue to foster a talented workforce to meet the personnel needs of USDA in the future.

Being centrally located, Kansas City offers convenient air and ground travel across the continental United States. The area is primarily served by the Kansas City International Airport, which is currently undergoing a $1.5 billion renovation to meet the needs of the growing local economy, with several regional airports also located nearby. Kansas City is ideally located for ERS and NIFA employees to si-

multaneously be closer to the agricultural stakeholders and rural communities they serve, while also being able to conveniently travel to USDA headquarters, research institutions and elsewhere across the nation.

We agree the quality of life of USDA employees ought to be a key consideration in relocating the agencies, and assure you that Kansas City is a premier place for people to live and work. Kansas City has undergone significant development in recent years, including a revitalized downtown area that offers residents a vibrant and exciting lifestyle. Kansas City residents enjoy some of the shortest commute times of any metropolitan area and have convenient access to popular destinations in both urban and rural areas of our states. The cost of living and residential housing costs in Kansas City are significantly lower than Washington[,] D.C. and most other cities.

ERS and NIFA each play an important role in our nation's food and agricultural research, education and extension services. Relocating ERS and NIFA to the middle of the country provides an opportunity to enhance the agencies' respective roles within USDA and their ability to serve farmers, ranchers and rural communities. We appreciate your consideration of Kansas City to be the future home of ERS and NIFA and stand willing to be of assistance to you in relocating the agencies to the area.

Sincerely,

Jerry Moran

Hon. JERRY MORAN,
United States Senator;

Hon. ROY BLUNT,
United States Senator;

Hon. PAT ROBERTS,
United States Senator;

Hon. JOSH HAWLEY,
United States Senator;

Hon. SHARICE DAVIDS,
Member of Congress;

Hon. EMANUEL CLEAVER,
Member of Congress;

Hon. VICKY HARTZLER,
Member of Congress;

Hon. ROGER W. MARSHALL,
Member of Congress;

Hon. STEVE WATKINS,
Member of Congress;

Hon. SAM GRAVES,
Member of Congress;

Hon. RON ESTES,
Member of Congress.

LETTER 4

May 22, 2019

Hon. SONNY PERDUE,
Secretary,
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Washington, D.C. 20252

Dear Secretary Perdue:

We understand there are plans underway to possibly relocate the Economic Research Service (ERS) and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) agencies of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to outside of Washington, D.C. Should USDA move forward with its plans, we ask that you give our great State of North Carolina your full consideration.

Agriculture is a cornerstone of North Carolina's economy, comprising our state's industry with an economic impact of $87 billion and supporting 686,200 jobs across the state. North Carolina's diverse topography coupled with its year-round temperate climate and rich soils have allowed North Carolina to become one of the most agriculturally diverse states in the nation, cultivating almost ninety different crops.

North Carolina's vibrant agriculture industry is also attributable to partnerships with our state's world-renown universities. North Carolina is home to two land-grant universities, North Carolina State University and North Carolina A&T University. In addition, Duke University and the University of North [] Carolina at Chapel Hill, two *U.S. News and World Report* top ranked universities, are centrally located within a twenty mile radius of North Carolina State University, and Raleigh-Durham International airport.

The Raleigh-Durham area has experienced tremendous growth over the last decade largely due to ample job opportunities, low-cost of living, and the overall high quality of life offered from the area's expanding recreational and cultural opportunities.

As Representatives of North Carolina, we stand ready to assist you with providing any further information about our state's countless attributes, and we look forward to further discussions about North Carolina's resources, talent, and access that make it an exceptional candidate for ERS and NIFA's new home.

Sincerely,

Hon. THOM TILLIS,
United States Senator;

Hon. RICHARD BURR,
United States Senator.

Hon. DAVID E. PRICE,
Member of Congress;

Hon. DAVID ROUZER,
Member of Congress;

Hon. GEORGE HOLDING,
Member of Congress;

Hon. G. K. BUTTERFIELD,
Member of Congress;

Hon. PATRICK T. MCHENRY,
Member of Congress;

Hon. RICHARD HUDSON,
Member of Congress;

Hon. MARK WALKER,
Member of Congress;

Hon. MARK MEADOWS,
Member of Congress;

Hon. TED BUDD,
Member of Congress;

Hon. VIRGINIA FOXX,
Member of Congress.

SUBMITTED LETTER BY HON. VICKY HARTZLER, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM MISSOURI

May 14, 2019

Hon. SONNY PERDUE,
Secretary,
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Washington, D.C.

Dear Secretary Perdue:

We are delighted that Kansas City (KC) is a finalist site for the future home to two U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) agencies: Economic Research Service (ERS) and National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA). As members of the leadership team from the adjacent land-grant, research institutions, we enthusiastically endorse the proposal submitted by the Kansas City Area Development Council (KCADC) and the Kansas City Animal Health Corridor for relocation to Kansas City.

The Kansas City region is widely recognized as a center for Midwest agriculture. Within 300 miles of Kansas City, there are six of the nation's premiere 1862 land-grant institutions—two of which are members of the prestigious Association of American Universities. Additionally, there are three 1890 land-grant institutions, and three 1994 institutions. All of these universities and colleges offer future talent in agricultural sciences, in addition to the many regional colleges of agriculture throughout the [M]idwest. Since 2017, these institutions graduated more than 150 Ph.D.s in agriculture. No other location in the United States offers a similar cluster of land-grant access and diversity.

Across the [M]idwest, agriculture is the unrivaled economic driver, contributing more than $300 billion annually to the region. Furthermore, each institution has acclaimed research, teaching and Extension programs actively contributing to agricultural innovation and technology translation across the region, the nation and the world. The USDA will find more than 400,000 farming operations here in the [M]idwest with an average farm size of nearly 600 acres.

We are confident that an enhanced USDA presence in Kansas City will convey a strong commitment to U.S. agriculture, supported by ready access to world-class researchers and land-grant and other agricultural institutions that will lend leadership to critical agricultural issues facing policy makers.

Iowa State University (ISU) is 225 miles from KC. ISU conducts cutting-edge research in agriculture and natural resources. Iowa ranks first nationally in corn, hog, egg and ethanol production, and second nationally in soybean and red meat production and in agricultural cash receipts and exports. Iowa was first state to adopt the

Morrill Act, and originated Cooperative Extension. ISU and the surrounding community host: (1) USDA APHIS Veterinary Services Laboratory; (2) USDA ARS National Animal Disease Center; National Laboratory for Agriculture and Environment and Regional Plant Introduction Station; Corn Insects and Crop Genetics Research Unit; and Crop Genome Informatics Laboratory; (3) USDOE Ames National Laboratory; and (4) other state/regional/national centers with missions aligned with the USDA.

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL), is 195 miles from KC. This exceptional Big Ten land-grant institution was the first university west of the Mississippi River to offer graduate education. Nebraska is the third largest agricultural economy in the U.S., ranks first in beef exports, commercial red meat production and the number of irrigated acres, and is known for the scale and diversity of its crop and livestock commodities. UNL is home to globally leading plant and animal science research programs, a U.S. Census Regional Data Center, the Daugherty Water for Food Global Institute, the National Drought Mitigation Center, Nebraska Innovation Campus—including a Food Innovation Center and Greenhouse Innovation Center—and the innovative Engler Agribusiness Entrepreneurship Program.

Kansas State University (K-State), anchored in Manhattan, KS and 123 miles from Kansas City, is the nation's first operational land-grant university. K-State offers 323 undergraduate and master degree programs, 43 graduate certificates, 39 doctoral degree programs, and has exceptional research facilities, including the Biosecurity Research Institute. The new National Bio- and Agro-Defense Facility sits adjacent to the campus' College of Veterinary Medicine and College of Agriculture, both ranked among the top schools in the nation. With these resources and a campus in suburban KC, K-State is well poised to support USDA NIFA and ERS agencies in meeting U.S. and global food system challenges.

The University of Missouri's College of Agriculture, Food & Natural Resources (MU–CAFNR) is situated 125 miles from Kansas City, with 17 research farms and centers positioned across the Show-Me state. MU–CAFNR offers degree programs to nearly 3,000 students preparing for careers in the agriculture and natural resource industries. This land-grant college is home to world-class animal and plant scientists who develop systems to produce the food, fiber, feed and fuel for a healthy world. Identified as an MU–CAFNR *Program of Distinction,* the Food and Agricultural Policy Research Institute contributes critical information to USDA and Capitol Hill on policy issues.

The land-grant mission is alive and well in the [M]idwest, the heart of U.S. agriculture. The faculty, staff and students across our campuses are ready to help our USDA colleagues adapt to the Kansas City region as we work together to strengthen U.S. agriculture around the world.

Sincerely,

WENDY WINTERSTEEN, PH.D.,
President, Iowa State University;

RICHARD B. MYERS,
President, Kansas State University;

RONNIE D. GREEN, PH.D.,
Chancellor, University of Nebraska-Lincoln;

ALEXANDER CARTWRIGHT, PH.D.,
Chancellor, University of Missouri.

SUBMITTED LETTERS BY HON. DAVID ROUZER, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM NORTH CAROLINA

LETTER 1

October 2, 2018

Hon. SONNY PERDUE,
Secretary,
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Washington, D.C. 20252

Dear Secretary Perdue:

We write to express our support for the comments submitted by several of our constituents advocating for the Economic Research Service (ERS) and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) agencies of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to be relocated to our great state of North Carolina.

Agriculture has been a cornerstone of North Carolina's economy for over 200 years. Our agriculture and agribusiness industry continues to be the number one industry in North Carolina, bringing in more than $87 billion each year and supporting 686,000 jobs across the state. The diverse topography, year-round temperate climate, and wide range of rich soils provide outstanding conditions for the cultivation of nearly 90 commodities, making North Carolina one of the most agriculturally diverse states in the nation.

North Carolina's thriving agriculture industry is made even more vibrant as a result of outstanding partnerships with our world-renown universities. We are home to the nation's largest 1890 land-grant university, North Carolina A&T University, as well as the 1862 land-grant university, North Carolina State University. Additionally, North Carolina has sixteen other campuses across the state that comprise the University of North Carolina System—the majority of which are located within a short drive of North Carolina's major airport hubs.

Ample job opportunities, low-cost of living, and the overall high quality of life offered by expanding recreational and cultural opportunities have resulted in exponential, continuing migration to North Carolina from across the globe. It is no shock that the agribusiness and technology industries in the area have experienced similar growth over the last decade.

We thank you for your commitment to bring USDA's resources closer to stakeholders and look forward to further discussions about North Carolina's resources, talent, and access that make it a great fit for ERS and NIFA's new home, and we respectfully ask you to consider our state in your search.

Respectfully,

Hon. RICHARD BURR,
United States Senator;

Hon. THOM TILLIS,
United States Senator.

LETTER 2

See Dunn Submitted Letter No. 4 on p. 38.

LETTER 3

October 3, 2018

DONALD K. BICE,
Deputy Assistant Secretary for Administration,
U.S. Department of Agriculture,
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. Bice:

As you consider opportunities to relocate USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) and Economic Research Service (ERS) headquarters locations outside of Washington, D.C., I strongly encourage you to seriously consider North Carolina. Our state is proud to present three different proposals for your consideration. These options would provide you a workforce that can compete with any in the country and give your professionals the opportunity to work in vibrant communities with exceptional access to education and research institutions, an improved cost of living and quality of life. Here in the Old North State, we honor our strong agricultural traditions and value our farms and farmers who work every day to feed our country and the world.

In North Carolina you'll find a public university system second to none. Responsible for over $2 billion Federal research dollars, North Carolina State University, North Carolina A&T State University, and the rest of the University of North Carolina system are leading the way in innovative agricultural practices for our country. Our public university system is enhanced by our strong network of private colleges and universities and our 58 member Community College system.

Each of the locations we propose are a short drive from both the mountains and the coast and boast outstanding recreational opportunities for your employees. Af-

fordable cost of living across our state will only prove to enhance the quality of life for your employees, and they will maintain access to Washington and the country with our network of international airports.

We're ready to get to work. North Carolina workers are talented, educated, and ready to work for USDA and its stakeholders across the country. That's thanks in part to our cultural values and exceptional educational system, but also to rich training opportunities and our steadfast commitment to research and development.

As you consider options for your relocation, I invite you to join us in North Carolina. Our agricultural economy is among the most diverse in the nation—an $87 billion economic driver. More than 47,000 farms are growing 90 different commodities in 400 different soil types on over 8 million acres. USDA, the NIFA and ERS would be most welcome partners as we continue to grow the agricultural community in North Carolina.

With kind regards, I am

Very truly yours,

ROY COOPER.

LETTER 4

October 4, 2018

DONALD K. BICE,
Deputy Assistant Secretary for Administration,
U.S. Department of Agriculture,
Washington, D.C.

Subject: USDA NIFA/ERS relocation proposals

Dear Deputy Assistant Secretary Bice,

Please accept this letter of support for North Carolina as the new location for USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture and Economic Research Service. The North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services has a long history of partnering with USDA to provide resources and support for North Carolina farmers as well as the protection and education of our citizens.

We at the NCDA&CS are working directly with the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina on the submission of the Expressions of Interest from NC, because we see great value in having NIFA and ERS headquartered in our state.

North Carolina is regularly seen as a great place to live, work and play. Our universities, as well as the community college system, provide top-tier education and will provide USDA with a pool of qualified candidates for both NIFA and ERS. With all our state has to offer, USDA will be able to recruit highly-skilled candidates for available positions and reduce turnover. With agriculture being our number one industry, many in North Carolina also understand the agricultural and rural community and the varied customers these agencies serve.

The Cooperative Extension Program is one of the largest in the country and is anchored by two excellent universities, N.C. A&T State University and North Carolina State University. The programs are specifically tailored to the agriculture and agribusiness in their respective areas. This is extremely important in a state that is the fourth most diversified agriculture state in the country based on commodities grown or raised commercially.

In addition to the variety of commodities produced, we have a large number of food manufacturers and processors operating in our state. The N.C. Food Innovation Lab, a soon-to-be hub for plant-based food science and manufacturing advancement will be located at the N.C. Research Campus, located in Kannapolis. The innovation center will support the expansion of food manufacturing and processing in North Carolina, increasing the opportunity for state farmers. Another agency that supports farmers is the Agriculture Sector Development in the NC Biotechnology Center. We are also headquarters to several grocery store chains and operate four regional farmers markets through the NCDA&CS.

We support the relocation of NIFA and ERS and see value to both the state and USDA to having these agencies in North Carolina.

Sincerely,

STEVEN W. TROXLER,
Commissioner.

LETTER 5

June 4, 2019

Hon. DAVID ROUZER,
Congressman,
Washington, D.C.

Dear Congressman Rouzer:

North Carolina Farm Bureau strongly supports USDA Secretary Sonny Perdue's efforts to relocate the Offices of Economic Research Services and National Institute of Food and Agriculture. I along with Commissioner of Agriculture Steve Troxler and Dean of NCSU's College of Agriculture Rich Linton met with USDA's search committee last month showing our unified support. The Research Triangle Area has a lot of the qualities that USDA requires:

- North Carolina enjoys two of the top land-grant research universities in the nation: NC State University and historically black North Carolina A&T State University in close proximity.
- We already have "outpost" laboratories of EPA in the Research Triangle Park.
- Our university and agriculture communities are highly supportive of the relocation.
- The RTP is an easy 4.5 hour drive from D.C. and a short direct flight.
- The RTP has a low cost of living, relative low cost housing, easy commutes and desirable quality of life.
- We enjoy excellent schools, three world class research universities and a robust diverse agriculture as well as a thriving ag-biotech sector.
- North Carolina has a rich agricultural heritage and is the third most diversified agriculture in the country.
- Because of NC's expanding economy, trailing spouses have an easier time finding appropriate career opportunities.
- Our state is an excellent place to live, work and play. In just a few hours of travel time, we can enjoy pristine beaches, majestic mountains, professional sports teams and world famous ACC Basketball.
- In the corporate relocation world, NC is known as a "sticky" state. Once employees move here, they do not want to leave.
- North Carolina will be an outstanding choice for relocating these important agencies.

Thank you for your help in promoting this effort. We stand ready to answer any questions that may come up.

Sincerely,

LARRY B. WOOTEN,
President.

LETTER 6

September 12, 2018

RE: North Carolina Proposal, USDA NIFA and ERS Relocation

Dear Ms. Lee,

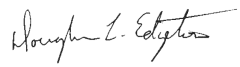
As a President and Chief Executive for the North Carolina Biotechnology Center, I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the proposal to locate employees of the USDA within our state.

I am writing to communicate my organization's strong support and commitment to ensure success of the relocation of USDA offices for the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) and the Economic Research Service (ERS). From our founding in 1984, the NC Biotechnology Center has had a strong focus on connecting academic, government, and industry efforts on agriculture-related sciences and technologies for the benefit of North Carolina and with impact worldwide. We believe that locating these key departments of the USDA within our ag-tech ecosystem that is a unique opportunity for the USDA and reinforced by proximity to the diverse agricultural production system within the state. We are confident that North Carolina offers unmatched capability for achievement of the desired goals of the NIFA and ERS relocation.

There is no doubt that locating such key initiatives as NIFA and ERS within our state will provide many benefits to the USDA. As you know, our Agriculture Sector Development team has a strong record of success in supporting and growing one of the world's largest ag-tech hubs. Of particular interest for this project is our capabilities to connect talent with opportunity. In today's economy, we recognize that relocation of employees often includes decisions based on opportunity for spouses and partners as well. We know that this household professional connection is especially prevalent in agriculture and know that in addition to ensuring success of the department/employee relocation, North Carolina is particularly suited to opportunities for ag professional spouses and partners.

I look forward to supporting your effort along with the multiple organizations that will collaborate with you. We know that North Carolina can become the national resource for agricultural economic data, as well as the Federal center of support for agricultural science and technology.

Sincerely,



DOUGLAS L. EDGETON,
President and Chief Executive Officer,
15 TW Alexander Drive | Post Office Box 13547 | Research Triangle Park, NC 27709
919–549–8819 | *scott_johnson@ncbiotech.org*

LETTER 7

October 4, 2018

Dear USDA Committee:

As Chancellor of NC State University, I would like to offer my support for North Carolina as the site for the new headquarters for the United States Department of Agriculture's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) and the Economic Research Service (ERS). North Carolina is uniquely qualified to host these organizations due to our strong agricultural foundation, innovative approach to research and education, and powerful industry partnerships.

North Carolina has incredible agricultural diversity, and NC State has a long history of promoting agriculture's progress. North Carolina farmers produce more than 90 commodities, making us one of the most diverse agriculture production states in the United States. Our state is the nation's top producer of sweet potatoes and tobacco and the second-leading producer of hogs, pigs and turkeys. NC State has 18 research stations across the state and Cooperative Extension offices in every county in an attempt to provide a depth of knowledge and resources to our agriculture community. This also allows us to conduct research that is representative of North Carolina's wide diversity in climate and soil composition, the results of which can serve as a model for many global regions and United States territories.

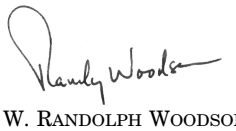
NC State's approach to innovative research and education truly sets us apart. With our Colleges of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Veterinary Medicine, and Natural Resources all among the top in the nation, no other university has a better collection of colleges focused on animal and plant production, forest health and forest bio-materials production, and ground-breaking animal health research. In addition to the knowledge gained through rigorous coursework, we strive to emphasize the importance of knowledge generation and application through hands-on research and industry collaborations.

We have an incredible number of strong partnerships with industry and organizations that demonstrate our capability and record accomplishment in these fields. In fact, many of these partnerships exist directly with the USDA and affiliated organizations including the NIFA and ERS. NC State is working to create one of the world's best agriculture research centers through the Plant Sciences Initiative (PSI).

The PSI will bring together experts from the university, industry and government and encourage collaborative research into our most challenging global problem: food security for the growing global population. In addition to the wealth of opportunities on NC State's campus and affiliated locations, Research Triangle Park cultivates a strong biotechnology presence nearby and provides the potential for even further research partnerships.

Thank you for considering North Carolina as a potential home for the NIFA and ERS headquarters.

Sincerely,



W. RANDOLPH WOODSON,
Chancellor.

Attachment

North Carolina State University's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, College of Natural Resources and College of Veterinary Medicine are all ranked in the top three in the nation. As a high-performing *Think and Do* land-grant institution, we strive each and every day to engage substantively with our education and economic development organizational partners on a local, regional and statewide basis to promote capital investment, job creation and community growth and development. Here below are just a few salient examples

- *NIFA Grants: NC State University enjoyed 401 research collaborations and more than $43.5 million in total funding from USDA during Federal Fiscal Year 2017 across multiple colleges including Agriculture and Life Sciences, Veterinary Medicine, Natural Resources, Engineering, Management and Sciences.*
- *During Federal Fiscal Year 2017, NIFA awarded NC State faculty 77 new grants totaling $22.3 million. CALS accolades and overall NC State University rankings illustrate a mass of intellectual capacity to interact effectively with faculty, staff, students and partners. NC State's Colleges of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Veterinary Medicine are together the single best complex of land-grant colleges in the nation. No other university has a better collection of colleges focused on animal and plant production, forest health and forest bio-materials production and a preeminent college of Veterinary Medicine.*
- *NC State is also home to five ARS research units with robust faculty collaborations between ARS and NC State researchers. Coupled with enthusiastic support from our NC Governor and our NC Legislature, NC State University is creating one of the world's finest agriculture research initiatives of the future, the NC State Plant Science Initiative (PSI). The PSI will broaden, deepen and enhance cutting-edge university/industry/government collaborative research into our most challenging 21st Century challenge, food security. NC State's 18 field labs and research stations across the state are able to support cutting-edge research across a wide variety of soils and climates. And North Carolina farmers produce more than 90 commodities (top U.S. producer of sweet potatoes and tobacco, second-leading producer of hogs and pigs, and turkeys), making our state one of the most diverse agriculture production states in the nation.*
- *NC State partners with dozens of ag biotech/precision ag companies and firms throughout North Carolina, especially here in Research Triangle Park (celebrates 60th anniversary in 2019) and on our award-winning NC State Centennial Campus, as well as with Research Triangle International, UNC-Chapel Hill, Duke University, and our 16 UNC System members and many members of our 58 NC Community College System[.]*

LETTER 8

September 10, 2018

DONALD BICE,
USDA Deputy Assistant Secretary for Administration,
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. Bice:

As the leader of one of two land-grant universities in North Carolina, I am pleased to join with the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina and

lend my full support to secure the relocation of the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture and the Economic [Research] Service operations to our state, and particularly to the Greensboro/Piedmont Triad region.

North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University has had a long and fulfilling relationship with the USDA in academic endeavors, scholarly research, and most recently in facilities and outreach development. As of this July, we have begun construction on a NIFA-sponsored $6 million, 17,000′2 pavilion located on the Aggie Farm that will include an auditorium, laboratories, a demonstration kitchen, a 50 person classroom and a 400 person conference room. Three additional projects with a combined total value of $12.3 million will also be completed in the next 4 years: an amphitheater, student and community gardens and a community and urban food complex with a business incubator. In addition, ERS has sponsored over $500,000 in research efforts at the university over the past 8 years.

N.C. A&T truly values our long-standing relationships with both NIFA and ERS and we look forward to the opportunity of working even more closely with these organizations when they become an integral part of the agricultural fabric of North Carolina.

Sincerely,

HAROLD L. MARTIN, SR.,
Chancellor.

SUBMITTED QUESTIONS

Response from Jack M. Payne, Ph.D., Senior Vice President for Agriculture and Natural Resources, University of Florida; Administrative Head, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, UF

Question Submitted by Hon. Jefferson Van Drew, a Representative in Congress from New Jersey

Question. As was stated before that China is overtaking the U.S. in many of the biotech and research aspects, would it not seem that the money and resources needed to relocate could be better used in continued research?

Answer. Absolutely! The Chinese are building the best universities in the world. They are pouring billions of dollars into their infrastructure and they are hiring our faculty to run the institutions and conduct research. As one of the "administrative heads" of agriculture in the land-grant system, I have spent much time over the years working with Congress to try to increase the agricultural research budget (AFRI in NIFA). There is a $42B research budget in NIH, $8B research budget in NSF and $400M in AFRI! It is an embarrassment given the increasing challenges we will have in feeding the world. We should not be spending time and effort to move two critical agencies out of D.C., as well as the time it will take to rehire the needed scientists and program leaders, but instead we should be focused on increasing the research budget for Agriculture. Keeping NIFA and ERS in Washington with its Federal partners and Federal agency stakeholders is essential to this effort. Food security for our country and the world depends on it, as does world peace!

Questions Submitted by Hon. Kim Schrier, a Representative in Congress from Washington

Question 1. As someone with a background in medicine and science I recognize the importance of a robust research community. I look forward to delving into the science of agriculture with my colleagues. To be clear, I don't want to see research compromised by moving NIFA and ERS out of D.C. It may be expensive to live in D.C., but it is more expensive to lose the combined brainpower and experience of scientists who will leave the USDA rather than relocate.

As the letter I submitted into the record and cosigned by Dean André-Denis Wright of Washington State University states, research advances have occurred because of the close collaboration of numerous research funding agencies. One such example is the Plant Genome Initiative. NIFA partnered with NSF, NIH and the Department of Energy to sequence the genomes of economically important plants and led to improved bean, potato, tomato, wheat and barley while at the same time training thousands of undergraduate and graduate students who will be the next generation plant scientists and breeders.

In my opinion, such integrative science is essential for meeting future challenges. My question to Dr. Payne and Dr. Tracy is what kind of impact do you expect the

proposed relocation of NIFA and ERS will have on collaborative, multi-agency research from USDA?

Question 2. Do you anticipate the USDA experiencing retention issues of current scientific experts if the NIFA and ERS are moved out of the D.C. region?

Answer 1–2. The proposed relocation of NIFA and ERS will have a very negative impact on collaborative, multi-agency research from USDA. NIFA serves as the Federal partner in the land-grant system and, not only manages the capacity funds in Smith-Lever and Hatch, but also the research funds in AFRI. Agricultural research today is multi-disciplinary because the problems we are trying to solve today are multi-disciplinary. When someone, like myself, goes to Washington, D.C., I visit with my major partner, NIFA, but also with Depts. of Defense, Interior, EPA, NIH, NSF, the USDA Forest Service, USAID, FDA, *etc.,* as well as Members of my state's Congressional delegation. All of these meetings are important because of the interdisciplinary nature of agriculture today. Land-grant universities receive funding from all of these Federal agencies in pursuit of the interdisciplinary research we conduct to solve agricultural problems. The University of Florida, for example, is the PI on a $49M USAID grant to develop livestock capacity in six African countries and two in Southeast Asia. USAID is headquartered in D.C. and I meet with them regularly. It becomes very difficult for those of us as administrative heads of Colleges of Agriculture to first go to D.C. to meet with partners and then somewhere else, such as Kansas City, to meet with our most important partner, NIFA.

NIFA also serves [as] a conveyor for these interdisciplinary projects. The NIFA Director and/or the Under Secretary for REE, will gather scientists from across the Federal agencies to meet with us at NIFA when we work on these projects.

All the reasons that USDA has provided for the relocation have shown to be specious. USDA's main reasons are that it will save money and that the two agencies need to be closer to farmers and ranchers.

Regarding the claim that it will save money, please see analysis in the web link below that demonstrates that is will be the U.S. taxpayer that will be paying for this. It is not going to save USDA money.

https://www.prweb.com/releases/full_cost_of_moving_usda_research_agencies_will_cost_taxpayers_money_not_save_it/prweb16391282.htm [Attachment 1]

Regarding the claim that the agencies need to be closer to farmers and ranchers is specious as well because NIFA and ERS have never worked with farmers and ranchers. There is a reason why almost every county in the United States has a county extension office and over 500 research labs associated with 107 land-grant universities exist throughout the country to serve the needs of agriculture. We, land-grant universities, work with the farmers and ranchers. NIFA and ERS work with us.

Morale of NIFA and ERS scientists and staff is at an all time low and over 100 already have let the agencies. Many more are trying to leave for other employment. It will takes years to get the agencies back up to the scientific capability that they once had. Due to the lack of good reasons for the move, many in the agricultural scientific community see this as a budget cut and an attack on science.

The attitude of the NIFA and ERS staff regarding the proposed move and their concerns about the Administration's attack on their science is described in the following two web links:

https://politi.co/2Y7bKDR [Attachment 2]

Scientists push back against apparent purge at USDA under Trump:

http://www.msnbc.com/rachel-maddow/watch/scientists-push-back-against-apparent-purge-at-usda-under-trump-62384197574 [Attachment 3]

Question 3. Given the potential location of the proposed NIFA/ERS faculties, are you concerned that having this located near one institution, and not in a "neutral" area will inadvertently facilitate interest in supporting that institution's efforts?

Answer. Yes.

Question 4. Have you been given adequate assurances by USDA that research around the country can be conducted in a way to avoid favoritism and maintain the best level of research?

Answer. No.

ATTACHMENT 1

CISION
PRWeb

Full Cost of Moving USDA Research Agencies Will Cost Taxpayers Money, Not Save It

ALLISON SCHEETZ,
Agricultural & Applied Economics Association, 414–918–3190

AAEA releases new research in USDA move

The relocation is triggering an unprecedented level of staff resignations and retirements

Milwaukee (PRWEB) June 19, 2019

The proposed move of two USDA research agencies will cost taxpayers money and reduce America's agricultural economic research and information infrastructure, according to the Agricultural and Applied Economics Association (AAEA). The AAEA is responding to Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue's June 13 announced plan to relocate the Economic Research Service (ERS) and National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) from Washington, D.C., to Kansas City. A team of AAEA member economists find that the move will result in a net cost to taxpayers rather than a net savings. Additionally, a rushed, unplanned move will undermine the quality of USDA agricultural economic information at a critical time for the nation's agricultural and rural economy.

The USDA's cost-benefit analysis was reviewed by three AAEA member economists: Scott Swinton, President last year of the AAEA, and Susan Offutt and Kitty Smith, both former ERS Administrators. The *AAEA review* ***here*** (*https://www.aaea.org/UserFiles/file/Report-MovingUSDAResearchersWillCostTaxpayers-AAEAReport2019june19final.docx.pdf*) finds that the proposed move would cost United States taxpayers $83 to $182 million dollars, instead of saving them $300 million as the USDA analysis claims. AAEA's reversal arises from correcting two errors in the original USDA analysis: (1) the USDA had overstated the cost of keeping the agencies in the National Capital Region, and (2) the USDA had failed to take account of the value of research and data lost through resignations and retirements. When translated into 2019 dollars, the combined values of these two corrections result in a cost to taxpayers of $37 to $128 million, as opposed to the predicted gain.

"The ERS and NIFA have assembled a world-class staff, who have a deep knowledge and understanding of agriculture and rural issues, to support the U.S. food and agriculture sector, as well as the data and information systems that support timely, objective research and analysis of major agricultural issues. However, the relocation is triggering an unprecedented level of staff resignations and retirements. We estimate that the cost to the nation of the loss of this expertise alone will amount to somewhere between $149 million and $215 million," said former AAEA President Scott Swinton.

"Few people realize how much the USDA Economic Research Service analysis has saved American taxpayers," stated current AAEA President David Zilberman. "This important research agency has saved taxpayers 30 percent annually simply by improving the economic design of our Conservation Research Program. If this relocation leads to a loss of expertise at ERS and NIFA that results in just a one percent reduction in the cost-effectiveness of farm bill expenditures over just 2 years, that would cost U.S. taxpayers $2.8 billion."

"To be frank, America's agricultural economy today faces serious challenges," continued Zilberman. "This is the worst possible time to dismantle the USDA's capability to analyze agricultural markets, crop insurance, and trade policy."

ATTACHMENT 2

POLITICO

Watch Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue dance around climate change questions

Editor's note: the video is retained in Committee file, and can be accessed at: *https://www.politico.com/story/2019/06/23/agriculture-department-climate-change-1376413*.

President Donald Trump and Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue have both expressed skepticism about climate change and appear to have suppressed research efforts on the topic.

Politico Investigation

Agriculture Department buries studies showing dangers of climate change

The Trump Administration has stopped promoting government-funded research into how higher temperatures can damage crops and pose health risks.

By Helena Bottemiller Evich
06/23/2019 05:04 p.m. EDT
Updated 06/23/2019 10:37 p.m. EDT

The Trump Administration has refused to publicize dozens of government-funded studies that carry warnings about the effects of climate change, defying a long-standing practice of touting such findings by the Agriculture Department's acclaimed in-house scientists.

The studies range from a groundbreaking discovery that rice loses vitamins in a carbon-rich environment—a potentially serious health concern for the 600 million people world-wide whose diet consists mostly of rice—to a finding that climate change could exacerbate allergy seasons to a warning to farmers about the reduction in quality of grasses important for raising cattle.

All of these studies were peer-reviewed by scientists and cleared through the nonpartisan Agricultural Research Service, one of the world's leading sources of scientific information for farmers and consumers.

None of the studies were focused on the causes of global warming—an often politically charged issue. Rather, the research examined the wide-ranging effects of rising carbon dioxide, increasing temperatures and volatile weather.

Rice is tossed in a pot by a woman in Ganta, Liberia.

Villagers work at Longji Rice Terrace at Longsheng Various Nationalities Autonomous County on June 2, 2018, in Guilin, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region of China. |AP and Getty Images.

The Administration, researchers said, appears to be trying to limit the circulation of evidence of climate change and avoid press coverage that may raise questions about the Administration's stance on the issue.

"The intent is to try to suppress a message—in this case, the increasing danger of human-caused climate change," said Michael Mann, a leading climate scientist at Pennsylvania State University. "Who loses out? The people, who are already suffering the impacts of sea level rise and unprecedented super storms, droughts, wildfires and heat waves."

Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue, who has expressed skepticism about climate science in the past and *allegedly retaliated* (*https://www.politico.com/story/2019/05/07/agriculture-economists-leave-trump-1307146*) against in-house economists whose findings contradicted Administration policies, declined to comment. A spokesperson for USDA said there have been no directives within the department that discouraged the dissemination of climate-related science.

"Research continues on these subjects and we promote the research once researchers are ready to announce the findings, after going through the appropriate reviews and clearances," the spokesperson said in an email.

"USDA has several thousand scientists and over 100,000 employees who work on myriad topics and issues; not every single finding or piece of work solicits a government press release," the spokesperson added.

However, a *POLITICO* investigation revealed a persistent pattern in which the Trump Administration refused to draw attention to findings that show the potential dangers and consequences of climate change, covering dozens of separate studies. The Administration's moves flout decades of department practice of promoting its research in the spirit of educating farmers and consumers around the world, according to an analysis of USDA communications under previous Administrations.

The lack of promotion means research from scores of government scientists receives less public attention. Climate-related studies are still being published without fanfare in scientific journals, but they can be very difficult to find. The USDA doesn't post all its studies in one place.

Since Trump took office in January 2017, the Agricultural Research Service has issued releases for just two climate-related studies, both of which had findings that were favorable to the politically powerful meat industry. One found that beef production makes a relatively small contribution to greenhouse gas emissions and another that removing animal products from the diet for environmental reasons would likely cause widespread nutritional problems. The agency issued a third press release about soy processing that briefly mentioned greenhouse gas emissions, noting that reducing fossil fuel use or emissions was "a personal consideration" for farmers.

By contrast, *POLITICO* found that in the case of the groundbreaking rice study USDA officials not only withheld their own prepared release, but actively sought to prevent dissemination of the findings by the agency's research partners.

Highlights from a USDA Study

EFFECTS ON RICE

Higher atmospheric CO_2 concentrations increase the growth of rice grains, yet decrease their nutritional value, lowering concentrations of protein, minerals and B vitamins.

POTENTIAL CONSEQUENCES

These findings raise potential concerns about public health because rice is an important staple crop for billions of people. An estimated 600 million people, many of whom live in Southeast Asian countries such as Bangladesh, Cambodia and Myanmar, get more than half of their daily calories and/or protein from rice.

Source: *Science Advances,* USDA ARS.
By Patterson Clark, *POLITICO* Pro DataPoint.

Researchers at the University of Washington had collaborated with scientists at USDA, as well as others in Japan, China and Australia, for more than 2 years to study how rising carbon dioxide in the atmosphere could affect rice—humanity's most important crop. They found that it not only loses protein and minerals, but is also likely to lose key vitamins as plants adapt to a changing environment.

The study had undergone intensive review, addressing questions from academic peers and within USDA itself. But after having prepared an announcement of the findings, the department abruptly decided not to publicize the study and urged the University of Washington to hold back its own release on the findings, which two of their researchers had co-authored.

In an email to staffers dated May 7, 2018, an incredulous Jeff Hodson, a UW communications director, advised his colleagues that the USDA communications office

was "adamant that there was not enough data to be able to say what the paper is saying, and that others may question the science."

"It was so unusual to have an agency basically say: 'Don't do a press release,'" Hodson recalled in an interview. "We stand for spreading the word about the science we do, especially when it has a potential impact on millions and millions of people."

Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue: Farmers are a 'casualty' in China trade war

Editor's note: the video is retained in Committee file, and can be accessed at: *https://www.politico.com/story/2019/06/23/agriculture-department-climate-change-1376413*.

Researchers say the failure to publicize their work damages the credibility of the Agriculture Department and represents an unwarranted political intrusion into science.

"Why the hell is the U.S., which is ostensibly the leader in science research, ignoring this?" said one USDA scientist, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to avoid the possibility of retaliation. "It's not like we're working on something that's esoteric . . . we're working on something that has dire consequences for the entire planet."

"You can only postpone reality for so long," the researcher added.

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With a budget of just over $1 billion, the USDA's Agricultural Research Service—known as ARS—is often referred to as "one of the best kept secrets" in the sprawling department because of its outsize impact on society. The agency has pioneered a variety of major breakthroughs, from figuring out how to mass produce penicillin so it could be widely used during World War II to coming up with creative ways to keep sliced apples from browning, and has for decades been at the forefront of understanding how a changing climate will affect agriculture.

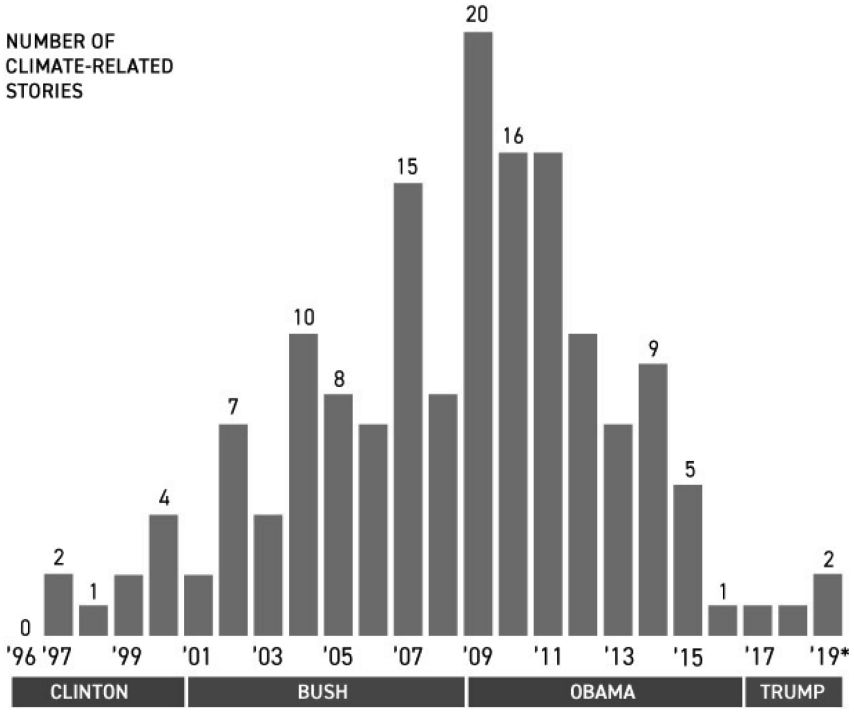
The agency has stringent guidelines to prevent political meddling in research projects themselves. The Trump Administration, researchers say, is not directly censoring scientific findings or black-balling research on climate change. Instead, they say, officials are essentially choosing to ignore or downplay findings that don't line up with the Administration's agenda.

Some scientists see the fact that the Administration has targeted another research arm of USDA, the Economic Research Service, as a warning shot. Perdue is moving ERS out of Washington, which some economists see as retribution for issuing reports that countered the Administration's agenda, as *POLITICO* recently *reported* (*https://www.politico.com/story/2019/05/07/agriculture-economists-leave-trump-1307146*).

"There's a sense that you should watch what you say," said Ricardo Salvador, director of the food and environment program at the Union of Concerned Scientists. "It's going to result in some pretty big gaps in practical knowledge. . . . it will take years to undo the damage."

A Pattern of Ignoring Climate Science

Agricultural Research Service news stories that mention studies related to climate change, global warming, atmospheric carbon dioxide, carbon sequestration or storage, greenhouse gases or global desertification have grown scarce under the Trump Administration. Not included in the tally below: News about climate scientists winning awards or articles with only links to climate-related stories.



*2019 data as of June 7.
Sources: *Science Advances,* USDA ARS.
By Patterson Clark, *POLITICO* Pro DataPoint.

Among the ARS studies that did not receive publicity from the Agriculture Department are:

- A 2017 finding that climate change was likely to increase agricultural pollution and nutrient runoff in the Lower Mississippi River Delta, but that certain conservation practices, including not tilling soil and planting cover crops, would help farmers more than compensate and bring down pollutant loads regardless of the impacts of climate change.
- A January 2018 finding that the Southern Plains—the agriculture-rich region that stretches from Kansas to Texas—is increasingly vulnerable to the effects of climate change, from the crops that rely on the waning Ogallala aquifer to the cattle that graze the grasslands.
- An April 2018 finding that elevated CO_2 levels lead to "substantial and persistent" declines in the quality of certain prairie grasses that are important for raising cattle. The protein content in the grass drops as photosynthesis kicks into high gear due to more carbon dioxide in the atmosphere—a trend that could pose health problems for the animals and cost ranchers money.
- A July 2018 finding that coffee, which is already being affected by climate change, can potentially help scientists figure out how to evaluate and respond to the complex interactions between plants, pests and a changing environment. Rising CO_2 in the atmosphere is projected to alter pest biology, such as by making weeds proliferate or temperatures more hospitable to damaging insects.

- An October 2018 finding, in conjunction with the USDA Forest Service, that climate change would likely lead to more runoff in the Chesapeake Bay watershed during certain seasons.
- A March 2019 finding that increased temperature swings might already be boosting pollen to the point that it's contributing to longer and more intense allergy seasons across the northern hemisphere. "This study, done across multiple continents, highlights an important link between ongoing global warming and public health—one that could be exacerbated as temperatures continue to increase," the researchers wrote.

Dried up rice stalks are burned on a field in Antipas on April 6, 2016, in Cotabato, Mindanao, Philippines.

Farmers dump out drying and rotten grapes at a grapery in Yuping Township of Shapingba [District] on Aug. 8, 2006, in Chongqing Municipality, China.

Rain clouds pass over an unplanted farm field on May 29 near Emden, Illinois.

Rain water storages for sale on April 28, 2017, in Thua Duc Village, Binh Dai District, Ben Tre Province, Vietnam. |Getty Images.

Those were among at least 45 ARS studies related to climate change since the beginning of the Trump Administration that did not receive any promotion, according to *POLITICO*'s review. The total number of studies that have published on climate-related issues is likely to be larger, because ARS studies appear across a broad range of narrowly focused journals and can be difficult to locate.

Five days after *POLITICO* presented its findings to the department and asked for a response, ARS issued a press release on wheat genetics that used the term "climate change." It marked the third time the agency had used the term in a press release touting scientific findings in 2½ years.

While spokespeople say Perdue, the former Georgia governor who has been Agriculture Secretary since April 2017, has not interfered with ARS or the dissemination of its studies, the Secretary has recently suggested that he's at times been frustrated with USDA research.

"We know that research, some has been found in the past to not have been adequately peer-reviewed in a way that created wrong information, and we're very serious when we say we're fact-based, data-driven decision makers," he said in April, responding to a question from *POLITICO*. "That relies on sound, replicable science rather than opinion. What I see unfortunately happening many times is that we tried to make policy decisions based on political science rather than on sound science."

President Donald Trump, for his part, has been clear about his views on climate science and agricultural research generally: He doesn't think much of either.

In each of his budgets, Trump has proposed deep cuts to agricultural research, requests that ignore a broad, bipartisan coalition urging more funding for such science as China and other competitors accelerate their spending. Congress has so far kept funding mostly flat.

The President has also repeatedly questioned the scientific consensus on climate change. After the government released its latest national climate assessment in November, a sweeping document based on science, Trump bluntly told reporters: "I don't believe it."

Officials at USDA apparently took the hint and the department did not promote the report, despite the fact that it was drafted in part by its own scientists and included serious warnings about how a changing climate poses a threat to farmers and ranchers across the country.

* * * * *

The USDA's failure to publicize climate-related research does more than just quell media coverage: It can also prompt universities, fearful of antagonizing a potential source of funding, to reconsider their own plans to publicize studies.

The saga of the rice study last spring shows how a snub from USDA can create spillover effects throughout the academic world.

Emails obtained by *POLITICO* from one of the study's co-authors show that ARS communications staff actually wrote a release on the study, but then decided not to send it out. The Agriculture Department and UW in Seattle had initially planned to coordinate their releases, which would both be included in a press packet prepared by the journal *Science Advances,* which published the *study* (*https://advances.sciencemag.org/content/4/5/eaaq1012*) in May.

The journal had anticipated there would be significant media interest in the paper. Several earlier studies had already shown that rice loses protein, zinc and iron under the elevated CO_2 levels that scientists predict for later this century, raising potentially serious concerns for hundreds of millions of people who are highly dependent on rice and already at risk of food insecurity. This latest study by ARS and its academic partners around the world had confirmed those previous findings and—for the first time—found that vitamins can also drop out of rice in these conditions.

Several days before the paper was slated to be published, Hodson, the UW communications official, sent ARS communications staff a draft of the press release the university was planning to send out. ARS officials returned the favor, sending UW their own draft press release. The headline on USDA's draft was clear: "Rising Carbon Dioxide Levels Can Reduce Vitamin Content in Rice," though the body of the release did not mention the word "climate."

All seemed to be on track for the rollout. A few days later, however, Hodson got a phone call from an ARS communications staffer. She told him that the agency had decided not to issue a press release after all and suggested UW reconsider its plans, noting that senior leaders at ARS now had serious concerns about the paper, according to the emails.

The staffer explained that officials were "adamant that there was not enough data to be able to say what the paper is saying, and that others may question the science," Hodson wrote in his email to his colleagues shortly after the call.

Having the Agriculture Department question the data just days before its publication struck many of the co-authors as inappropriate. The paper had already gone through a technical and policy review within ARS, both of which are standard procedure, and it had gone through a stringent peer-review process.

Kristie Ebi, one of the co-authors from UW, replied to Hodson: "Interesting—USDA is really trying to keep the press release from coming out."

Nonetheless, senior leaders at UW took USDA's concerns about the paper seriously, Hodson said. (It also wasn't lost on anyone, he said, that other parts of the university receive substantial grant funding from the Agriculture Department.) The university conducted an internal review and determined that the science was sound. It went ahead with its press release.

The USDA's attempt to quash the release had ripple effects as far as Nebraska. After catching wind of USDA's call to the University of Washington, Bryan College of Health Sciences, in Lincoln, Neb., delayed and ultimately shortened its own release to avoid potentially offending the Agriculture Department.

"I'm disappointed," said Irakli Loladze, a mathematical biologist at Bryan who co-authored the rice paper. "I do not even work at the USDA, but a potential call from the government agency was enough of a threat for my school to skip participating in the press-package arranged by the journal. Instead, our college issued a local and abbreviated release."

A spokesperson for Bryan College said that the institution supports Loladze's work and noted that the college ultimately issued its own press release and covered the study in its own publications.

"There was no omission or intentional delay based on what others were saying or doing," the spokesperson said.

Despite the efforts of the Agriculture Department, the rice paper attracted substantial international press coverage, largely because many of the outside institutions that collaborated on the study, including the University of Tokyo, promoted it.

A farmer is working on a rice field with a rotary cultivator in the rural surroundings of the suburb New Town in Kolkata, West Bengal, India. | Frank Bienewald/LightRocket via Getty Images.

Kazuhiko Kobayashi, an agricultural scientist at the University of Tokyo and co-author on the paper, said he couldn't understand why the U.S. government wouldn't publicize such findings.

"It's not necessarily bad for USDA," he said in an interview. "Actually, it's kind of neutral."

"In Japan we have an expression: *sontaku,*" he said, offering his own speculation about the political dynamic in the United States. "It means that you don't want to stimulate your boss . you feel you cannot predict your boss's reaction."

A USDA spokesperson said the decision to spike the press release on the rice study was driven by a scientific disagreement, not by the fact that it was climate-related.

"The concern was about nutritional claims, not anything relating to climate change or [CO_2] levels," the spokesperson said in an email. "The nutrition program leaders at ARS disagreed with the implication in the paper that 600 million people are at risk of vitamin deficiency. They felt that the data do not support this."

The spokesperson said no political appointees were involved in the decision.

Authors of the rice study strongly disagreed with the concerns USDA raised about their paper. In an email leading up to publication, Loladze, the Bryan College researcher, accused the department of essentially "cherry picking" data to raise issues that weren't scientifically valid, according to the emails.

* * * * *

When the Agriculture Department chooses to promote a study, the impact can be significant, particularly for the agriculture-focused news outlets that are widely read by farmers and ranchers.

Earlier this year, when the agency decided to issue its release about the study finding that producing beef—often criticized for having an outsize carbon and water footprint—actually makes up a very small fraction of greenhouse gas emissions, the

agricultural trade press cranked out several stories, much to the delight of the beef industry. The study had also been supported by the National Cattlemen's Beef Association.

The USDA's efforts to hide climate work aren't limited to ARS. A review of department press releases, blog posts and social media shows a clear pattern of avoiding the topic. These platforms largely eschew the term "climate change" and also steer clear of climate-related terms. Even the word "climate" itself appears to have now fallen out of favor, along with phrases like carbon, greenhouse gas emissions, adaptation and sequestration.

In April, for example, USDA sent out a press release noting that USDA officials had signed on to a communiqué on the sidelines of a G20 agricultural scientists' meeting that reaffirmed their commitment to "science-based decision making." The release made no mention of the fact that most of the principles USDA had agreed to were actually related to "climate-smart" agriculture.

President Donald Trump, left, greets Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue on stage during the 100th American Farm Bureau Federation Convention in New Orleans, Louisiana, in January. |Kathleen Flynn/Bloomberg via Getty Images.

Scott Hutchins, USDA's Deputy [Under Secretary] for research, education and economics, told *POLITICO* at the time that he emphasized science-based decision-making in the release—not climate—because that was the strength the participants brought to these international dialogues. He added that there was "no intent whatsoever" to avoid including the words "climate smart" in the release.

A spokesperson for USDA said that department leadership "has not discouraged ARS or any USDA agency from using terms such as climate change, climate, or carbon sequestration, or from highlighting work on these topics."

But David Festa, Senior Vice President of Ecosystems at the Environmental Defense Fund, which works with farmers and ranchers on climate mitigation, said tensions within the USDA over climate issues are preventing a more robust discussion of the effects of climate change on American agriculture.

"USDA really could and should be leading . . . and they're not," Festa said.

Aaron Lehman, an Iowa farmer whose operation is roughly half conventional, half organic grain, said farmers are simply not getting much information from USDA related to how to adapt to or mitigate climate change.

"My farmers tell me this is frustrating," said Lehman, who serves as Iowa Farmers Union President.

The gap in the conversation is particularly pronounced right now, he said, as an unprecedented percentage of growers across the Midwest have had difficulty planting their crops because fields are either too wet or flooded—an extreme weather scenario that's been disastrous for agriculture this year.

"Farmers have a sense that the volatility is getting worse," he said.

"You get the sense that it's very sensitive," Lehman said of the current dynamic around climate science at USDA. "But if you can't have an open conversation about it, if you feel like you're being shunned, how are we going to make progress?"

* * * * *

Even during the George W. Bush Administration, when climate change was first deemed a "sensitive" topic within ARS—a designation that means science and other documents related to it require an extra layer of managerial clearance—the department still routinely highlighted climate-related research for the public.

In the first 3 years of Bush's second term, for example, USDA promoted research on how farmers can change their tilling practices to reduce carbon being released into the atmosphere, a look at how various farm practices help capture carbon into soil, and a forecast on how rising CO_2 levels would likely affect key crops. The communications office highlighted work showing that using switchgrass as a biofuel in lieu of ethanol could store more carbon in soil, which would not only mitigate greenhouse gas emissions but also boost soil health. There was also a release on a study simulating how climate change would pose challenges to groundwater.

Under Bush, the department publicly launched a 5 year project on "Climate Friendly Farming" and touted a sweeping initiative aimed at better understanding and reducing agriculture's greenhouse emissions.

"Even a small increase in the amount of carbon stored per acre of farmland would have a large effect on offsetting U.S. greenhouse gas emissions," an ARS release noted in 2005.

A worker rests beside packages of rice at a farm product market on April 8, 2008 in Wuhan of Hubei Province, China. | China Photos/Getty Images.

Jim Connaughton, who served as Chairman of the White House Council on Environmental Quality and director of the White House Office of Environmental Policy during the Bush Administration, said he was encouraged that USDA and other agencies have so far been able to continue conducting climate science even as the issue has become more politically sensitive within the current Administration. However, he noted it was "really unusual" for research agencies to systematically hold back scientific communication.

During the Bush era, he said, "The agencies were unfettered in their own decisions about publicizing their own science."

"The tone from the top matters," he added. "The political appointees are taking signals about their own communication products."

During the Obama years, USDA became increasingly outspoken about climate change and the need to involve agriculture, both in terms of mitigation and adaptation.

The department came up with sweeping action plans on climate change and climate science and highlighted its work on a number of different platforms, including press releases, blog posts and social media blasts. In 2014, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack also launched Climate Hubs in ten regions across the country aimed at helping farmers and ranchers cope with an increasingly unpredictable climate.

"We were trying to take science and make it real and actionable for farmers," said Robert Bonnie, who served as [Under Secretary] for natural resources and the environment at USDA during the Obama Administration. "If you're taking a certain block of research and not communicating it, it defeats the purpose of why USDA does the research in the first place."

ATTACHMENT 3

MSNBC

RACHEL MADDOW (*https://www.msnbc.com/rachel-maddow-show*)

Scientists push back against apparent purge at USDA under Trump
June 20, 2019

Editor's note: the video is retained in Committee file, and can be accessed at: *http://www.msnbc.com/rachel-maddow/watch/scientists-push-back-against-apparent-purge-at-usda-under-trump-62384197574*.

Kevin Hunt, a geographer at the USDA's Economic Research Service, talks with Rachel Maddow about the Trump Administration's effort to push scientists out of the USDA, and the newly formed employee union in his division of the department of which he is the acting-Vice President.

Response from William F. Tracy, Ph.D., Professor, Department of Agronomy, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Questions Submitted by Hon. Jefferson Van Drew, a Representative in Congress from New Jersey

Question 1. As was stated before that China is overtaking the U.S. in many of the biotech and research aspects. Would it not seem that the money and resources needed to relocate could be better used in continued research?

Answer. It has been demonstrated that investment in agricultural research returns economic benefits many-fold to the nation that makes the investment. From the founding of the land-grant universities and the Hatch Agricultural Research Act in the 1880s to the National Plant Genome Initiative, the United States has been the world leader in agricultural research. In turn we have been the leaders in agricultural productivity and efficiency. This is no longer the case. Statistics show that China is pouring massive amounts of money into ag research. I have seen entire, modern, fully equipped, university research campus spring up where nothing existed

but rice paddies 3 years before. I have said to my colleagues that we are in the path of a steamroller and our leaders don't know it is coming. All this is to emphatically answer yes to your question, our resources must be allocated to increased research. In addition to the cost of the move, the proposed move would have very negative effects on research due to lost time and expertise.

Question 2. Dr. Bill Tracy, as you mentioned there may be perceived biases that would exist if we relocate these agencies outside of the Washington, D.C. area. We have a couple land-grant universities in New Jersey, including a major research university—Rutgers University—as do many states across the country. There is concern with how stakeholders could be affected with relocation. Currently all stakeholders have relatively equal access to NIFA and ERS. If we are to relocate these agencies to specific areas, how do you think that would impact stakeholders who would feel disadvantaged relative to those stakeholders who would "benefit" from the relocation?

Answer. The proposed move will be negative for all stakeholders, perhaps especially the ones that are closest to where NIFA and ERS relocate. The perception of impartiality and lack of favoritism is critical to the success of all granting agencies. NIFA has been scrupulous in developing policies and procedures that not only avoid favoritism and conflict of interest but avoid any appearance of such. A move out of the National Capital Area will inevitably create perceptions of bias. Just the suggestion of moving them already has. The fact that universities entered into competition for agencies that they should be in ***no*** way connected or associated with indicates the problem. In fact, NIFA and ERS employees should have ***no*** interaction with local university personnel. So why are we moving the agencies to be closer to them? Land grant and other academic researchers are the direct clientele of NIFA, not farmers or ranchers. Any hint of favoritism will be extremely damaging to these agencies.

Questions Submitted by Hon. Kim Schrier, a Representative in Congress from Washington

Question 1. As someone with a background in medicine and science I recognize the importance of a robust research community. I look forward to delving into the science of agriculture with my colleagues. To be clear, I don't want to see research compromised by moving NIFA and ERS out of D.C. It may be expensive to live in D.C., but it is more expensive to lose the combined brainpower and experience of scientists who will leave the USDA rather than relocate.

As the letter I submitted into the record and cosigned by Dean André-Denis Wright of Washington State University states, research advances have occurred because of the close collaboration of numerous research funding agencies. One such example is the Plant Genome Initiative. NIFA partnered with NSF, NIH and the Department of Energy to sequence the genomes of economically important plants and led to improved bean, potato, tomato, wheat and barley while at the same time training thousands of undergraduate and graduate students who will be the next generation plant scientists and breeders.

In my opinion, such integrative science is essential for meeting future challenges. My question to Dr. Payne and Dr. Tracy is what kind of impact do you expect the proposed relocation of NIFA and ERS will have on collaborative, multi-agency research from USDA?

Answer. Representative Schrier,

Thank you for the opportunity to clarify and expand my testimony on this very important subject.

You mention the shining example of multi-agency collaboration, the Plant Genome Initiative, involving USDA–NIFA, NIH, NSF, and DOE. The research results and the training of thousands of students, who are now becoming top notch researchers, completely changed the way we do plant science research. As the science becomes more complex and the stakes higher, we will need to form many more of these highly effective multi-agency collaborations. Having NIFA and ERS 1000 miles and a time zone away will not only handicap NIFA an ERS in being effective partners with the other agencies, it will greatly weaken their role and influence, out of sight out of mind. I have been in enough video conferences to know that the off-site party does not have the same access and influence as those, literally, around the table.

Also moving the NIFA and ERS agencies will mean that Congress's constituents will be deprived of their access to NIFA and ERS scientists and managers. Often the farmers, consumers, scientists, *etc.* who visit you and your colleagues in Washington[,] D.C., will take the opportunity to discuss needs and programs with scientists and managers at the various agencies. They will not be able to visit NIFA and ERS if these agencies are 1,000 miles away.

Question 2. Do you anticipate the USDA experiencing retention issues of current scientific experts if the NIFA/ERS facilities are moved out of the D.C. region?

Answer. We are already seeing an exodus of talented scientific experts, simply under the threat of the move. I believe this will increase with the move. We will lose not only experienced scientists but deep institutional knowledge. These losses will severely handicap these agencies from carrying out the important work authorized by Congress and desired by the American people. It will be many years, if ever, before they will be able to operate at full strength.

Question 3. Given the potential location of the proposed NIFA/ERS faculties, are you concerned that having this located near one institution, and not in a "neutral" area will inadvertently facilitate interest in supporting that institution's efforts? Have you been given adequate assurances by USDA that research around the country can be conducted in a way to avoid favoritism and maintain the best level of research?

Answer. The proposed more will be negative for all stakeholders, perhaps especially the ones that are closest to where NIFA and ERS relocate. The perception of impartiality and lack of favoritism is critical to the success of all granting agencies. NIFA has been scrupulous in developing policies and procedures that not only avoid favoritism and conflict of interest but avoid any appearance of such. A move out of the National Capital Area will inevitably create perceptions of bias. Just the suggestion of moving them already has. The fact that universities entered into competition for agencies that they should be in ***no*** way connected or associated indicates the problem. In fact, NIFA and ERS employees should have ***no*** interaction with local university personnel. So why are we moving the agencies to be closer to them? Land-grant and other academic researchers are the direct clientele of NIFA, not farmers or ranchers. Any hint of favoritism will be extremely damaging to these agencies.

Response from Elizabeth J. Brownlee, Owner and Operator, Nightfall Farm; President, Hoosier Young Farmers Coalition; Member, National Young Farmers Coalition

Question Submitted by Hon. Jefferson Van Drew, a Representative in Congress from New Jersey

Question. As was stated before that China is overtaking the U.S. in many of the biotech and research aspects, would it not seem that the money and resources needed to relocate could be better used in continued research?

Answer. Thank you for your question, Representative Van Drew. I agree entirely. I would like to explain why.

The relocation will have a clear, immediate cost in relocating two agencies There will also be a cost in delayed research. Many critical research projects meant to inform policy makers will either slow down or come to a halt during the moving process. Additionally, institutional knowledge will be lost as staff leave the agency and choose not to relocate. Estimates by the ERS union show that four out of five staff will choose not to relocate with the agency, causing a significant decline in the pace and quality of agricultural research.

I can offer an example of how this might look for farmers and our allies. Because of the government shutdown, NIFA had a delay in rolling out one of their critical grant programs, the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BFRDP). The program was announced on a delayed schedule, which meant that farmer groups like ours had to write grant applications during the busy spring planting season (instead of during the slower winter and early spring). We worked closely with a land-grant university and two farmer organizations on applications, but it was almost impossible to fit this work in between preparing fields and pasture fences, starting up farmers market seasons, and the regular push of spring work. If these two agencies are forced to relocate, logic holds that there will have to be delays in rolling out grant programs, conducting research, and informing policy makers. This is a real, on the ground hardship for farmers like me.

Question Submitted by Hon. James R. Baird, a Representative in Congress from Indiana

Question. Ms. Brownlee, I appreciated your testimony and the chance to learn more about the challenges and opportunities you're facing as a young farmer. I appreciate your leadership in the Hoosier Young Farmers Coalition and share your passion for the next generation of agriculture.

During the hearing, you discussed many of the Federal programs that have benefited you and other new and beginning farmers. Can you speak to any of the unmet needs of new farmers that Congress should be aware of and look to address, going forward?

Answer. Thank you Representative Baird, for your question and for striving to serve beginning farmers in Indiana.

One of the unmet needs that Congress should consider is providing outreach and assistance to young farmers in accessing key farm bill programs. Most young farmers are not participating in USDA programs, because they are not aware of the options or how to access them. One way to overcome this is through quick and thorough implementation of the 2018 Farm Bill. The bill included several excellent programs to help new farmers, including the Local Agriculture Market Program (LAMP) and Farming Opportunities Training and Outreach (FOTO) program. These programs will need adequate staff and resources to be rolled out in full force and reach the new producers who need them. These two programs address unmet needs by providing funding for land-grant universities and others to provide training for new and socially disadvantaged farmers; grants for farmers who are building up their regional food systems; incentives for farmers to improve their energy efficiency; and other commercial-scale solutions that mean farmers can produce quality food and keep more of every food dollar.

I'd like to offer up an example of why Congress must be proactive about ensuring the implementation of the 2018 Farm Bill:

The bill calls for a new and critical position on the Federal level, to have a National Beginning Farmer and Rancher Coordinator, as well as a Beginning Farmer and Rancher Coordinator in each state. This person will be an existing USDA employee—and is critical to ensuring that new farmers know about and can access Federal programs. This role can assist local USDA offices that lack the capacity or knowledge to meet the needs of beginning farmers. Many USDA field staff provide exceptional customer service to beginning farmers—but many others have limited experience working with diverse specialty crop, fruit, or pasture-based systems, local and regional marketing, or Federal programs designed specifically for beginning farmers. It's encouraging that the farm bill directed USDA to identify a beginning farmer and rancher coordinator in each state: this person can publicize programs to beginning farmers, help train coworkers, and answer questions when a USDA county employee doesn't know how to assist a beginning farmer or rancher.

Although the 2018 Farm Bill was passed over 6 months ago, USDA has only recently designated someone to serve as the National Beginning Farmer and Rancher Coordinator, and has yet to identify the State Coordinators. Many farm bill programs have already come and gone for 2018–2019: that means that there was a chance for new farmers to utilize Federal funding to improve their farms, but the farmers likely didn't know about the opportunities and local USDA staff didn't know how to help the farmers. Many of these programs' annual enrollment period has already closed to receive new applications—so beginning farmers have gone another year without the support of a specialized USDA staffer or targeted outreach.

Congress needs to ensure that USDA has the resources, staff capacity, institutional knowledge, and expertise needed to implement the 2018 Farm Bill as quickly and effectively as possible. Then, we can learn from remaining gaps in meeting new farmers' needs, and make the next farm bill even stronger.