

March 13, 2026

The Honorable Andy Harris
Chair
Subcommittee on Agriculture
House Committee on Appropriations
1536 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Hoeven
Chair
Subcommittee on Agriculture
Senate Committee on Appropriations
338 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Sanford Bishop
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Agriculture
House Committee on Appropriations
2407 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Agriculture
Senate Committee on Appropriations
506 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

RE: FY 2027 request for USDA Agriculture and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS)

Dear Chairman Harris, Chairman Hoeven, Ranking Member Bishop, and Ranking Member Shaheen:

The undersigned research institutions, scientific societies, and agricultural stakeholders respectfully request **\$400 million for animal health and \$390 million for plant health programs at U.S. Department of Agriculture's Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS)**. We also support funding for a fully staffed and operational **National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility (NBAF)**, which is jointly used by APHIS and Agricultural Research Service (ARS) scientists, **\$45 million for the National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN)**, and flat, stable funding for **Biotechnology Regulatory Services (BRS)** and **Veterinary Services (VS)**.

APHIS protects the health, welfare, and value of American agriculture and natural resources through its many program areas. Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) is APHIS's largest program area, with major facilities in Maryland and North Carolina and local field offices at ports and borders and throughout the country. This program, funded through Animal and Plant Health lines, protects agriculture and natural resources from invasive weeds, insects, and pathogens, provides plant health inspection certifications, manages quarantines, determines which plants and plant product imports pose high risks, and facilitates safe trade. In short, PPQ scientists and technicians are our Farmland Security.

Funding PPQ's work is one of the best ways to protect American agriculture.

The economic impacts of managing invasive insect pests in North America surpass \$27.3 billion in goods and services and \$2.06 billion in human health, cautious estimates that continue to increase with global trade. It is far less expensive to prevent these pests from entering the country in the first place. In 2024, PPQ protected American agriculture from harmful plant pests and foreign animal diseases by intercepting 289,855 prohibited agricultural items and 3,008 quarantine-significant pests during baggage inspections. This past August, APHIS intercepted a ship from Asia off the U.S. coast which harbored a swarm of bees, two kinds of mites, and two viruses, none of which are currently present in the United States. The work conducted by APHIS inspectors and scientists is critical to safeguard domestic agriculture and biosecurity.

The National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility is a state-of-the-art laboratory facility built by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Science and Technology Directorate for USDA to replace the aging and out-of-date biocontainment and research facility on Plum Island, New York. It is intended to house both APHIS and Agricultural Research Service (ARS) staff to conduct foreign animal disease research, training, and diagnostics, but although construction was completed in December 2022, NBAF is not yet fully operational or fully staffed. Considering the serious threats on our borders, from New World Screwworm to Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza, bringing this facility online should be a priority.

The National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN) is essential to the health of food animal agriculture, food security, bioterrorism surveillance, and the U.S. economy, and it serves as our nation's most vital early warning system for emerging and foreign animal diseases. During the past 25 years, the NAHLN, composed of federal, university and state veterinary diagnostic laboratories, has established a surveillance network and emergency response system that provides critical resources for testing, surveillance, information management, quality assurance with auditing and development and validation of new tests. NAHLN has been authorized for funding at \$30 million since 2012. Its current appropriation is \$24.9 million total from APHIS (\$15.7 million), NIFA (\$4.2 million), and Farm Bill (\$5 million), but more is needed to protect against the increasing numbers and virulence of threats to food animals, and, in the case of bird flu and other zoonotic diseases, to humans as well. We request \$45 million in appropriations for the NALHN.

Our organizations care deeply about science-based regulations for biotechnology, proposed and implemented by the Biotechnology Regulatory Service (BRS) within APHIS. We request flat, stable funding for BRS to continue its important task ensuring innovative biotech products have viable pathways from research concept to the commercial market.

We also request stable funding for Veterinary Services (VS), which plays a critical role in protecting the nation's animals, animal products, and veterinary biologics.

We appreciate the Subcommittee's historic support for APHIS programs, and as Congress moves forward to finalize its FY2027 appropriations, we hope you will consider these crucial increases for these highly impactful programs.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

American Association of Veterinary Laboratory Diagnosticians

American Association of Veterinary Medical Colleges

American Meat Science Association

American Phytopathological Society

American Seed Trade Association

American Society of Agronomy

American Society of Animal Science

American Society of Plant Biologists

American Veterinary Medical Association

Aquatic Plant Management Society

Council for Agricultural Science and Technology

Crop Science Society of America

Entomological Society of America

National Association of State Departments of Agriculture

North Central Weed Science Society

Northeastern Weed Science Society

Soil Science Society of America

Southern Society of Weed Science

Weed Science Society of America

Western Society of Weed Science