

Durbin, Colleagues Urge USDA, OMB To Boost Public Food And Agriculture Research Funding In Fiscal Year 2025

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WASHINGTON – U.S. Senate Majority Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL), a member of the Senate Agriculture Committee, today led 13 of his colleagues in sending a letter to the Secretary of Agriculture Thomas Vilsack and Director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Shalanda Young urging the agency leaders to increase the Department of Agriculture's (USDA) research budget by at least five percent, plus inflation, for Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25). In their letter, the Senators emphasized the importance of public funding for food and agriculture research as it ensures that the U.S. remains competitive in the global market.

The U.S. share of public agriculture research investments globally among high-income countries as a group has declined from 35 percent in 1960 to less than 25 percent by 2013. By comparison, in the past 30 years, China's investments in public agriculture research has risen eight-fold, with China now [the world's largest](#) public funder of agriculture research. According to a [2021 report](#) jointly commissioned by the American Farm Bureau Federation and the Farm Journal Foundation, U.S. public spending on food and agriculture [has been flat](#) for the past decade, threatening the competitiveness of U.S. food systems, a growing concern as the global population may reach 10 billion by 2050, and food production needs will increase by 60 to 70 percent.

“As the President’s Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 budget request is prepared, we request that an increase of at least five percent, plus inflation, above the FY 2024 funding levels proposed by the Senate, be provided across the board for all USDA research activities underway within the Agricultural Research Service, National Institute of Food and Agriculture, the Economic Research Service, and the National Agricultural Statistics Service,” the Senators wrote in the letter.

The letter continues on, noting that public research leads to rapid discoveries that widely benefit society.

“Between 2008 and 2013, however, public investments in food and agricultural research dropped by 20 percent in inflation-adjusted terms, while the contributions by large private-sector corporations have increased by 64 percent over the same period... The public sector can pursue research into subjects and specialties that the private sector cannot or will not,” the lawmakers wrote. “Open-access research helps to increase the pace of discoveries by some estimates ranging between a 20 to 60 percent rate of return.”

The Senators continued the letter by reiterating that this increased funding will prepare the food and agricultural sector for future challenges including global population growth, sustainability, changing weather patterns, and plant and animal diseases.

Joining Durbin in sending today’s letter were U.S. Senators Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), Cory Booker (D-NJ), Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Ben Cardin (D-MD), Tom Carper (D-DE), Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), Mazie Hirono (D-HI), Alex Padilla (D-CA), Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), Bernie Sanders (I-VT), Tina Smith (D-MN), Mark Warner (D-VA), and Ron Wyden (D-OR).

A copy of the letter is available [here](#).