Dear Chairmen Conaway and Roberts and Ranking Members Peterson and Stabenow:

We the undersigned organizations are writing to urge your support for critical investments in science to support the future of animal agriculture. Animal agriculture is a major economic driver for our nation. According to the USDA Economic Research Service, total cash receipts for animals and animal products was over $189 billion in 2015. This represents over fifty percent of all farm cash receipts.

Unfortunately, the economic contributions of the animal agriculture industry are under the constant threat of emerging animal pests and diseases that have the potential to devastate production capacity and competitiveness. In recent years, disease outbreaks have cost billions in production losses and response costs. For example, the last avian influenza outbreak cost taxpayers $1 billion in response, clean up, and indemnity costs and required the depopulation of nearly 50 million birds. That doesn’t include lost export markets, temporary shortages, or price increases for certain poultry and their products. Researchers estimate that an uncontrolled outbreak of foot and mouth disease in the United States could have as much as a $200 billion impact over 10 years. Without effective science-based tools to prevent and mitigate future outbreaks, animal agriculture will be vulnerable to major economic impacts.

Current funding by USDA to support animal science is not proportionate with the economic contributions of animal agriculture. In fact, investment in the animal sciences has been stagnant for years. This disturbing trend was highlighted by National Academy of Sciences in its 2015 report “Critical Role of Animal Science Research in Food Security and Sustainability”. The report recognizes the historic underfunding of animal sciences and calls for increased investments.

The current funding imbalance puts U.S. animal agriculture at a major disadvantage at a critical time when livestock and poultry producers are facing serious threats from pests and disease. To help meet these threats we respectfully request the investment of $25 million in annual mandatory funding be included in the 2018 Farm Bill to support Sec. 1433 Continuing Animal Health and Disease Programs.
Sec. 1433 was expanded during the last Farm Bill to authorize a competitive grants mechanism to address high priority research needs. Mandatory funding for Sec. 1433 would build on the efforts from the 2014 Farm Bill by funding the competitive grants program and enabling the support of critical research to provide science-based solutions to animal pest and disease threats.

We stand ready to answer any questions about our request and the critical needs for science-based solutions to protect animal agriculture. We look forward to working with you as work on the 2018 Farm Bill continues.

Sincerely,

American Association of Avian Pathologists
American Association of Bovine Practitioners
American Association of Mycobacterial Diseases (AAMD)
American Association of Small Ruminant Practitioners
American Association Of Veterinary Laboratory Diagnosticians
American Dairy Goat Association
American Dairy Science Association
American Feed Industry Association
American Goat Federation
American Horse Council
American Sheep Industry
American Society of Animal Science
American Veterinary Medical Association
Animal Agriculture Alliance
Animal Health Institute
Arizona Cattle Feeders’ Association
Arizona Cattlemen’s Association
Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges
Association of Veterinary Biologics Companies
Biotechnology Industry Organization
California Pork Producers Association
California Poultry Federation
California Wool Growers Association
Chicken and Egg Association of Minnesota
Colorado Cattlemen’s Association
Colorado Livestock Association
FASS
Fats and Proteins Research Foundation
Florida Cattlemen's Association
Georgia Cattlemen's Association
Georgia Poultry Federation
Indiana State Poultry Association
Iowa Turkey Federation
Kentucky Poultry Federation
Michigan Agri-Business Association
Michigan Cattlemen’s Association
Michigan Pork Producers Association
Minnesota Turkey Growers Association
Mycobacterial Diseases of Animals Multistate Initiative (MDA)
National Assembly of State Animal Health Officials
National Association for the Advancement of Animal Science
National Association of Federal Veterinarians
National Association of State Departments of Agriculture
National Aquaculture Association
National Cattlemen’s Beef Association
National Grain and Feed Association
National Milk Producers Federation
National Renderers Association
National Turkey Federation
North Carolina Poultry Federation
North Dakota Turkey Federation
Ohio Poultry Association
Oklahoma State University – Department of Animal Science
Poultry Science Association
South Carolina Poultry Federation
South Dakota Pork Producers Council
South Dakota Poultry Industry Association
Texas Poultry Federation
Texas Turkey Federation
The Poultry Federation – Arkansas, Missouri, Oklahoma
United Egg Producers
University of Florida, College of Veterinary Medicine
University of Florida, Department of Animal Sciences
U.S. Animal Health Association
U.S. Dairy Forage Research Center Research and Industry Committee
U.S. Poultry & Egg Association
Virginia Poultry Federation
Wisconsin Poultry and Egg Industry Association