

April 3, 2024

The Honorable Martin Heinrich
Chairman
Subcommittee on Agriculture
Senate Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Andy Harris
Chairman
Subcommittee on Agriculture
House Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Hoeven
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Agriculture
Senate Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Sanford Bishop
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Agriculture
House Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Heinrich, Ranking Member Hoeven, Chairman Harris, Ranking Member Bishop:

We, the undersigned 168 food and agriculture organizations, thank you for all your work to promote a vibrant and sustainable food and farm system. We particularly appreciate your recent support to ensure the USDA Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production received funding in the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2024 (P.L. 118-42). This funding is essential to sustain the growing momentum of the Office as it responds to demand from countless communities and growers nationwide.

As you work to develop the FY 2025 agriculture appropriations bill, we strongly support fully funding the Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production and related activities at \$25 million, and the urban agriculture data collection initiative at \$5 million. These funding requests should not be met by siphoning investments from other sources that support conservation services.

As one component of local and regional food systems, urban agriculture generally refers to the cultivation, processing, and distribution of agricultural products in urban and suburban settings. Urban agriculture is a longstanding practice that has begun to take many different forms, including outdoor and indoor vertical production, indoor warehouse farms, greenhouses, community gardens, rooftop farms, and even hydroponic and aquaponic facilities. Ultimately, agriculture in these settings produces an array of economic and social benefits beyond urban city centers.

The Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production (OUAIP) offers programs and services that support the development of urban, indoor, and other emerging agricultural methods in urban, suburban, and rural settings. They accomplish this by administering grants, cooperative agreements, a federal advisory committee, and collaborating on a number of programs across the Department of Agriculture.

Since OUAIP received its first appropriation in 2020, it has quickly responded to nationwide interest by investing over \$73 million in 182 grants and 120 cooperative agreements to increase the capacity of urban agriculture, innovative producers, and municipal composting initiatives in local communities across 43 states and Puerto Rico. Funding supports a wide range of activities, such as operating community gardens and nonprofit incubator farms, increasing food production and availability in limited access areas, providing job training and education, developing business plans, planning and implementing municipal composting plans, and updating local zoning. These activities foster community engagement, local economic development, and environmental resiliency among diverse populations. Growers engaged in these projects have connected with new market opportunities, such as mobile markets and food pantries, implemented season extension practices, and diversified their on-farm revenue. For many beginning farmers, urban agriculture is one pathway to start farming, gain experience, and expand operations into rural communities.

Our ability to fully quantify the prevalence of urban and innovative agricultural operations and their economic impact is only as good as the data that supports it. Unfortunately, this ability has been hindered by the stalled implementation of the Data Collection On Urban, Indoor, And Emerging Agricultural Production Initiative, which has yet to be funded since its authorization in the 2018 Farm Bill.

Demand for OUAIP programs has steadily increased since 2020 yet, only 22% of eligible proposals are funded. **Due to the overwhelming interest in the program, we recommend that full funding of \$25 million be included in the FY 2025 agriculture appropriations bill** to provide the Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production with the resources necessary to fund more than just a handful of projects in a few select states. **Furthermore, we recommend an additional \$5 million for the urban agriculture data collection initiative** to better understand the number of growers utilizing these practices and quantify the economic impact.

We appreciate the opportunity to speak to the importance of the Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production. Thank you for taking time to consider this request, and we look forward to partnering with you in the future to promote urban agriculture.

Sincerely,

National Organizations, Farms, and Businesses

Babylon Micro-Farms

Bowery

CEA Alliance

Certified Naturally Grown

Earthjustice

Extremely 2 Dope, LLC

Farm Aid

Food and Fiber Law

FoodCorps	Natural Resources Defense Council
Generative Food Group, Inc.	Organic Farming Research Foundation
HEAL (Health, Environment, Agriculture, Labor) Food Alliance	Rural Coalition
Hmong National Development, Inc.	Slow Food USA
International Fresh Produce Association	The Ajani Group Cooperative
Izaak Walton League of America	The National Center for Appropriate Technology
Julian Samora Research Institute - Michigan State University	Union of Concerned Scientists Food and Environment Program
Little Leaf Farms	Vertical Harvest Farms
National Center for Frontier Communities	Women, Food, and Agriculture Network
National Hmong American Farmers	Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition	Zero Food Waste Coalition
National Young Farmers Coalition	

Regional Organizations, Farms, and Businesses

4 Osprey	CCOF
AG Noire BIPOC Farming Association	Center for Rural Affairs
Agri-Cultura Cooperative Network	Chicago Food Policy Action Council
Agriculture and Land-Based Training Association	CISA: Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture
Americana Community Center	City of Detroit, Office of Urban Ag
Arcadia Center for Sustainable Food & Agriculture	Clagett Farm/Chesapeake Bay Foundation
Atlanta Farmers Coalition	Cleveland and Cuyahoga County Food Policy Coalition
BF50 Indigenous Health Initiative	Common Ground Producers and Growers, Inc./ Pearson's Family Farms
Blue Shed Urban Gardens, LLC	Community Alliance with Family Farmers
BoysGrow	Community Herd LLC
BrightFarms	Compost Collective KC
Brightmoor Connection	Contemporary Farmer, Inc.
C.A.S.A. del Llano (Communities Assuring a Sustainable Agriculture)	Crop Swap LA
California FarmLink	Cultivate Kansas City
Carolina Farm Stewardship Association	Dakota Rural Action
Catholic Rural Life	Deeply Rooted Produce

Delaney Community Farm
Dietrick Institute for Applied Insect Ecology
Do!a Fina Café
Ecological Farming Association
Ekar Farm
Equity Advocates
Fair Share Farm
Farm to Table- New Mexico
Florida Organic Growers
Friends Farm
Global One Urban Farming
Global Technology Education LLC
Granata Farms
GrassWorks New
Greater Englewood Chamber of Commerce
Greater KC Food Policy Coalition
Green Beverly
Grow Local Colorado
Growing Green Gardens Network
Illinois Stewardship Alliance
Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy
Interfaith Sustainable Food Collaborative
Island Grown Initiative
Ivanhoe Neighborhood Council
KC Healthy Kids
KC Young Farmers
Kendall Street Farm
La Semilla Food Center
Land For Good
Land Stewardship Project
Liberty Farm and Boricua Garden
Lilburn Farmers Market
Longfellow Farm
MAFO
Maine Farmland Trust
Marbleseed
Michael Fields Agricultural Institute
Michigan Food and Farming Systems
Michigan Organic Food and Farm Alliance
Mile High Farmers
Minnesota Farmers' Market Association
Missouri Coalition for the Environment
Mlp farms llc
Montana Organic Association
Nebraska Sustainable Agriculture Society
New Entry Sustainable Farming Project
New Mexico Food & Agriculture Policy Council
New Orleans Food Policy Action Council
Newhall Fields Community Farm
Nightshade Farm & Flowers
No More Empty Pots
North Lawndale Greening Committee
Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance
Northern Plains Sustainable Agriculture Society
Northwest Center for Alternatives to Pesticides
Nourish Colorado
Oakland Avenue Urban Farm
Offshootz
Ohio Ecological Food & Farm Association
Ophelia's Blue Vine Farm
Oregon Tilth
Organic Seed Alliance

Ottawa Conservation District
Pasa Sustainable Agriculture
Penobscot Tribal Farm
Petit Jardin
Pinnacle Prevention
Project Sweetie Pie
Prosperity Gardens
Pure Green Farms LLC
Renewing the Countryside
Revolution Community Inc
Rhode Island Food Policy Council
Root Mass Farm
Rural Advancement Foundation International – USA
Sanctuary Farms
Sankofa House of Colorado
Santa Fe Farmers Market Institute
Savanna Institute
SoilDeep, LLC.
Southeastern Massachusetts Agricultural Partnership
Southwest Organizing Project
Sprout NOLA
Switch Gears Farm
Syntax Land Design, LLC
The Giving Grove
The Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture
The Land Connection
The MARM Farm
(Milwaukee Area Renewal Movement)
The Well Incorporated
The Zoo City Farm and Food Network
Too Tall Farm & Nursery
Toohnii Binaneest'ą? Altaas'éeí Alliance (ToohBAA)
UpRoot Colorado
Urban Growers Collective, Inc.
Urbavore Urban Farm
Veggielution
Virginia Association for Biological Farming
Wild Farm Alliance
Wildside Urban Farm
Woodland City KC (Farm/Business)