

September 29, 2025

Dear agInnovation Directors,

I am honored to accept the appointment as new Chair of agInnovation. It is a true privilege to be a part of a system with such a dedicated and talented team of directors committed to advancing agricultural innovation and excellence.

I want to extend my sincere gratitude for your past labor of love and contributions to agInnovation. Your dedication has been instrumental in shaping agInnovation into the impactful research association it is today. I also wish to thank the previous Chair, Dr. Steven Lommel, for his leadership and vision, which laid a strong foundation for us to continue to build upon.

As I step into this new role, I am eager to work closely with each of you. Your support, insights, and suggestions are invaluable as we set our course forward. I am committed to fostering a collaborative environment where every voice is heard and valued, and together, we can achieve greater impact.

Attached are my agInnovation priorities and the Chair's Initiatives that were discussed at our recent meeting in St. Louis. I am committed to ensuring that agInnovation continues to be a forward-thinking, inclusive organization that remains responsive to the evolving needs of our stakeholders. My focus is on fostering innovation, promoting diversity, and actively engaging with our community to achieve meaningful progress. I look forward to working with all of you to turn these priorities into tangible achievements.

Thank you once again for your ongoing support and commitment. Your dedication and contributions are vital to the success and growth of agInnovation. I am genuinely excited to begin this new chapter and look forward to collaborating closely with each of you. Together, I believe we can achieve great things, drive meaningful innovation, and make a lasting impact on our research community. I am eager to learn from your expertise, share ideas, and work collectively towards our shared vision. Let's move forward with enthusiasm and a shared sense of purpose as we build a bright future for agInnovation.

Sincerely,



Chandra



## **2025-2026 agInnovation Chair's Initiatives**

### **1. Build a Healthier Nation Through Prevention Research and Innovation**

- **Role of diet in preventing chronic diseases (MAHA Report)**
- **Ensuring a safe and nutritious food supply**
  - Innovations in low/minimum processed foods
  - Innovations in minimizing chemicals/food additives,
  - Extending shelf life through natural/alternate means

### **2. Transform Agriculture Production System through new Technologies**

- **Labor Shortages & Rising Costs**
  - AI, automation, and robotics address persistent labor shortages and reduce reliance on manual labor, which is becoming more expensive and scarcer.
- **Precision Agriculture using sensors, drones, and AI:**
  - Low and precise application of farm inputs and optimization of planting, irrigation, and harvesting to improve farm profitability and soil health

### **3. Finalize the Roadmap**

### **4. Create a formal framework to facilitate research collaboration between 1862 and 1994 Land- grant universities with 1890 Centers of Excellence**

- **Use the multistate project portfolio** as a tool to facilitate research collaborations across the land-grant system, institutional relationships among all LGUs.
- **Leverage 1890 Centers of Excellence** as platforms to foster systemwide collaboration across the land-grant system.

**agInnovation**

science that feeds the world



# Incoming Chair Initiatives

**Chandra Reddy**

Dean & Director,  
Tennessee State University

## 2025 - 2026 agInnovation Priorities

### 1. Enhance Funding for Agricultural Research:

- Advocate for increased appropriations for USDA-NIFA to boost capacity program funding.
- Engage relevant federal funding agencies and organizations to diversify and expand the competitive research funding portfolio.

### 2. Address Critical Infrastructure Needs:

- Identify and implement both short- and long-term strategies to increase funding for the Research Facilities Act.
- Provide guidance on the Research Facilities Act implementation to meet the infrastructure needs of colleges of agriculture at Land-grant universities, small to large.

### 3. Increase Organizational Visibility and Impact:

- Strategically enhance external communications, marketing, brand recognition, and public relations efforts to elevate the visibility and impact of the organization.
- Expand partnerships and engagement within the Land-grant University community and with federal agencies, industry, and foundations to support collaborative initiatives.

### 4. Intensify Strategic Actions to Position Food Security as a Cornerstone of National Security:

- Demonstrate how a stable food supply underpins economic growth and plays a critical role in reducing poverty.
- Emphasize the importance of a well-nourished population in sustaining a productive workforce and maintaining national defense readiness.
- Highlight the role of national security in ensuring resilience to food supply disruptions caused by natural disasters, pandemics, or cyber threats.
- Underscore the strategic importance of protecting agricultural infrastructure and food distribution systems to safeguard national interests.



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