**APLU BAA Vision Document**

**\*\*High level executive summary and outline\*\***

The Association of Public and Land Grant Universities’ Board on Agriculture Assembly envisions a future where American agriculture provides the nation with improved personal, financial, and environmental health and prosperity. American agriculture is squarely positioned at the nexus of food, energy, health, and community. In the future we envision, America’s farms, fields, ranches, forests, and fisheries will supply the food, fuel, feed, and fiber Americans need without reliance on foreign inputs, investments, or products. In this future, agriculture is a vital part of the solution to improving water and soil quality and environmental, ecosystem, and forest health while driving innovations that spur economic vitality and prosperity for America and beyond.

**The United States maintains a safe, abundant, and secure domestic food supply for the benefit of food safety and national security.**

Grocery stores in the United States are filled with a diversity of products. Produce, meats, grains, cheeses, and many other affordable, nutritious products produced in the United States line the shelves.[[1]](#footnote-2) Our food system is the safest in the world, both with respect to consistent availability of food and the absence of foodborne disease.[[2]](#footnote-3) Disruptive global events that have recently shaken global agricultural markets, such as Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, a powerhouse agricultural exporter,[[3]](#footnote-4) failed to produce panic in the United States because our domestic food supply is stable. This was no accident. It is the result of an intentional effort to support agriculture research, Extension, and teaching in every U.S. state and territory.

The journey to ensure the safety, abundance, and security of America’s food supply began in 1862 with the establishment of the Land-grant university system and with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, which provides direct support for the universities’ mission. Land-grant institutions were created to drive innovation through research, spread knowledge through Extension, and educate an agricultural workforce. Over the past 150 years, support for this mission rose steadily, with past investments serving as the foundation for our agricultural system today. But now the system is in a critically endangered position. Staffing cuts, reduced research dollars, and crumbling infrastructure have diminished the capacity of trusted Land-grant institutions to address local agricultural challenges. Consequently, commercially produced, nationally oriented solutions become the only options available.

All agriculture experiences geographically specific challenges – regional agricultural success is what makes our nation’s food system resilient and responsive; seeds produced in the Plains will not work as well in Florida or New Mexico. Locally or regionally tailored innovations, however, developed by researchers in conversation with local producers, will increase success and reduce overall reliance on crop insurance and other supports, driving down premiums and increasing profitability and food security. [[4]](#footnote-5)

The Association of Public and Land Grant Universities’ (APLU) Board on Agriculture Assembly (BAA) envisions a future where producers can unquestionably rely on the capacity of their local land-grant institution’s research and Extension experts to co-create solutions unique to their local agricultural challenges, ensuring a future where each region can rely on its neighbors for a secure, domestic supply of safe, accessible, and nutritious food for years to come. Current levels of federal investment will not support this future; opportunities are already being lost.

[Two examples/stories here.]

**Rural communities are economically and environmentally healthy places to live.**

Many rural residents enjoy natural amenities, beautiful landscapes, and tight-knit communities. During and since the COVID-19 pandemic, net migration into these areas has caused the rural population to increase, a new trend that follows decades of population decline and is likely reflective of new flexibilities with respect to remote work.[[5]](#footnote-6),[[6]](#footnote-7) However, the influx of new residents, and the corresponding growth in amenities and opportunities, is not equally distributed. As before the pandemic, rural America struggles to provide its residents with economic opportunities, access to healthcare, transportation, broadband, and educational opportunities.[[7]](#footnote-8) There is also increasing acknowledgement that many, especially underserved, rural populations face a disproportionate level of legacy pollution, the result of extractive industries that have left environmental degradation.[[8]](#footnote-9) With such a diversity of needs across a varied landscape, communities need local, tailored solutions to address their unique challenges.

APLU’s BAA envisions a future where customized, science-based interventions improve the quality of life in rural communities across the country, transforming all of them into economically and environmentally healthy places to live, work, and raise a family.

[Two examples/stories here.]

**Americans have better, more nourishing diets and longer, healthier lives.**

The U.S. agricultural system is a marvel of ingenuity and technology. In the mid-twentieth century, charged with ending hunger and malnutrition in America and across the globe, armies of researchers and Extension professionals worked with American farmers and ranchers to build a system that produces more calories per acre than the world had ever seen. They succeeded, and today, Americans have easy access to inexpensive calories. But there was an unseen cost – calories alone do not make for a nutritious diet.[[9]](#footnote-10) Today, poor nutrition is now a primary cause of illness in the United States.[[10]](#footnote-11)

More than half of Americans have diabetes or pre-diabetes. If you include other diet-related conditions like obesity, high blood sugar, high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol, and cardiovascular disease, fewer than seven percent of Americans can be considered “healthy.”[[11]](#footnote-12) Poor nutrition is shortening American lives, burdening American children with obesity, and threatening to destabilize our healthcare system. Healthcare costs continue to rise, primarily to treat diet-related diseases.[[12]](#footnote-13)

APLU’s BAA envisions a future where Americans have better, more nourishing diets and longer, healthier lives by cutting in half the number of Americans with diet-related diseases. Much of this change can come from the agricultural sector, where improvements in agronomy and crop technologies can make nutritious food more accessible and affordable. Extension and education will also be needed to translate academic research ideas and new technologies to producers and, subsequently, consumers.

Just as the agricultural community heard the call for more calories to combat malnutrition in the last century, we stand ready to answer one of this century’s most pressing humanitarian needs. What is needed now is support for the army of researchers and Extension professionals who have been working tirelessly on these pressing issues to scale our many successes to the national level.

[Two examples/stories here.]

1. [Insert AgInnovation reference that 87% of food consumed in the US was produced domestically.] [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. https://impact.economist.com/sustainability/project/food-security-index/reports/Economist\_Impact\_GFSI\_2022\_Global\_Report\_Sep\_2022.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. https://fas.usda.gov/sites/default/files/2022-04/Ukraine-Factsheet-April2022.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/farm-practices-management/risk-management/crop-insurance-at-a-glance/#:~:text=Federal%20Crop%20Insurance%20Program%20insured%20acreage,-Embed%20this%20chart&text=FCIP%20participation%20has%20increased%20steadily,for%20the%202021%20crop%20year. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. https://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/pub-details/?pubid=107837 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. https://carsey.unh.edu/publication/snapshot/recent-data-suggest-rural-america-is-growing-again [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/rural-economy-population/ [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. https://www.epa.gov/system/files?file=documents/2022-04/epa-rural-fact-sheet\_3.25\_vcleared\_epa-comments\_final.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. https://www.pnas.org/doi/full/10.1073/pnas.0912953109 [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. https://www.usda.gov/nutrition-security#:~:text=Poor%20nutrition%20is%20a%20leading,care%20costs%20and%20decreased%20productivity. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. https://www.agriculture.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Testimony\_Mozaffarian\_11.02.2021\_UPDATED1.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. https://www.rockefellerfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/True-Cost-of-Food-Full-Report-Final.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-13)