

agInnovation
science that feeds the world



Spring Business Meeting

March 2, 2026

Chandra Reddy
agInnovation Chair

2025 - 2026 agInnovation Priorities - *Progress*

1. Enhance Funding for Agricultural Research:

- The BLC (chaired by Steve Lommel) worked with the BAC and the BAA Board of Directors to advocate for significant increases in appropriation for USDA-NIFA to boost capacity program funding, and AFRI funding
- agInnovation Directors participated in the recent CARET/BAA Washington Conference and made visits to the Hill to advocate for capacity and competitive funds, as well as passage of the Farm Bill

2. Address Critical Infrastructure Needs:

- As presented earlier, agInnovation provided oral and written guidance and recommendations at the NIFA Listening Session on the Research Facilities Act implementation to meet the infrastructure needs of colleges of agriculture at Land-grant universities.

3. Strengthen Collaborative Partnerships:

- Enhance partnerships and engagement within the Land-grant University community and with federal agencies, industry, and foundations to support collaborative initiatives - engaged in meetings with NIFA, ARS, NRCS, FAS, Forest Service, APHIS, FFAR...

2025 - 2026 agInnovation Priorities - *Progress*

4. Increase Organizational Visibility and Impact:

- agInnovation is working with the CMC, and Pivot to strategically enhance external communications, marketing, brand recognition, and public relations efforts, including the agInnovation website and blog, to elevate the visibility and impact of the organization.

5. Intensify Strategic Actions to Position Food Security as A Cornerstone of National Security:

- Capacity Funding Initiative: Doug Steele's presentation
 - Phase 1 - Survey of Institutions receiving Capacity Funding (2024-2025)
 - Phase 2 - Economic Analysis of the Impact of Capacity-funded programs and projects (2025-2026)
 - Phase 3 - Implementation (Developing Advocacy messaging and FY 2028 ask) (2026)
- Stable federal support from capacity funding secures a future for national security, agricultural profitability, community resilience, positive youth development and health and nutrition programming built on science.
- Foundational funding ensures continuity in research and Cooperative Extension, enables long-term projects, and builds the critical expertise required to address complex, emerging challenges.

2025 - 2026 agInnovation Priorities - *Progress*

5. Intensify Strategic Actions to Position Food Security as A Cornerstone of National Security:

- Integrated Land-grant Roadmap---“Building Sustainable Food Systems.” --- one of the six societal benefits

What’s at stake: Food system failures that threaten our national security, including food supply interruptions, food waste, food insecurity and hunger, foodborne diseases, economic instability, and a growing reliance on costly imports.

- The issue doesn’t revolve around ROI (1:20) The question is no longer whether agricultural R&D pays off, it does; the scientific literature tells us that. The question is: whether we, as a society, are willing to allow a permanent downshift in productivity by failing to invest in the scale that science demands.
- R&D impacts materializes over a time frame of 10-20 years. The key is navigating the temporal asymmetry between investment decision making (*annual timeline*) and impact of investment (*decadal timeline*)
- We’re not selling research. We are selling **continuity over disruption; preparation over reaction; and prevention over remediation.** agInnovation’s narrative should revolve around avoidable loss versus aspirational gain.

2025 - 2026 agInnovation Chair's Initiatives

- Progress

1. Finalize the Integrated Land-grant Roadmap;

- As presented earlier, agInnovation, ECOP, ACOP have contracted with Adaptive Roots to finalize the Integrated Land-grant Roadmap by June 30, 2026.

2. Create a formal framework to facilitate research collaboration between 1862, 1890 and 1994 Land-grant universities

- Use the multistate project portfolio as a tool to facilitate research collaborations across the Land-grant system, institutional relationships among all LGUs.- in progress.
- A collaboration research study commissioned by the Association of 1890 Research Directors and agInnovation South and conducted by the Southern Rural Development Center made a number of recommendations that can be incorporated into agInnovation writ large. Alton and Gary Thompson are examining these recommendations to facilitate research collaboration among the land grant universities..

2025 - 2026 agInnovation Chair's Initiatives

- Progress

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

- A coordinated framework would help reduce fragmentation, promote complementary strengths, and accelerate innovation in priority areas such as small farms, adverse weather events, food systems, global food security health and wellness, rural prosperity, workforce development, and emerging technologies.
- At the same time, I must acknowledge the current fiscal uncertainty stemming from the delayed passage of the Farm Bill. The absence of a reauthorized Farm Bill creates ambiguity regarding long-term funding streams for 1890 Centers of Excellence.
- In short, the current funding environment should not delay structural alignment; rather, it should motivate us to build the architecture now so that the system is ready to deploy at scale when federal resources stabilize. We will accelerate our efforts to develop a formal collaboration framework that will strengthen the 1890 Centers of Excellence.
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2025 - 2026 agInnovation Chair's Initiatives

- Progress

4. Mobilize the Land-grant System to Build a Healthier Nation through Research and Innovation

- This initiative centers on the critical nexus of food systems, agriculture, and public health, recognizing the well-documented relationship between dietary patterns and long-term health outcomes—particularly the prevention and management of chronic diseases highlighted in the MAHA Report.
- agInnovation will build upon the foundational work of Adaptive Roots and expand it into a coordinated, system-wide effort across the land-grant enterprise. The goal is to mobilize the full capacity of the 1862, 1890, and 1994 institutions—leveraging research, Extension, and education—to advance a healthier nation through science-based innovation.
- To strengthen strategy and federal alignment, we are also working with Lewis-Burke Associates. Their expertise in federal policy, appropriations strategy, and agency engagement will help position this initiative competitively within USDA, HHS, NIH, and other relevant funding streams. This partnership will support the development of a coordinated federal strategy, identify near-term funding opportunities, and ensure that the initiative is framed in a way that aligns with congressional and Administration priorities.
- Taken together, this initiative represents a proactive effort to position the land-grant system as a national leader at the intersection of agriculture, nutrition science, and public health—advancing research-driven solutions that improve health outcomes while strengthening food systems and rural economies.

2026 USDA Priorities for Research and Development

1. Increased Productivity of Farmers and Ranchers
2. Expanding Markets and Creating New Uses of U.S. Agricultural Products
3. Protecting the Integrity of American Agriculture from Invasive Species
4. Promoting Soil Health to Regenerate Long-Term Productivity of Land
5. Improving Human Health through Precision Nutrition and Food Quality



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