

118TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 8447

To direct the Secretary of Agriculture to establish centers of excellence for agricultural security research, extension, and education, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MAY 17, 2024

Mr. BACON (for himself, Mr. NUNN of Iowa, and Mr. CARBAJAL) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Agriculture

A BILL

To direct the Secretary of Agriculture to establish centers of excellence for agricultural security research, extension, and education, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “American Agricultural
5 Security Act of 2024”.

6 **SEC. 2. CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE.**

7 (a) CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE.—The Secretary of
8 Agriculture (referred to in this Act as the “Secretary”)
9 shall establish at least 1 center of excellence for the pur-

1 pose of carrying out research, extension, and education ac-
2 tivities for each of the areas of focus described in sub-
3 section (c).

4 (b) HOST INSTITUTIONS.—

5 (1) IN GENERAL.—Institutions eligible to host
6 or co-host a center of excellence established under
7 this section include—

8 (A) an 1862 Institution, as defined in sec-
9 tion 2 of the Agricultural Research, Extension,
10 and Education Reform Act of 1998 (7 U.S.C.
11 7601);

12 (B) an 1890 Institution, as defined in such
13 section 2;

14 (C) a 1994 Institution, as defined in such
15 section 2;

16 (D) a non-land-grant college of agriculture,
17 as defined in section 1404 of the National Agri-
18 cultural Research, Extension, and Teaching
19 Policy Act of 1977 (7 U.S.C. 3103);

20 (E) a Hispanic-serving agricultural college
21 or university, as defined in such section 1404;
22 and

23 (F) an accredited school of veterinary med-
24 icine.

1 (2) DISTRIBUTION.—To the maximum extent
2 practicable, the Secretary shall ensure the geo-
3 graphic diversity of institutions selected to host or
4 co-host a center of excellence established under this
5 section.

6 (3) LIMITATION.—An institution selected to
7 host or co-host a center of excellence under this sec-
8 tion may host or co-host only one such center of ex-
9 cellence at a time.

10 (4) DUTIES.—An institution or institutions se-
11 lected to host or co-host a center of excellence estab-
12 lished under this section shall partner with the Agri-
13 cultural Research Service, other Federal agencies,
14 State Governments, other institutions of higher edu-
15 cation (as defined in section 101 of the Higher Edu-
16 cation Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1001)), agricultural
17 industry groups, or other relevant entities to—

18 (A) reduce duplicative efforts and focus on
19 filling gaps across research, extension, and edu-
20 cation activities by enhancing coordination and
21 improving cost-effectiveness;

22 (B) leverage available resources by using
23 public-private partnerships;

24 (C) implement training and educational
25 initiatives to increase awareness and effectively

1 disseminate solutions to target audiences
2 through extension activities;

3 (D) increase the economic returns to rural
4 communities by identifying, attracting, and di-
5 recting funds to high-priority agricultural
6 issues;

7 (E) rapidly respond to emerging issues
8 that threaten any sector of the United States
9 agricultural industry;

10 (F) focus on workforce development for
11 employers to recruit and retain high quality em-
12 ployees in rural areas; and

13 (G) engage in assistance for administrative
14 management and education regarding poten-
15 tially valuable intellectual property derived from
16 federally-supported research, extension, and
17 education activities.

18 (c) AREAS OF FOCUS.—The areas of focus described
19 in this subsection are each of the following:

20 (1) BIOSECURITY AND CYBERSECURITY.—Re-
21 search, extension, and education activities focused on
22 agricultural biosecurity and cybersecurity efforts to
23 defend the United States food supply from any at-
24 tacks.

1 (2) BIOSYSTEMS AND AGRICULTURAL ENGI-
2 NEERING.—Research, extension, and education ac-
3 tivities focused on biosystems and agricultural engi-
4 neering, including precision agriculture technologies
5 and mechanization and automation technologies for
6 specialty crops.

7 (3) DIGITAL AGRICULTURE.—Research, exten-
8 sion, and education activities focused on developing,
9 evaluating, and deploying digital agriculture, includ-
10 ing artificial intelligence.

11 (4) FOREIGN ANIMAL DISEASE.—Research, ex-
12 tension, and education activities focused on foreign
13 animal diseases, including the ecology and etiology
14 of emerging diseases, control methods, and imple-
15 mentation strategies to enhance preparedness and
16 response efforts to protect the livestock and poultry
17 industry.

18 (d) TERMS.—

19 (1) DURATION.—The term of an award under
20 this section shall be for a 5-year period, and may be
21 renewed for not more than one additional 5-year pe-
22 riod.

23 (2) CONSTRUCTION PROHIBITED.—Funds made
24 available under this section shall not be used for the
25 construction of a new building or facility or the ac-

1 quisition of, expansion, remodeling, or alteration of
2 an existing building or facility (including site grad-
3 ing and improvement, and architect fees).

4 (e) ANNUAL REPORT.—Not later than 1 year after
5 the date of the enactment of this section, and every year
6 thereafter, the Secretary of Agriculture shall submit to the
7 Committee on Agriculture of the House of Representatives
8 and the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and For-
9 estry of the Senate a report describing—

10 (1) the projects initiated by each center of ex-
11 cellence established under this section in the pre-
12 ceding year;

13 (2) the amount of funding for each such project
14 and the funding source;

15 (3) the institutions participating in each such
16 project and their shares of the overall funding for
17 each project;

18 (4) the level of cost-sharing for each such
19 project;

20 (5) technology transfer and intellectual property
21 management actions undertaken by each such cen-
22 ter, such as the number of relevant invention disclo-
23 sures, provisional patents filed, non-provisional pat-
24 ents filed and issued, number of licenses executed,
25 and start-up companies registered; and

1 crease the number of trained individuals with an ex-
2 pertise in agricultural biosecurity and cybersecurity;

3 (3) to expand or upgrade facilities to meet bio-
4 safety and biosecurity requirements necessary to
5 protect facility staff, members of the public, and the
6 food supply while carrying out agricultural biosecu-
7 rity research;

8 (4) to cover costs associated with the acquisi-
9 tion of equipment and other capital costs related to
10 expansion of food, agriculture, and veterinary medi-
11 cine teaching programs in agricultural biosecurity
12 and cybersecurity; or

13 (5) otherwise improve the capacity of the
14 United States to respond in a timely manner to
15 emerging or existing threats.

16 (c) ELIGIBLE ENTITIES.—An entity eligible to re-
17 ceive a grant under this section is—

18 (1) a State agricultural experiment station;

19 (2) a State departments of agriculture;

20 (3) a college or university;

21 (4) a university research foundation;

22 (5) a research institution or organization;

23 (6) a Federal agency;

24 (7) a national laboratory; or

1 (8) any group consisting of 2 or more of the en-
2 tities described in paragraphs (1) through (7).

3 (d) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There
4 are authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section
5 \$10,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2025 through 2029.

○