

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 13, 2019

Chavonda Jacobs-Young, PhD
Administrator
Agricultural Research Service
Jamie L. Whitten Federal Building
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Administrator Jacobs-Young,

We write to invite you to tour the National Center for Agricultural Utilization Research (NCAUR) in Peoria, Illinois. The NCAUR is an exemplary United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Agriculture Research Service (ARS) lab and has a long history of success in accomplishing federal research priorities that have helped expand and support the modern farm economy and the agriculture industry overall. However, the Administration's past proposals to close the NCAUR have jeopardized its future and we hope you will take this opportunity to learn more not only about the lab's ongoing research, but its importance to the State of Illinois.

The NCAUR was founded in 1938 as the Northern Regional Laboratory and was one of four regional labs set up by Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1938, before being renamed the NCAUR in 1990. The lab is famously credited with discovering the method for industrialized mass production of penicillin in the early 1940s and has also contributed to the development of processes to remove carcinogens from corn and soy crops.

Today, the NCAUR conducts research in novel industrial and specialty food products and with various agricultural commodities through 35 current research information system (CRIS) projects with almost 250 employees. Additionally, the NCAUR is the designated lead technology transfer facility for the USDA. Recently, the NCAUR had two publicized research breakthroughs including the discovery of a new specialty sugar called isomelezitose as well as a new source crop and method of extraction for an insect repellent similar to DEET. These developments, among others, indicate the lab's continued importance to not only food and agriculture sciences, but our public health and national security.

Despite the lab's remarkable history and recent accomplishments, the President's Budget requests for FY 2018 and FY 2019 targeted the NCAUR and nearly twenty other ARS labs and research units for closure. In response, we have actively advocated for the continued funding of federal agriculture research labs and, as the result of our efforts, House and Senate Appropriators have rejected the President's proposal to close the NCAUR. However, the proposed closures have created staffing issues at the facility, which persist despite our engagement with the USDA and urgings that the facility be adequately staffed.

As we move into the FY 2020 budgeting and appropriations cycle, we invite you to visit Peoria, tour the NCAUR, and meet with the employees. We hope this will be an opportunity for you to learn first-hand about the value of the lab, and the need for continued investment in ARS research facilities like the NCAUR.

While the value of an in-person visit cannot be understated, we understand and respect the demands of your position and schedule. As such, if your schedule does not allow for a visit to Peoria, we would appreciate your consideration of a meeting in Washington, D.C. to discuss the NCAUR and the value of agricultural research to the State of Illinois and the nation as a whole.

Sincerely,



Darin LaHood
Member of Congress



Cheri Bustos
Member of Congress