



The Honorable David Scott
Chairman
House of Representatives Committee on
Agriculture
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Glenn ‘GT’ Thompson
Ranking Member
House of Representatives Committee on
Agriculture
Washington, DC 20515

Re: In Regards to the Role of Climate Research in Supporting Agricultural Resiliency hearing before the U.S. House of Representatives

Date: June 24, 2022

The National Young Farmers Coalition (Young Farmers) thanks the U.S. House of Representatives for holding this hearing on the important role of climate research in supporting agricultural resiliency. As farmers are on the frontlines of the climate crisis, climate research is a critical tool for farmers to discover and test best practices and build on-farm resiliency. We thank the Honorable David Scott and Glenn ‘GT’ Thompson for holding this hearing to discuss the impact of and opportunities for climate research in the agricultural sector.

The National Young Farmers Coalition works closely with young farmers across the country to assist them in building resilience to climate change through training, building nation-wide farmer networks, and advocating for policy change at the state and federal levels of government. Our campaigns focus on key issues, identified by our members, to address the major obstacles young farmers face. In a 2017 national survey of our coalition, 66% of respondents reported experiencing unpredictable weather, and 53% attributed those changes to climate change.¹ Furthermore, in a 2020 survey of policy issues, our members across the country identified addressing climate change as their number one priority.² Young farmers, particularly Black, Indigenous and other people of color (BIPOC) farmers, are on the frontlines of experiencing and responding to this crisis. Our farmers have experienced increased pest pressure, droughts and floods, and rates of plant and animal disease, with seemingly no end in sight. Young farmers have lost crops and livestock and have dealt with sustained damage to their farms due to extreme weather events, causing them to suffer severe economic losses. Some farmers have even shut down their operations due to droughts and unsafe conditions from uncontrolled wildfires. However, farming is a huge opportunity for mitigating the harmful effects of climate change. Farmers have the transformative power

¹ Sophie Ackoff, Andrew Bahrenburg, and Lindsey Lusher Shute, Building a Future with Farmers II, National Young Farmers Coalition, November 2017, https://www.youngfarmers.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/NYFC-Report-2017_LoRes_Revised.pdf.

² National Young Farmers Coalition, “2021 Climate Policy Recommendations,” May 2021, <https://www.youngfarmers.org/2021/05/2021-climate-recommendations/>

to sequester carbon on their farms by using climate-smart methods, including no- and reduced-till methods, managed grazing, and soil health practices.

At the National Young Farmers Coalition, we believe that climate action should be science-based and data-driven while prioritizing the experiences of Indigenous and traditional knowledge systems that have proven histories of placing agriculture in the right relationship with the environment. Quality public research is a crucial tool for farmers, and young and BIPOC farmers know the important role that research plays in managing and operating a farm. The Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program is the only farmer-led research program and a critical tool in helping farmers fight climate change. In addition to providing grant funding for farmers to lead research on sustainable agriculture, the program also supports peer-to-peer learning by sharing the research findings with other farmers across the country. Research from SARE helps small-scale, diversified farmers implement conservation practices and measure their climate mitigation impacts. The SARE program funds on-farm research into sustainable agricultural farming systems, including organic systems. Increased funding for SARE would put more money directly into the hands of farmers and allow them to create more and new innovative grant programs that are responsive to their needs and the issues they confront in the field daily. This is particularly important, as public investment in agriculture research is declining despite farmers facing increased challenges due to climate chaos.

USDA Climate Hubs are another important resource for farmers in fighting climate change. Climate Hubs, led by the Agricultural Research Service and the Forest Service, support applied research and development and work closely with extension providers to deliver research, tools, and information to farmers and other professionals. Climate hubs have the potential to make a significant impact in providing young and BIPOC farmers with up to date and accurate information, specific to the geographic region in which they are located. An increase in funding to Climate Hubs to support enhanced outreach will allow more farmers to engage with their work through extension providers and gain access to additional resources to support on-farm climate mitigation, adaptation, and resilience that is relevant to their region.

Young Farmers would like to thank the Honorable David Scott and Glenn ‘GT’ Thompson for convening this hearing to discuss the role of climate research in agricultural resilience. Sound research is critical for assisting farmers in the fight against climate change. We look forward to working with you to find ways to improve climate and agriculture research for young, beginning, and BIPOC farmers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'LO', with a large, stylized flourish extending from the bottom left.

Lotanna Obodozie
Climate Campaign Director
National Young Farmers Coalition