

**Charles Valentine Riley  
Memorial Foundation**



**RMF Position Statement on Pursuing a Unifying Message  
Elevating Food, Agricultural and  
Natural Resources Research as a National Priority**

The United States is unprepared to meet this century's formidable challenges of hunger and malnutrition, climate change, environmental degradation and emerging plant and animal diseases. The enormity of these issues is unprecedented and can only be viewed in the global context of the inexorable addition of more than 2 billion people to the world's population over the next 40 years. As the clock is ticking, the pressures are mounting. A sustainable future for America and the world is in the balance.

**A Deficit of Solutions?** Public investment in research to meet looming food, agricultural and natural resources problems is woefully inadequate. For decades, support has been stagnant or in a state of decline. The United States is in danger of losing its leadership position in food, agricultural and natural resources research as other nations increase their investments. A deficit of public research funding translates into an innovation deficit and, ultimately, a deficit of solutions.

**For the Public Good.** Results of food, agricultural and natural resources research impact the lives of everyone on a daily basis — safe, nutritious and health-promoting food, clean drinking water, sustainable natural resources, renewable energy and a robust economy. Agriculture is not only a key national engine of economic growth, it is the foundation for national security. We depend on agriculture for a safe, plentiful food supply and the accessible, nutritionally sound and affordable diet necessary for the public health. Globally, food insecurity is found at the heart of conflict and political instability. Publicly funded food, agricultural, and natural resources research must lead in addressing challenges unlikely to be taken on by the private sector or that require the long view — a sustained focus and effort to achieve future success. Publicly funded research emphasizes returns to society and the rapid, widespread availability of new science-based knowledge. Steady, sustained support for public research lays the foundation for discovery that the private sector builds upon for highly valued products and technologies.

**Changing the Paradigm.** To successfully advocate for the public resources to make food, agricultural and natural resources research a higher national priority, a paradigm shift must occur. The old model of many stakeholder voices pitted against each other, advocating for narrow and shrinking slices of federal resources, must be recast as a convergence of voices working together with a unified message in support of expanding total research funding in this critical area.

**A Pivotal Moment.** Since 2013, the [Charles Valentine Riley Memorial Foundation](#) and its partners have invited key stakeholders and interested parties to envision the opportunity for a convergence of efforts that result in development of a unified message — one that calls for public investment in food, agricultural and natural resources research as a higher national priority. A common thread of the dialogue has been exploring the formation of a broad coalition committed to develop the compelling case for enhanced investment in research. The times call for an inspiring vision, bold action and a

heightened sense of purpose. For our common future, funding this research must be given the priority it deserves.

## **The Riley Memorial Foundation Supports:**

- Ongoing efforts to elevate public food, agricultural and natural resources research as a national priority.
- Participation in a broad coalition of stakeholders to develop and deliver a unified message on the need for strengthening the U.S. food, agricultural and natural resource research portfolio.
- Development of a unified message that makes clear the essential nature of this research and related education and technology transfer activities that contribute to the public good, including economic growth and jobs, and quality of life improvements.
- A commitment for increased investment in research throughout the federal agencies with significant roles in addressing critical priorities associated with food, agriculture, nutrition and health, natural resources and the environment.
- Growing each of the key components of the agricultural research funding portfolio that supports the national system delivering results for the public good:
  - **Competitive grants**, to take advantage of innovation at public and private universities, federal laboratories and other organizations with scientific and technical expertise — and the commitment to multi-partner, multidisciplinary collaboration — that contribute to beneficial results to society.
  - **Capacity funds**, for state (universities) and federal (such as USDA Agricultural Research Service and Forest Service) institutions to continue to provide a stable scientific workforce and research sites that conduct research requiring long-term commitment and potential high-risk/high-payoff solutions, while maintaining the capacity to rapidly deal with crisis situations.
  - **Public-private partnerships**, to support growing the number of efforts like the Foundation of Food and Agricultural Research, a nonprofit corporation that matches public funds with private funds to conduct research on problems of national and international significance.
- A national food and agricultural research, education and extension system that:
  - builds and maintains a critical mass of well-trained scientists, educators and extension personnel to ensure that the U.S. remains the leader in global agricultural production;
  - provides a safe, affordable and nutritious food supply;
  - increases economic opportunities for farmers, businesses, families and communities; and
  - conserves natural resources and protects the environment for a sustainable future.
- Ensuring that an effective, efficient transfer of science-based knowledge and technology for the benefit of food and agricultural producers and consumers remains a high priority in future budgets: a critical component to successfully meet the global challenge of feeding more than 9 billion people by the year 2050.

**More information:** [Charles Valentine Riley Memorial Foundation](#)

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