February 2, 2026

Mr. Joon Park, Administrator
Agricultural Research Service
Jamie Whitten Building
14th and Independence Ave., SW
Washington, DC 20250

Reference: USA Pulses USDA-ARS 2026-27 Policy Update

Dear Mr. Park,

USA Pulses represent the producers, processors, first purchasers, exporters, warehouseman, and food manufacturers of pulses in the U.S. Our stakeholders include the check-off organizations in WA, ID, MT, ND, SD, NE, and MN. With the recent addition of Northarvest Bean Growers Association, we represent 100% of peas, lentils and chickpeas and over 80% of dry bean production. Basically, we represent the pulse industry from farm to table in the U.S.

DGA Increases Need for Pulses. The pulse industry relies on the USDA-ARS to provide scientific research supporting our four research pillars of breeding and genetics, crop management, health and nutrition, and product innovation. With the announcement of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA) last week, it is clear that pulse crops, i.e. beans, dry peas, lentils and chickpeas are an important part of the diet for Americans. The DGA's have clearly included pulses as a protein and doubled the recommended portions for protein. The guidelines also include pulses as a vegetable. The increase in recommendations for pulses brings the total from 1 ½ cups per week to ½ cup per day, or 3 ½ cups per week. USA Pulses estimates we will need to increase acreage to 6 million acres and production from 2.8 million MT to 4.2 million MT. To meet the dietary recommendations, we will need help from ARS.

PCHI and PQN Funding. Nearly 16 years ago in 2010, with the help of USDA-ARS, the American Pulse Association, a precursor of today's USA Pulses coalition, brought together researchers, producers and trade members in Beltsville, MD to create the Pulse Crop Health Initiative (PCHI). Through a lot of hard work and cooperation between the pulse industry, Congress and the ARS, we have added an authorization of $25 million in the Farm Bill and are now in the sixth year of funding (currently at $5.5 million for FY 2026) for the PCHI. In addition, we have been able to add to base level funding of ARS over the past 5 years (currently $2.8 million in FY 2026) to support the Pulse Quality Network (PQN) with primary locations in Pullman, WA; Fargo, ND; and East Lansing, MI. These two programs help to establish ARS as a critical partner to improve the quality of our crop, increase the scientific knowledge of the nutrition available in pulses, improve the understanding of the health effects of pulses and develop technical knowledge about the sustainability of pulses. With the potential increase in consumption of pulses, ARS leadership and expertise is critical to the industry but also to the US population.

Fill personnel vacancies in 2026. Over the past five years but especially in the last year, ARS has faced retirements and resignations of key personnel. Currently, there are scientist vacancies in the Grain Legume Genetics and Physiology Research Unit, the Plant Introduction Center, and at the Western Wheat and Pulse Quality Lab all located at Pullman, WA. There are numerous vacancies at the Pulse, Potato and Sugar Beet Quality Lab at Fargo, ND and technicians are significantly reduced. These vacancies are significant, because the lack of personnel makes it harder to make an impact with the funds we have helped to secure. In addition, it does not appear that there is a plan to replace these vacancies. Many have been open for more than one year. ***USA Pulses requests USDA-ARS fill critical personnel vacancies in 2026 to help the industry increase consumption and production of pulses.***

We continue to support the following increases to the base level funding for ARS listed below:

1. **Pulse Crop Health Initiative Research Initiative (language in Agriculture Act of 2018) in the farm Bill ($25.0 million per year, five years):** The 2018 Farm Bill was extended and reauthorized the establishment of PCHI. Congress appropriated funding for the PCHI as follows: $2 million for FY 2018, $3 million for FY 2019, $4 million for FY 2020, $5 million for FY 2021, and $5.5 million for FY 2022 through FY 2026. USA Pulses supports a new Farm Bill in 2026 and authorization of the PCHI. We are requesting appropriation at the full amount of $25 million in FY 2027. ***In FY 2027, the industry is requesting reauthorization of the PCHI in the Farm Bill and full funding of $25 million per year for five years.***
2. **USA-ARS Pulse Crop Quality Network ($3.2 million)** We are requesting an additional $3.2 million to establish this network of labs. Initially, USDA-ARS received $1 million in 2020 and an increase to $2.0 million in 2021, $2.5 million in FY 2022, $2.5 million in FY 2023, and $2.8 million in 2024-26. Current funding established Pullman, Fargo and East Lansing as labs focused on improving quality parameters for pulses and finding genetic links. USA Pulses is requesting an increase of $2.8 million to provide genetic links for product innovations in milk, yogurts, and cheese and meat analogs.

3. **Base Level Increases to Funding for USDA-ARS in FY 2027: $9.9 million.** Below is a summary of the Base Level Increases in funding of Pulse Crops Research being requested by USA Pulses. A brief justification for the increases is provided below the table.

Request for USDA-ARS Base Level Increase Focused on Pulse Crops

	Current Base	Requested Increase	Projected Funding
Base Level Increase-ARS Fargo, ND			
Add Pulse Crop Quality Research Center to Wheat Quality Lab	$ 2,800,000	$ 3,200,000	$ 6,000,000
Total for ARS-Fargo, ND	**$ 2,800,000**	**$ 3,200,000**	**$ 6,000,000**
Base Level Increase-ARS Pullman, WA			
Grain Legume Genetics Physiology Research Unit			
Pullman Pathology, Pulse Breeding Prosser Pathology, Weeds, Pulse Breeding	$ 2,440,097	$ 4,500,000	$ 6,940,097
Increase for Winter Pulse Breeder	$ 120,000	$ 700,000	$ 820,000
Plant Germplasm Introduction & Testing (Grasses, Pulses, Alfalfa)	$ 2,851,524	$ 1,000,000	$ 3,851,524
Total for ARS-Pullman, WA	**$ 5,411,621**	**$ 6,200,000**	**$ 11,611,621**
Base Level Increase-ARS East Lansing, MI			
ARS Pulse Breeding Program-Michigan	$ 624,000	$ 0	$ 624,000
Total for ARS-East Lansing, MI	**$ 624,000**	**$ 0**	**$ 624,000**
Base level increase to Sclerotinia Initiative			
National Sclerotinia Initiative Increase	**$ 2,500,000**	**$500,000**	**$ 3,000,000**
Total Request for USDA-ARS Base Level Funding Increase for National Pulse Research	**$ 11,335,621**	**$ 9,900,000**	**$ 21,235,621**

4. **Grain Legume Genetics Physiology Research (GLGPR) Unit ($4.5 million).** The USDA/ARS Grain Legume Genetics & Physiology Research Unit currently includes six scientists focused on Pulse Crops. This Unit has been extremely effective in developing pulse cultivars. Four recent releases include Hampton Green Pea, Avondale Lentil, and USDA Royal, USDA Nash, and USDA Quinn Chickpeas. Additionally, three autumn-sown peas, USDA Klondike (yellow), USDA MiCa and USDA Dint (both green) were released in 2021 and are in the process of commercialization. The dry bean breeder at Prosser also conducts critical work on Sclerotinia resistance, genetic mapping, and disease resistance, as well as variety development. The leadership from this research unit is renowned nationally and internationally. ***USA Pulses requests a $4.5 million increase in base-level funding for these scientists to support research aimed at improving pulse crops through genetics, breeding, integrated pest and disease management, and soil health***.
5. **USDA/ARS Winter Pulses Geneticist ($700,000).** Dry pea, lentil and chickpea growers need fall-seeded cool-season legumes in their crop rotation. The development of high-yielding Fall Seeded pulse varieties will help US growers remain competitive with rapidly expanding pulse acreage in Canada, Australia, Ukraine, and Russia. Therefore, it is critical to establish the fall-seeded legumes breeding program and have a dedicated breeder/geneticist position based at the USDA/ARS Pulse Crops Genetics and Physiology Research (PCGPR) Unit at Washington State University, Pullman, WA. In FY 2006, Congress appropriated $120,000 for this position. ***USA Pulses requests an additional $700,000 to fund a geneticist fully focused on fall-seeded pulse crops.***
6. **Plant Germplasm Introduction & Testing Research ($1.0 million).** The USDA-ARS Plant Introduction unit at Pullman, WA, houses a large number of genetic resources (germplasm) for pulse crops in the US. The unit contains seeds of dry peas, lentils, chickpeas, lupins, fava beans, and dry beans, and is the primary source of genetic diversity and novel traits/genes in pulses in the US. This collection is extremely critical for plant breeders to develop improved cultivars with novel disease resistance, enhanced water-use efficiency, efficient nitrogen fixation, improved nutritional traits, and desirable end-use quality of pulse crops. Current funding supports two full-time scientists, the support programming for these scientists, and support for the bare minimum physical storage facility. The unit critically needs additional funding to maintain the germplasm, catalog traits, and genetic information more efficiently on genetic databases, fund additional collection missions, increase storage and regeneration capacity, and promptly respond to requests for germplasm. Additional funding is also needed to enhance the use of germplasm through high-thoughput phenotype and genotype characterization. Refilling current vacant positions is also critical to maintain/enhance this important unit's function to effectively and maximize the utility of germplasm accessions and services to Pulse breeders to develop improved cultivars. ***USA Pulses requests an additional $1.0 million to increase support for this critical facility.***
7. **Sclerotinia Initiative $3.0 million.** Sclerotinia (White Mold) is a devastating disease that is not well understood. It is an important issue for our pulse industry, particularly in dry beans. In 2020, Congress approved an increase to base level funding of the NSI of $1 Million to a total of $2.5 Million. This will improve the ability of the cooperating industries to fight this disease. USA Pulses is supporting increasing funding to $3.0 Million.
8. **Establish a Program Assistant at Fargo, ND, Research Center.** USA Pulses requests the addition of a program assistant to work in support of the Pulse Crop Health Initiative, the Pulse Quality Network, the Sclerotinia Initiative, and the Sugar Beet Research Initiative. We suggest utilizing the funding provided by overhead to fund this position.

9. **Fill Vacancies at Potato, Pulse and Small Grains Quality Research Unit, Fargo, ND**. Pulse Quality evaluation center located at the Edward T. Schafer ARS Research Center is currently understaffed and performs limited evaluations. ARS needs to develop and execute a plan to add authorized personnel and begin to provide much needed evaluations of nutrients and heavy metals to help respond to customer concerns and needs with nutrient information, variety links, and understanding of negatives like heavy metals.

10. **Research Plant-Based Foods as Sources of Nutrients of Concern ($25.0 million per year, five years).** The designation of "nutrients of concern" (dietary fiber, vitamin D, calcium, potassium), established by the USDA, provides an important tool to focus agriculture and food research. USA Pulses requests that the USDA devote a portion of the Agriculture and Food Research Institute (AFRI) competitive grants toward using plant-based foods as sources of nutrients of concern. Research should further investigate the nutrition provided by plant-based foods and the development of processing, functionality, and bioavailability of nutrients in plant-based foods and food products. Pulses, i.e., dry peas, lentils, chickpeas, and dry beans, are plant-based foods that provide major sources of nutrients of concern. ***USA Pulses requests $25.0 million per year for five years in FY 2026-30 for research on plant-based foods as sources of nutrients of concern***.

11. **National Predictive Modeling Tool Initiative (NPMTI, $15 million).** The NPMTI develops research-based tools to forecast the incidence of diseases affecting US crops, which currently cause losses of $100-$200 billion each year. Modeling of pulse crop root rot began in 2023, with the intent to inform producers of their risk for root rot based on soil sampling results and to provide research-based management recommendations to mitigate the impact of root rot on crop yields and quality. Funded by a 2020 Congressional appropriation, NPMTI is expected to operate for an additional ten years or more. ***USA Pulses requests that $15 million in annual funding be authorized for this important initiative in the Farm Bill's USDA-ARS base budget.***

12. **Regenerative Agriculture Pulse Crop Research Funding ($1.0 billion)**. USA Pulses proposes $1.0 billion focused on pulse crops to accomplish the following:
    - Increase nitrogen fixation of pulse crops.
    - Improve the productivity of low environmental impact crops like pulses.
    - Increase functionality and processing technology to include pulses in more products.
    - Increase nutrient density and nutrient availability for healthy, sustainably produced diets.
    - Focus research efforts toward achieving net-zero carbon emissions from agriculture.

    USA Pulses supports establishing a Sustainable and Regenerative Agriculture Research Program of $1.0 billion focused on finding sustainable production and processing solutions for agriculture.

13. **Alternatives to Fumigation as Protection against Bruchids and Nematodes.** The US pulse industry has faced market uncertainty with trading partners like India each year due to a requirement to fumigate shipments of US pulse crops with methyl bromide (MeBr) before arrival at ports to prevent bruchids and nematodes from entering partner countries. India alone is the largest market for US dry peas and lentils, and in the top five markets for US chickpeas, with great potential for dry beans. Exporters must deal with US regulatory pressure to reduce MeBr use, labeled usage requiring indoor application and quarantine at 50 degrees F during winter shipping dates, and no effective alternatives to control the problem pests. ***USA Pulses requests USDA-ARS focus MeBr research towards finding effective alternatives for the fumigation of stored grains.***

14. **Pulses and Dilated Cardiomyopathy (DCM) in Canines.** The Food & Drug Administration in 2019 linked DCM in dogs to pulses in their diets, creating a significant negative impact on pulse markets. Current published research disputes this claim. ***USA Pulses strongly supports scientific research investigating the nutrition provided to companion animals in diets including higher concentrations of pulses. In addition, USA Pulses requests that all announcements about pet food nutrition be based on sound science and communicate the actions consumers need to take to keep their pets safe.***

Demand for pulses is increasing. Pulses are water-use efficient; they can fix atmospheric nitrogen in the soil; and they provide a nutrient-dense food source with immense versatility and great taste. With the recommended increase in protein by the DGA there is a rapidly growing demand for pulses and plant-based proteins as consumers look for healthy, environmentally friendly food options. USA Pulses needs support from USDA-ARS to develop improved pulse varieties with enhanced agronomic and quality traits, and to build more knowledge and information on the role of pulse crops in soil health/sustainability, nutrition, and functionality. USA Pulses is working to increase programming for the ARS but leadership must also work to hire scientists, technicians and even admin support to improve the support for pulses.

Continued support for the future. USA Pulses has collaborated with USDA-ARS over the past several years to enhance nutrition research, expand functionality information, and boost production and sustainability of pulse crops. Our achievements include increased funding for PCHI, now at $5.5 million, and the establishment of a Pulse Quality Network with funding raised to $2.8 million. The industry is optimistic about the future, and we look forward to your support in guiding and growing these efforts.

Sincerely,

Tim McGreevy
CEO

cc: Dr. Steven M. Kappes, Associate Administrator, National Programs
Dr. Roy Scott, National Program Leader for Crop Production and Protection
Dr. Cindy Davis, National Program Leader for Nutrition, Food Safety/Quality
Dr. Tara McHugh, Area Director, Pacific West Area
Dr. Larry Chandler, Area Director, Plains Area
Dr. Lanie Biladeau, Research Center Director, Edward T. Schafer Center, Fargo, ND.
Dr. George Vandemark, Research Ldr, Pulse Crops (Grain Legume) Genetics & Physiology Res Unit