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(Original Signature of Member)

119TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

**H. R.** \_\_\_\_\_

To provide for Department of Defense and Department of Agriculture joint research and development activities, and for other purposes.

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IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. MESSMER introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
**A BILL**

To provide for Department of Defense and Department of Agriculture joint research and development activities, 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 “DOD and USDA  
5 Interagency Research Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE AND DEPARTMENT OF**  
2 **AGRICULTURE JOINT RESEARCH AND DEVEL-**  
3 **OPMENT ACTIVITIES.**

4 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Defense and the  
5 Secretary of Agriculture (referred to as the “Secretaries”)  
6 shall carry out collaborative research and development ac-  
7 tivities focused on the joint advancement of Department  
8 of Defense and Department of Agriculture mission re-  
9 quirements and priorities in the areas of agriculture and  
10 food defense, as specified in section 221 of the Depart-  
11 ment of Agriculture Reorganization Act of 1994 (7 U.S.C.  
12 6922), including requirements and priorities related to na-  
13 tional security, agricultural resilience, feedstocks for bio-  
14 industrial manufacturing, and natural resource manage-  
15 ment.

16 (b) MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING.—The Sec-  
17 retaries shall enter into a memorandum of understanding  
18 or another appropriate interagency agreement for the pur-  
19 poses of carrying out and coordinating the research activi-  
20 ties under subsection (a). Such memorandum or agree-  
21 ment shall—

22 (1) formalize coordination between the Depart-  
23 ment of Defense and the Department of Agriculture  
24 on joint project activity in the areas specified in sub-  
25 section (c);

1           (2) require the use of a competitive, merit-re-  
2 viewed process, which considers applications from  
3 Federal agencies, National Laboratories, institutions  
4 of higher education, nonprofit institutions, industry,  
5 and other appropriate entities;

6           (3) provide a framework for the Secretaries to  
7 enter into public-private partnerships under which—

8           (A) the Secretaries may make grants for  
9 the purposes of this Act; and

10           (B) the Secretaries require the recipient of  
11 any such grant to provide an amount of non-  
12 Federal matching funds in an amount equal to  
13 the amount of the grant involved;

14           (4) where appropriate, leverage existing bilat-  
15 eral and multilateral agreements with allies and  
16 partners;

17           (5) ensure that activities carried out under sub-  
18 section (a) focus on the research and development of  
19 technologies and tools that are—

20           (A) characterized by high-payoff potential;

21           (B) designed to prepare for, prevent, pro-  
22 tect against, or mitigate current or projected  
23 threats to mission requirements and priorities  
24 delineated under subsection (a); and

1 (C) dependent upon initial Federal invest-  
2 ment to incentivize private development and  
3 broader market adoption; and

4 (6) establish a comprehensive risk management  
5 approach to gauge national security implications and  
6 inform and protect research, including through part-  
7 ner and performer engagement, due diligence proc-  
8 esses, continual monitoring, cybersecurity, threat  
9 awareness and education, supply chain protection,  
10 information sharing, and risk mitigation.

11 (c) COORDINATION.—In carrying out the activities  
12 under subsection (a) and contingent on formally docu-  
13 mented and mutually agreed upon research security prac-  
14 tices, polices, and procedures, the Secretaries shall—

15 (1) conduct collaborative research on—

16 (A) engineering, mechanization, and tech-  
17 nological improvements, including to address  
18 capacity issues across the agrifood supply chain;

19 (B) agricultural data architecture, includ-  
20 ing for applications of artificial intelligence and  
21 machine learning to agricultural data to opti-  
22 mize agricultural and defense systems;

23 (C) biological sciences, such as plant, ani-  
24 mal, and microbial genetics, for—

1 (i) natural disaster and weather resil-  
2 iency;

3 (ii) biosecurity;

4 (iii) biological, toxin, and chemical  
5 threat mitigation;

6 (iv) mitigation of the impacts to farm-  
7 land contiguous to military bases of De-  
8 partment of Defense chemical releases,  
9 specifically, perfluoroalkyl and  
10 polyfluoroalkyl substances (commonly re-  
11 ferred to as PFAS), released through ac-  
12 tivities carried out by the Department of  
13 Defense; and

14 (v) invasive species management;

15 (D) management strategies for water, en-  
16 ergy, soil, forests, and food to reduce scarcity  
17 risks to civilian and military operations;

18 (E) supply chain security, including feed-  
19 stocks for bioindustrial manufacturing for de-  
20 fense applications, such as propellants, explo-  
21 sives, fuels, and other critical materials and  
22 precursors;

23 (F) agrifood supply chain security to mini-  
24 mize food disruptions, promote and protect ag-

1           riculture as critical national infrastructure, and  
2           enhance defense logistics for military feeding;

3           (G) innovations applicable to defense objec-  
4           tives and beneficial to rural agricultural econo-  
5           mies, including—

6                   (i) precision agriculture technologies;

7                   (ii) drones;

8                   (ii) remote sensing; and

9                   (iii) positioning, navigation, and tim-  
10           ing capabilities;

11           (H) operational resilience to, and prepared-  
12           ness for, natural disasters, biosecurity hazards,  
13           and other threats to agricultural systems;

14           (I) wildfire prediction, prevention, and  
15           mitigation, including research on fuel load man-  
16           agement, fire behavior modeling, post-fire recov-  
17           ery strategies, and the impact of wildfires on  
18           agricultural productivity and military readiness;  
19           and

20           (J) such other topics as the Secretaries  
21           may determine relevant to the mission require-  
22           ments and priorities described in subsection (a);

23           (2) promote collaboration and secure informa-  
24           tion sharing with stakeholders that are capable of

1 increasing market-based adoption of technologies de-  
2 veloped pursuant to this Act;

3 (3) provide reliable access to secure data and  
4 information for entities that have analysis and intel-  
5 ligence capabilities and expertise relating to the de-  
6 fense of the food and agriculture critical infrastruc-  
7 ture sector, including—

8 (A) Federal, State, local, and Tribal agen-  
9 cies;

10 (B) relevant authorities at the Department  
11 of Defense, Department of Agriculture, and Na-  
12 tional Laboratories; and

13 (C) institutions of higher education, non-  
14 profit institutions, and industry partners;

15 (4) ensure that, where activities utilize Federal  
16 data or records from agricultural producers, such  
17 data—

18 (A) is not subject to disclosure under sec-  
19 tion 552 of title 5, United States Code (com-  
20 monly known as the Freedom of Information  
21 Act); and

22 (B) is not disclosed pursuant to any other  
23 authority or action of the Secretaries;

24 (5) establish and fund research in areas identi-  
25 fied by the Chief Scientist of the Department of Ag-

1       riculture and the Under Secretary of Defense for  
2       Research and Engineering, including through the  
3       Agriculture Advanced Research and Development  
4       Authority established under section 1473H of the  
5       National Agricultural Research, Extension, and  
6       Teaching Policy Act of 1977 (7 U.S.C. 3319k) and  
7       the Department of Defense Office of Research and  
8       Engineering, to address mission requirements and  
9       priorities delineated under subsection (a);

10           (6) support research and workforce development  
11       as the Secretaries determine necessary to foster in-  
12       novation in both the agricultural and defense sec-  
13       tors, including sharing of personnel of the Depart-  
14       ment of Defense and Department of Agriculture  
15       through the interagency exchange program estab-  
16       lished under section 221 of the Department of Agri-  
17       culture Reorganization Act of 1994 (7 U.S.C. 6922);  
18       and

19           (7) conduct applied research, development, and  
20       demonstration projects to field-test innovations re-  
21       sulting from the collaborative research conducted  
22       under paragraph (1), with the purpose of  
23       transitioning successful technologies into real-world  
24       agricultural and defense operations to improve effec-

1           tiveness, reduce risks, and strengthen long-term  
2           readiness.

3           (d) AGREEMENTS.—In carrying out the activities  
4 under subsection (a), the Secretaries are authorized to—

5               (1) enter into reimbursable agreements between  
6           the Department of Defense, the Department of Agri-  
7           culture, and other entities to maximize the effective-  
8           ness of research and development; and

9               (2) collaborate with relevant members of the in-  
10          telligence community and other Federal agencies as  
11          appropriate.

12          (e) AUTHORITY TO USE UNOBLIGATED FUNDS.—In  
13 addition to such sums as may be appropriated to carry  
14 out this Act, the Secretaries are authorized to carry out  
15 this Act using unobligated funds otherwise appropriated  
16 for the Agriculture Advanced Research and Development  
17 Authority within the Department of Agriculture and for  
18 research, development, testing, and evaluation within the  
19 Department of Defense.

20          (f) REPORTING AND OVERSIGHT.—

21               (1) ANNUAL REPORTS.—Not later than one  
22          year after the date of the enactment of this Act, and  
23          annually thereafter, the Secretaries shall—

1 (A) submit to the appropriate congres-  
2 sional committees a report that includes a de-  
3 scription of—

4 (i) interagency coordination between  
5 each Federal agency involved in the re-  
6 search and development activities carried  
7 out under this section, which shall include  
8 a description of the methodology used to  
9 select such activities for the year covered  
10 by the report;

11 (ii) potential opportunities to expand  
12 the technical capabilities of the Depart-  
13 ment of Defense and the Department of  
14 Agriculture;

15 (iii) collaborative research achieve-  
16 ments and the impact of such achieve-  
17 ments on national defense and agricultural  
18 resilience;

19 (iv) research security practices, poli-  
20 cies, and procedures implemented in con-  
21 junction with the activities carried out  
22 under this Act;

23 (v) expenditures for research and de-  
24 velopment activities under this Act; and

1 (vi) future priorities for joint re-  
2 search; and

3 (B) make a version of the report available  
4 to the public, except that such publicly available  
5 version of the report may only contain informa-  
6 tion that is safe for public release in accordance  
7 with the Controlled Unclassified Information  
8 Programs at the Department of Defense and  
9 Department of Agriculture.

10 (2) RESEARCH SECURITY.—The activities au-  
11 thorized under this section shall be carried out in a  
12 manner consistent with subtitle D of title VI of the  
13 Research and Development, Competition, and Inno-  
14 vation Act (enacted as division B of Public Law  
15 117–167; 42 U.S.C. 19231 et seq.), to ensure re-  
16 search integrity and security.

17 (3) GAO REVIEWS.—Not less frequently than  
18 once every five years after the date of the enactment  
19 of this Act, the Comptroller General of the United  
20 States shall conduct a review to assess the effective-  
21 ness and impact of the joint research initiative es-  
22 tablished under this Act.

23 (g) JUDICIAL DEFERENCE.—Notwithstanding sec-  
24 tion 706 of title 5, United States Code, a court shall defer

1 to the Secretaries' reasonable interpretation of any ambig-  
2 uous provision of this Act.

3 (h) DEFINITIONS.—In this Act:

4 (1) The term “agriculture and food defense”  
5 has the meaning giving that term in section 221 of  
6 the Department of Agriculture Reorganization Act  
7 of 1994 (7 U.S.C. 6922).

8 (2) The term “appropriate congressional com-  
9 mittees” means—

10 (A) the Committee on Armed Services, the  
11 Committee on Agriculture, and the Committee  
12 on Science, Space, and Technology of the  
13 House of Representatives; and

14 (B) the Committee on Armed Services, the  
15 Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and For-  
16 estry, and the Committee on Energy and Nat-  
17 ural Resources of the Senate.