

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

**NYDIA M. VELAZQUEZ**

7TH DISTRICT, NEW YORK

June 27, 2019

The Honorable Sonny Perdue  
Secretary  
United States Department of Agriculture  
US Department of Agriculture  
1280 Maryland Ave SW,  
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue,

I am writing today in response to alarming reports revealing the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) decision to deliberately suppress imperative studies conducted by the Agricultural Research Service (ARS) and research partners showing the dangers of climate change.<sup>1</sup> As you know, the non-partisan ARS is a leading source of scientific information for farmers and consumers in the United States. Failure to promote taxpayer funded research reverberates a clear intent to suppress knowledge of the increasing danger of climate change.

The mission of the ARS is to find solutions to agricultural problems that affect Americans every day from field to table.<sup>2</sup> The USDA has a duty to allow the ARS to uphold their civic obligation and actively inform the public. This obligation can only be fulfilled through dynamically promoting all scientific studies aimed at solving agricultural problems, including those that involve climate change. In fact, at least 45 climate-related research studies were conducted by the ARS since 2017. Yet only two, favorable to the meat industry, were permitted to be publicly dispersed.<sup>3</sup> It is critical that the myriad of issues scientists at the ARS examine receive fair and equal treatment. Ultimately, we cannot dismiss the connection between climate change and agriculture wellness.

On the basis thereof, according to an article in The Hill on June 24, a USDA spokesperson said, "Research continues on these subjects and we promote the research once researchers are ready to announce the findings, after going through the appropriate reviews and clearances".<sup>4</sup> Assuming this statement is completely factual, it is perplexing to interpret the USDA's intention to not promote the roughly 45 climate-related studies that were whole and complete. As such, I pose the following questions to you:

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.politico.com/story/2019/06/23/agriculture-department-climate-change-1376413>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ars.usda.gov/about-ars/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ars.usda.gov/oc/press-room/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://thehill.com/blogs/blog-briefing-room/news/450037-trump-admin-buried-reports-warning-climate-change-could-hurt>

- 1) What are the appropriate reviews and clearances required to publish and promote research? Please describe the chain of command.
- 2) Since 2017, how many ARS studies and ARS research partner studies have called for publication requests? Are any of those studies pending approval? If so, please provide a brief description of each one.
- 3) What determines lack of promotion with studies such as the multinational two-year study demonstrating rising carbon dioxide in the atmosphere could affect rice, the worlds third largest crop behind wheat and corn?
- 4) Were there any communications between the White House and the USDA regarding the release of climate-related studies. If so, what was the nature of those communications?

No country, no matter how sophisticated they are technologically, can advance its society fully without actively working to circulate information. Especially important is disseminating data that will equip the public with sufficient scientific skills to enable them to develop informed opinions about important public health and agricultural issues.

We must prioritize scientific reality over political strategy. I respectfully request you assess the USDA's internal information broadcast problem. The lack of ARS scientific publicity deters development of the agricultural industry and the public health of everyday Americans. Please provide answers to this inquiry within 30 days of receipt of this letter.

Thank you.



Nydia M. Velázquez  
Member of Congress