

119TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 4607

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

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MAY 20, 2026

Mr. BANKS (for himself and Mr. BUDD) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Armed Services

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”.

6 **SEC. 2. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE AND DEPARTMENT OF**
7 **AGRICULTURE JOINT RESEARCH AND DEVEL-**
8 **OPMENT ACTIVITIES.**

9 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Defense and the
10 Secretary of Agriculture (referred to in this Act as the

1 “Secretaries”) shall carry out collaborative research and
2 development activities focused on the joint advancement
3 of Department of Defense and Department of Agriculture
4 mission requirements and priorities in the areas of agri-
5 culture and food defense, as specified in section 221 of
6 the Department of Agriculture Reorganization Act of
7 1994 (7 U.S.C. 6922), including requirements and prior-
8 ities related to national security, agricultural resilience,
9 feedstocks for bioindustrial manufacturing, and natural
10 resource management.

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

17 (1) formalize coordination between the Depart-
18 ment of Defense and the Department of Agriculture
19 on joint project activity in the areas specified in sub-
20 section (c);

21 (2) require the use of a competitive, merit-re-
22 viewed process, which considers applications from
23 Federal agencies, National Laboratories, institutions
24 of higher education, nonprofit institutions, industry,
25 and other appropriate entities;

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

3 (A) the Secretaries may make grants for
4 the purposes of this Act; and

5 (B) the Secretaries require the recipient of
6 any such grant to provide an amount of non-
7 Federal matching funds in an amount equal to
8 the amount of the grant involved;

9 (4) where appropriate, leverage existing bilat-
10 eral and multilateral agreements with allies and
11 partners;

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

15 (A) characterized by high-payoff potential;

16 (B) designed to prepare for, prevent, pro-
17 tect against, or mitigate current or projected
18 threats to mission requirements and priorities
19 delineated under subsection (a); and

20 (C) dependent upon initial Federal invest-
21 ment to incentivize private development and
22 broader market adoption; and

23 (6) establish a comprehensive risk management
24 approach to gauge national security implications and
25 inform and protect research, including through part-

1 ner and performer engagement, due diligence proc-
2 esses, continual monitoring, cybersecurity, threat
3 awareness and education, supply chain protection,
4 information sharing, and risk mitigation.

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

9 (1) conduct collaborative research on—

10 (A) engineering, mechanization, and tech-
11 nological improvements, including to address
12 capacity issues across the agrifood supply chain;

13 (B) agricultural data architecture, includ-
14 ing for applications of artificial intelligence and
15 machine learning to agricultural data to opti-
16 mize agricultural and defense systems;

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

19 (i) natural disaster and weather resil-
20 iency;

21 (ii) biosecurity;

22 (iii) biological, toxin, and chemical
23 threat mitigation;

24 (iv) mitigation of the impacts to farm-
25 land contiguous to military bases of De-

1 partment of Defense chemical releases
2 through activities carried out by the De-
3 partment of Defense; and

4 (v) invasive species management;

5 (D) management strategies for water, en-
6 ergy, soil, forests, and food to reduce scarcity
7 risks to civilian and military operations;

8 (E) supply chain security, including feed-
9 stocks for bioindustrial manufacturing for de-
10 fense applications, such as propellants, explo-
11 sives, fuels, and other critical materials and
12 precursors;

13 (F) agrifood supply chain security to mini-
14 mize food disruptions, promote and protect ag-
15 riculture as critical national infrastructure, and
16 enhance defense logistics for military feeding;

17 (G) innovations applicable to defense objec-
18 tives and beneficial to rural agricultural econo-
19 mies, including—

20 (i) precision agriculture technologies;

21 (ii) drones;

22 (iii) remote sensing; and

23 (iv) positioning, navigation, and tim-
24 ing capabilities;

1 (H) operational resilience to, and prepared-
2 ness for, natural disasters, biosecurity hazards,
3 and other threats to agricultural systems;

4 (I) wildfire prediction, prevention, and
5 mitigation, including research on fuel load man-
6 agement, fire behavior modeling, post-fire recov-
7 ery strategies, and the impact of wildfires on
8 agricultural productivity and military readiness;
9 and

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

13 (2) promote collaboration and secure informa-
14 tion sharing with stakeholders that are capable of
15 increasing market-based adoption of technologies de-
16 veloped pursuant to this Act;

17 (3) provide reliable access to secure data and
18 information for entities that have analysis and intel-
19 ligence capabilities and expertise relating to the de-
20 fense of the food and agriculture critical infrastruc-
21 ture sector, including—

22 (A) Federal, State, local, and Tribal agen-
23 cies;

1 (B) relevant authorities at the Department
2 of Defense, Department of Agriculture, and Na-
3 tional Laboratories; and

4 (C) institutions of higher education, non-
5 profit institutions, and industry partners;

6 (4) ensure that, where activities utilize Federal
7 data or records from agricultural producers, such
8 data—

9 (A) is not subject to disclosure under sec-
10 tion 552 of title 5, United States Code (com-
11 monly known as the “Freedom of Information
12 Act”); and

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

15 (5) establish and fund research in areas identi-
16 fied by the Chief Scientist of the Department of Ag-
17 riculture and the Under Secretary of Defense for
18 Research and Engineering, including through the
19 Agriculture Advanced Research and Development
20 Authority established under section 1473H of the
21 National Agricultural Research, Extension, and
22 Teaching Policy Act of 1977 (7 U.S.C. 3319k) and
23 the Department of Defense Office of Research and
24 Engineering, to address mission requirements and
25 priorities delineated under subsection (a);

1 (6) support research and workforce development
2 as the Secretaries determine necessary to foster in-
3 novation in both the agricultural and defense sec-
4 tors, including sharing of personnel of the Depart-
5 ment of Defense and Department of Agriculture
6 through the interagency exchange program estab-
7 lished under section 221 of the Department of Agri-
8 culture Reorganization Act of 1994 (7 U.S.C. 6922);
9 and

10 (7) conduct applied research, development, and
11 demonstration projects to field-test innovations re-
12 sulting from the collaborative research conducted
13 under paragraph (1), with the purpose of
14 transitioning successful technologies into real-world
15 agricultural and defense operations to improve effec-
16 tiveness, reduce risks, and strengthen long-term
17 readiness.

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

20 (1) enter into reimbursable agreements between
21 the Department of Defense, the Department of Agri-
22 culture, and other entities to maximize the effective-
23 ness of research and development; and

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

4 (e) **AUTHORITY TO USE UNOBLIGATED FUNDS.**—In
5 addition to such sums as may be appropriated to carry
6 out this Act, the Secretaries are authorized to carry out
7 this Act using unobligated funds otherwise appropriated
8 for the Agriculture Advanced Research and Development
9 Authority within the Department of Agriculture and for
10 research, development, testing, and evaluation within the
11 Department of Defense.

12 (f) **REPORTING AND OVERSIGHT.**—

13 (1) **ANNUAL REPORTS.**—Not later than one
14 year after the date of the enactment of this Act, and
15 annually thereafter, the Secretary of Defense, in
16 consultation with the Secretary of Agriculture,
17 shall—

18 (A) submit to the appropriate congres-
19 sional committees a report that includes a de-
20 scription of—

21 (i) interagency coordination between
22 each Federal agency involved in the re-
23 search and development activities carried
24 out under this section, which shall include
25 a description of the methodology used to

1 select such activities for the year covered
2 by the report;

3 (ii) potential opportunities to expand
4 the technical capabilities of the Depart-
5 ment of Defense and the Department of
6 Agriculture;

7 (iii) collaborative research achieve-
8 ments and the impact of such achieve-
9 ments on national defense and agricultural
10 resilience;

11 (iv) research security practices, poli-
12 cies, and procedures implemented in con-
13 junction with the activities carried out
14 under this Act;

15 (v) expenditures for research and de-
16 velopment activities under this Act; and

17 (vi) future priorities for joint re-
18 search; and

19 (B) make a version of the report available
20 to the public, except that such publicly available
21 version of the report may only contain informa-
22 tion that is safe for public release in accordance
23 with the Controlled Unclassified Information
24 Programs at the Department of Defense and
25 Department of Agriculture.

1 (2) RESEARCH SECURITY.—The activities au-
2 thorized under this section shall be carried out in a
3 manner consistent with subtitle D of title VI of the
4 Research and Development, Competition, and Inno-
5 vation Act (division B of Public Law 117–167; 42
6 U.S.C. 19231 et seq.), to ensure research integrity
7 and security.

8 (3) GAO REVIEWS.—Not less frequently than
9 once every 5 years after the date of the enactment
10 of this Act, the Comptroller General of the United
11 States shall conduct a review to assess the effective-
12 ness and impact of the joint research initiative es-
13 tablished under this Act.

14 (g) JUDICIAL DEFERENCE.—Notwithstanding sec-
15 tion 706 of title 5, United States Code, a court shall defer
16 to the Secretaries’ reasonable interpretation of any ambig-
17 uous provision of this Act.

18 (h) DEFINITIONS.—In this Act:

19 (1) AGRICULTURE AND FOOD DEFENSE.—The
20 term “agriculture and food defense” has the mean-
21 ing giving that term in section 221(a) of the Depart-
22 ment of Agriculture Reorganization Act of 1994 (7
23 U.S.C. 6922(a)).

1 (2) APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMIT-
2 TEES.—The term “appropriate congressional com-
3 mittees” means—

4 (A) the Committee on Armed Services, the
5 Committee on Agriculture, and the Committee
6 on Science, Space, and Technology of the
7 House of Representatives; and

8 (B) the Committee on Armed Services, the
9 Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and For-
10 estry, and the Committee on Energy and Nat-
11 ural Resources of the Senate.

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