



March 31, 2025

Mr. Ricki Schroeder

Chief of Staff

Research, Education and Economics

U.S. Department of Agriculture

14th & Independence Ave., SW

Washington, DC 20250

Dear Mr. Schroeder,

We are writing on behalf of the National Barley Improvement Committee (NBIC), American Malting Barley Association (AMBA), and the National Barley Growers Association (NBGA) to express our strong concerns regarding the proposed reductions in workforce within the Agricultural Research Service (ARS), specifically in relation to barley research. While we acknowledge the need to reduce government spending and the importance of streamlining operations, we urge you to consider the long-term consequences these cuts could have on research that directly supports U.S. barley production and the broader industries that rely on it. We strongly urge you to preserve positions that are critical to barley research to protect investments already made and ensure continued growth in the industry. Barley is integral to the U.S. brewing, malting, and distilling industries, contributing an economic impact of \$400 billion annually from the brewing industry alone. While barley may not be among the largest crops in acreage, it supports significant value-added industries (including Kentucky's \$9 billion Bourbon industry).

Federal investments in barley research—such as those focused on genetic improvements, disease resistance, and resilience to abiotic stress—are crucial for ensuring U.S. farmers remain competitive in a global marketplace. These research efforts not only benefit barley farmers but the wider economy, providing jobs and economic returns across the country. There is a significant return on investment generated by research. For every \$1 invested in agricultural research, the economy realizes a return of \$20, reinforcing the importance of continued support for these programs. If research positions are lost, we are not only jeopardizing ongoing research projects but also risking the loss of millions of dollars already invested. The expertise of these highly specialized roles is difficult, if not impossible, to replace, and the knowledge and progress made through years of research will be lost without their continued involvement.

In addition to the critical research positions, we also recognize the essential support provided by the technicians who assist in daily operations. These technicians are the backbone of research, from maintaining equipment to assisting in data collection. Without their contributions, the critical work being done by ARS scientists could not be carried out effectively. Losing these positions would be a devastating blow to the progress already made in barley research.

Our respective organizations are committed to supporting the barley research community, but we need continued investment into ARS to ensure that the industry remains competitive and sustainable. We urge ARS leadership to prioritize the preservation of these critical research programs, which are vital for maintaining a robust and resilient barley supply chain in the U.S.

Barley malt quality analysis: Barley has highly specific quality standards that must be met in order for it to be used in the production of malt. As the network of barley researchers make advancements in genetic improvements or craft recommendations on crop management, these changes must be vetted to prove the barley produced still meets those high industry requirements. Having the physical infrastructure and the talent to analyze the potential malt quality of samples generated through research is of critical importance.

Disease surveillance and resistance: Several diseases have the potential to devastate barley and other cereal crops in any given year. Through various initiatives, a network of research exists to identify the prevalence and extent of disease impacting crops. The outcomes of this work directly informs recommendations made to farmers in the management of their crops. Furthermore, this same research network is aggressively seeking to understand disease pressures to inform barley breeding programs so that resistance can be bolstered in the crop leading to lessened reliance on chemical inputs.

Building resiliency to abiotic stress: Barley inherently is an extremely tolerant crop, often grown where other crops cannot - in high elevations, or arid regions. It is also extremely efficient with inputs like water and fertility. In order to bolster this resilience, research focusing on tolerance to stressors like heat and drought is critical to ensure we have a stable supply of barley in the years ahead. Furthermore, in order to diversify growing regions and to promote on-farm productivity and profitability, advancements in winter-hardiness are vital to opening up opportunities for additional winter barley production that supports several ecosystem services.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We look forward to continuing to work with you to support barley research and ensure that the investments made in U.S. agriculture continue to pay dividends for years to come.

Respectfully,



Scott E. Heisel
President
American Malting Barley Association



Ashley McFarland
Executive Secretary
National Barley Improvement Committee



Chris Englestad
President
National Barley Growers Association