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CHELLIE PINGREE
CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES
1ST DISTRICT, MAINE

June 24, 2019

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The Honorable Phyllis K. Fong
Inspector General
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Room 117-W Jamie Whitten Building
1400 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Inspector General Fong,

I am writing to request investigatory action into the alleged suppression of climate change science at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

On June 23, 2019, Politico published an article describing a pattern of climate change research being buried by USDA. The article noted that only two Agricultural Research Service (ARS) studies related to climate change have been publicized since January 2017, while at least 45 ARS studies related to climate change have not been publicized. The article also detailed instances in which USDA asked research institutions not to publicize the results of peer-reviewed studies. Additionally, previous reports regarding the relocation of the National Institute of Food and Agriculture and the Economic Research Service have suggested that the relocation is meant to suppress research on controversial topics, including climate change.

As you know, USDA's Office of the Inspector General (OIG) completed an audit report in February 2018 titled, "Reviewing the Integrity of USDA's Scientific Research Program." As part of this audit report, OIG conducted a survey of 2,212 research-grade scientists at USDA. Question 18 asked USDA researchers, "Have you been informed by management/supervisors/public affairs that certain research topics/ papers and conference presentations are sensitive/controversial/ prominent/ high profile and require additional managerial approval?" In response, 74 percent of the USDA researchers completing the survey selected "yes." The next question asked USDA researchers to identify the research areas that have been identified to them as "sensitive/ controversial/ prominent/ high profile." In response, 42 percent of the USDA researchers completing the survey selected "climate change."

I am deeply concerned by these recent reports, especially combined with the results of OIG's researcher survey last year. USDA's Scientific Integrity Policy indicates that "it is the policy of the Department to . . . encourage, but not require, USDA scientists to participate in communications with the media regarding their scientific findings (data and results)." Federally-funded research should never be suppressed. Farmers are already experiencing the effects of

climate change, and the federal government should be doing everything it can to give farmers the research they need to stay in business. I believe this issue warrants further investigation by USDA's OIG and request a report be conducted on USDA's dissemination of climate change research.

I appreciate your prompt attention to this matter. If you have any questions, please contact Kelliann Blazek on my staff at kelliann.blazek@mail.house.gov or 202-225-6116.

Sincerely,



Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress