



NHCSL

THE NATIONAL HISPANIC CAUCUS OF STATE LEGISLATORS

RESOLUTION

No. 2019-04

Encouraging Agricultural Collaboration between the United States and Israel

Reported to the Caucus by the NHCSL
Business, Economic Development, International Relations and Trade Task Force
Rep. Alonzo Baldonado (NM), Chair

Sponsored by Rep. César Chávez (AZ) and Rep. Alonzo Baldonado (NM)

Unanimously ratified by the Caucus on December 5, 2019

1 **WHEREAS**, many communities in the United States struggle with problems such as
2 drought, water storage issues, limited resources, environmental changes, and overall
3 food security;¹ and,

4 **WHEREAS**, climate change poses a severe threat to the United States' southwest
5 region, a region with large Hispanic populations, "an already parched region that is
6 expected to get hotter and, in its southern half, significantly drier. Increased heat and
7 changes to rain and snowpack will send ripple effects throughout the region's critical
8 agriculture sector, affecting the lives and economies of 56 million people;"² and,

¹ Alicia Harvie, *A Looming Crisis on American Farm* (Farmaid), available at:

<https://www.farmaid.org/issues/farm-economy-in-crisis/looming-crisis-american-farms/>.

² U.S. Global Change Research Program, NATIONAL CLIMATE ASSESSMENT: SOUTHWEST, pp. 463 (The assessment admits there are uncertainties but notes, at p. 483, that: "There is **high** confidence in the continued trend of declining snowpack and streamflow in parts of the Southwest given the evidence base and remaining uncertainties. For the impacts on water supply, there is **high** confidence that

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9 **WHEREAS**, Israel has been a global leader in agricultural technologies, addressing
10 food security issues in an arid landscape by pioneering “trickle-down irrigation,
11 agricultural biotechnology, soil solarization, and the sustained use of industrial waste
12 for agriculture;”³ and,

13 **WHEREAS**, Israeli companies also continue to lead the nations of the world in
14 agricultural drone technology;⁴ and,

15 **WHEREAS**, Israel is further developing artificial intelligence for agricultural
16 purposes and plant biotechnology;⁵ and,

17 **WHEREAS**, according to *The Economist*, Israel’s agriculture economy is so impressive
18 that almost twice as many companies exist in the Israeli agricultural sector than in
19 the better-known Israeli cyber security sector;⁶ and,

20 **WHEREAS**, in our 2018 Annual Summit we held a session dedicated to policies
21 promoting agricultural entrepreneurship among farmworkers because over 80
22 percent⁷ of U.S. farmworkers self-identify as Hispanic, making this issue a key priority
23 for our Caucus; and,

24 **WHEREAS**, Israel’s has a long track record of turning kibbutz⁸ farmworkers into
25 agricultural entrepreneurs;⁹ and,

26 **WHEREAS**, Israel’s achievements in fomenting agricultural entrepreneurship among
27 kibbutzim members thereby provides a great area of potential learning for Hispanic
28 Americans and of collaboration between Israel and U.S. Hispanic communities; and,

reduced surface water supply reliability will affect the region’s cities, agriculture, and ecosystems.” High confidence means that there is “Moderate evidence (several sources, some consistency, methods vary and/or documentation limited, etc.), medium consensus”), available at <https://nca2014.globalchange.gov/report/regions/southwest>.

³ Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs “Science and Technology: Agricultural R&D,” (Government of Israel), available at:

<http://www.israel.org/MFA/AboutIsrael/Science/Pages/SCIENCE%20AND%20TECHNOLOGY-%20Agricultural%20R-amp-D.aspx>.

⁴ *Silicon makes the desert bloom; Agritech in Israel* The Economist, 2019, accessed at :

<https://www.economist.com/middle-east-and-africa/2019/01/12/how-silicon-makes-israels-desert-bloom>

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Employment and Training Administration, *The National Agricultural Workers Survey*, p. 1 (US Dept. of Labor, Jan. 2018) (“Eighty-three percent of all farmworkers were Hispanic. Among U.S.-born workers, 35 percent were Hispanic.”), available at

https://www.doleta.gov/naws/pages/research/docs/NAWS_Research_Report_13.pdf.

⁸ Kibbutzim are collective communities in Israel that were traditionally based on agriculture. “In recent decades, some kibbutzim have been privatized and changes have been made in the communal lifestyle.” See <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kibbutz>.

⁹ The Economist, *supra* note 4.

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29 **WHEREAS**, in 2020, the Israeli government “plans to sponsor pilot projects that
30 connect startups with farmers,” allowing for technology trials before entering
31 international markets;¹⁰ and,

32 **WHEREAS**, experts note that Israel’s next challenge will be scaling up the use of its
33 agricultural technology, because “limited farmland means they must look for partners
34 abroad early on;”¹¹ and,

35 **WHEREAS**, in October 25, 1977, the United States and Israel signed the US-Israel
36 Binational Agricultural Research and Development (BARD) Fund, “a competitive
37 funding program for mutually beneficial, mission-oriented, strategic and applied
38 research of agricultural problems, jointly conducted by American and Israeli
39 scientists;”¹² and,

40 **WHEREAS**, the U.S. National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) and the BARD
41 Fund signed a Memorandum of Understanding in 2013, that establishes a
42 framework under which U.S. and Israeli scientists and engineers collaborate and
43 receive cross-funding for agricultural research;¹³ and,

44 **WHEREAS**, on December 20, 2018, as part of the Agriculture Improvement Act of
45 2018, a bipartisan amendment, led by Congressman Darren Soto (FL-09), enacted an
46 expansion to the 2013 Memorandum of Understanding that includes encouraging
47 research by “private entities, including through collaboration with colleges and
48 universities, research institutions, and the private sector” and called for accelerating
49 “the demonstration, development, and application of agricultural solutions resulting
50 from or relating to BARD Fund programs, including BARD Fund-sponsored research
51 and innovations in drip irrigation, pesticides, aquaculture, livestock, poultry, disease
52 control, and farm equipment;”¹⁴ and,

53 **WHEREAS**, the newly enacted language requires new appropriations from time to
54 time to be “paid directly to the Fund.”¹⁵

55 **THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that The National Hispanic Caucus of State
56 Legislators commends Israel’s efforts, achievements, and leadership in agricultural

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² US-Israel Binational Agricultural Research and Development fund, accessed at: <https://www.bard-isus.com/>.

¹³ USDA, BARD Memorandum of Understanding, accessed at: <https://nifa.usda.gov/resource/bard-memorandum-understanding>.

¹⁴ AGRICULTURE IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2018, Stat. Sec. 7122, Binational agricultural research and development (De. 20, 2018) (amending Sec. 1458(e) of the NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH, EXTENSION, AND TEACHING POLICY ACT OF 1977 (7 U.S.C. § 3291(e)).

¹⁵ 7 U.S.C. § 3291(e)(1).

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57 technology research and development, and in promoting agricultural
58 entrepreneurship among farmworkers and their families; and,

59 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that The National Hispanic Caucus of State Legislators
60 recognizes that Israel can serve as a crucial ally for the United States in addressing
61 domestic food security and overall agricultural concerns; and,

62 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that The National Hispanic Caucus of State Legislators
63 supports promoting further agricultural cooperation between Israel and the United
64 States as a way to strengthen the longstanding Israeli-American alliance; and,

65 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that The National Hispanic Caucus of State Legislators
66 understands that promoting Israeli-US agricultural entrepreneurship can
67 particularly help Hispanic farmworkers and their families become agritech leaders;
68 and,

69 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that The National Hispanic Caucus of State Legislators
70 calls on Congress to robustly allocate monies to the BARD Fund, with a view to, among
71 other things, developing safer pesticides and improving agricultural
72 entrepreneurship and innovation among US farmworkers; and,

73 **BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED**, that The National Hispanic Caucus of State Legislators
74 calls on states and the federal government to contribute to any efforts to further
75 develop and implement Israeli and US-Israeli agricultural practices and technologies
76 that may aid in the health of our own agricultural industry.

77 THE NHCSL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED THIS RESOLUTION
78 ON MAY 6, 2019 AT ITS SPRING MEETING IN WASHINGTON, DC.

79 THE NATIONAL HISPANIC CAUCUS OF STATE LEGISLATORS UNANIMOUSLY
80 RATIFIED THIS RESOLUTION ON DECEMBER 5, 2019, AT THE ANNUAL MEETING
81 IN SAN JUAN, PR.