



United States Department of Agriculture

Research, Education, and Economics
Agricultural Research Service

August 19, 2019

The Honorable Susan A. Davis
U.S. House of Representatives
1214 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congresswoman Davis:

Thank you for your July 26, 2019, letter cosigned by your colleagues, concerning the expansion of Sahara mustard (*Brassica tournefortii*) across the southwestern United States and the need for the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) research on biocontrol control agents for its eradication. We share your concern about the damage this plant is inflicting on native ecosystems and its contributions to increasing wildfire hazards and risks.

As you know, the Agricultural Research Service (ARS) is USDA's chief in-house research agency, and we conduct biocontrol research on a number of economically significant plant and insect pests. ARS scientists working at our European Biological Control Laboratory (EBCL) in Montpellier, France, are currently conducting preliminary investigations to support the development of a new project plan that will undergo external review and then be implemented in September 2020.

The new 5-year research plan will include studies on identifying and assessing potential biocontrol control agents that can be used for Sahara mustard mitigation and eradication. The EBCL is the ideal location for this research to occur since Sahara mustard is native to this region and has not to date developed invasive characteristics that threaten its native ecosystem, which suggests natural predators already play a role in keeping it in check. We will be able to share more information about our research scope and methodology when the plan has been reviewed and approved.

We appreciate your support of ARS efforts to protect U.S. agricultural, urban, military, and recreational lands from the damaging effects of Sahara mustard. If you have further questions or would like additional information about our work, please have a member of your staff contact Gary Mayo, the ARS Legislative Affairs Analyst, at 202-260-9494 or gary.mayo@usda.gov.

Again, thank you writing and for sharing your perspective about this very important matter.

A similar letter is being sent to your colleagues.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chavonda Jacobs-Young". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

CHAVONDA JACOBS-YOUNG
Administrator

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