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– FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE –

WOODLAND, California, Sept. 9, 2020 – Public-Private Partnership to Strengthen Sacramento Region’s Leadership in Ag | Food | Health innovation

AgStart today announced a unique, broad-based public-private collaboration to fund a new, shared-use innovation incubator in Woodland supporting innovators and startup companies in Ag | Food | Health. When complete, the \$1.3M ‘Lab@AgStart’ will feature a fully-equipped shared-lab and kitchen space as well as a co-working office space. Examples of innovations that the Lab@AgStart could support include environmentally-friendly biocontrol products for agriculture, new drought-resistant crops, and new foods and food-as-medicine ingredients. The collaboration includes the U.S. Economic Development Administration, Yolo County, the City of Woodland, the Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation, and a number of other private donors.

“Our region has struggled with a lack of laboratory capacity to support emerging companies pursuing science-based innovations,” explained Michel Teel, Chief Visionary Officer of Raley’s and head of the Greater Sacramento Area Economic Council’s Food and Agriculture Innovation Council. “Expanding our region’s capacity to support science-based Food and Ag technology innovation strengthens our region’s leadership as an Ag | Food | Health innovation hub.”

Woodland and the Greater Sacramento region are located in the center of California’s Sacramento Valley region, one of the world’s most productive agricultural regions, but a region threatened by shortages of water and workforce availability. This creates opportunities for innovation – new drought-tolerant plant varieties, less-labor-intensive harvest techniques, and new foods and food ingredients – that could transform our food system.

“This land is both our past and our future, and we can’t wait to see what comes next. That’s why we’re proud to contribute significant funding for this project through our Doyuti T’uhkama partnership,” said the Tribal Council of the Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation, a Native American Tribe centered in nearby Brooks, California. “The Lab@AgStart will be all about creating what comes next.”

“In recent years, the prominence of UC Davis research in agriculture, food science, and human and animal health, and the strength of California’s Central Valley agricultural economy have generated an explosion of promising startup companies pioneering innovations to improve the productivity, efficiency, and sustainability of our food system”, said John Selep, President of AgTech Innovation Alliance, the non-profit sponsor of the AgStart program. “Developing these new solutions involves scientific testing, development, and refinement, requiring laboratory facilities, which are scarce throughout our Central Valley region. As a result, available laboratory facilities in the Greater Sacramento region have been filled, and new lab capacity has been quickly absorbed.”

“When it opens later in 2020, the Lab@AgStart facility will be the largest shared-use wet-lab facility for startup companies in the entire Central Valley region, said John. “Construction on the improvements necessary to outfit the lab will commence this fall and the Lab@AgStart should be ready for occupancy around the end of the year.”

A broad coalition of public and private funding sources have been assembled to finance the \$1.3 million dollar Lab@AgStart project.

“The U.S. Economic Development Administration made the right call in supporting AgStart. Their strong work to support burgeoning companies across the health and agriculture industries will lead to innovations that bolster our nation's food system,” Congressman John Garamendi (CA-03) said.

In addition to the Economic Development Administration, both the City of Woodland and County of Yolo have committed financial support to the Lab@AgStart project as well.

"We are thrilled by the announcement of the U.S. EDA's investment in helping grow our local food and agriculture innovation ecosystem," Woodland Mayor Rich Lansburgh said. "The City of Woodland is proud to partner with Yolo County and industry supporters to promote the scientific community through the launch of the Lab@AgStart, which will offer an affordable state-of-the-art facility in Downtown Woodland. Innovators will have access to Woodland's network of 190 plus existing food & ag companies that collaborate with the City through the Food Front initiative to transform the way we grow, produce, and enjoy the food that we eat."

“The Lab@AgStart is an exciting project for our region that further strengthens our ag and life science innovation ecosystem,” said Gary Sandy, Chair of the Yolo County Board of Supervisors. “The County is proud to collaborate with AgStart, the City of Woodland, and the Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation to maximize success for our community.”

Private sponsorship of the Lab@AgStart facility includes support from Bayer, Gowan Company, and the Dowling Family.

Dr. Matthew Amicucci, principal scientist for BCD Bioscience, said, “As a young nutritional science platform company recently spun out of UC Davis research, one of our biggest challenges has been finding research facilities in the Yolo County area. The opportunity for expanded lab space will enable us to not only fulfill our internal development and our Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation grant, but also facilitate further growth through collaborative projects with leading go-to-market partners.

Dr. Fatma Kaplan, Founder and CEO of Pheronym, a biocontrol startup based in Davis, said, “Finding affordable wet lab space is very difficult for early stage biotech companies. Incubator wet labs have been critical to Pheronym's early success. Agstart's new wet lab incubator will fill a critical need in the Sacramento Region.”

About AgStart and the AgTech Innovation Alliance:

AgStart is a program of AgTech Innovation Alliance, a registered 501(c)(3) non-profit public benefit corporation based in Woodland, California, focused on advancing innovation in Ag | Food | Health. AgStart has been active in the Sacramento region since 2012, when it was launched through a collaboration between a regional technology alliance and the University of California, Davis. Since 2015, AgStart has supported hundreds of ag- and food-tech startup companies through mentorship, education, and its shared co-working space at its downtown Woodland incubator.

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