

Att: Farm Bill

June 6, 2012

Dear Senator,

Creating jobs in rural America and ensuring the success of the next generation of farmers are national priorities. Earlier this spring, the Senate Agriculture Committee passed the bipartisan Agriculture Reform, Food and Jobs Act of 2012. We applaud Chairwoman Stabenow, Ranking Member Roberts, and members of the Committee for moving ahead with reauthorizing this wide-ranging and critical piece of legislation. While the Committee-passed bill takes modest steps to fulfill these priorities, the bill fails to make an adequate investment in rural economic development and in the next generation of farmers.

One of the proven job-creating titles of the farm bill is the Rural Development title, which authorizes essential grants and loan programs targeted at leveraging local initiatives to spur growth and opportunity in rural areas. Since 1996, Congress has provided an average of \$413 million per farm bill for the Rural Development title, while the new bill as reported by the Committee includes no funding at all.

We urge you to correct this deficiency by providing robust funding for the following successful Rural Development programs: Value-Added Producer Grants, Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program, Rural Energy Savings Program, and Water/Wastewater Backlog.

In addition to investing in the future of rural America, we must invest in the future of American agriculture. The average age of an American agricultural producer today is 57, and if we let current trends go unchecked, that number will only increase. Providing training and technical assistance to the next generation of farmers can help buck the trend and ensure future food security.

The Committee-passed bill falls far short of maintaining current investment in the training tools that new and diverse farmers need to succeed. We urge you to provide robust mandatory funding for the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program and Outreach and Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers Program (Section 2501).

We recognize the severity of our nation's fiscal situation. During the Committee markup, it was unclear without a Congressional Budget Office score whether there was funding available for these programs, and Senators agreed to continue the conversation about funding these key priorities before the floor debate. The final CBO score indicates that the Senate Agriculture Committee exceeded its commitment of \$23 billion in savings. We urge you to take advantage of this important opportunity to reinstate mandatory rural development funding and to improve investments in the future of American agriculture and rural communities.

Thank you for your attention to these important matters. We strongly encourage you to reach out to and work with Senator Brown of Ohio and other interested colleagues prior to the floor farm bill debate. These Senators are working on an amendment to fund these priorities.

By ensuring continued investments in rural economic development and in the next generation of farmers, we can ensure that the Farm Bill is a “jobs” bill that underpins and enables economic growth in rural communities throughout America. We look forward to working together on this important matter for American agriculture and America’s rural communities.

Sincerely,

Abundant Garden Life
Alianza Nacional de Campesinas
American Community Gardening Association
American Indian Mothers, Inc.
American Planning Association
American Public Works Association
American Sustainable Business Council
Association for Enterprise Opportunity
Center for Popular Research, Education and Policy
Center for Rural Affairs
Center for Social Inclusion
ChangeLab Solutions
ColorOfChange.org
Community Food Security Coalition
Council of State Community Development Agencies
The Cornucopia Institute
Corporation for Enterprise Development
Environmental Working Group
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Farmers’ Market Coalition
FoodCorps
Food and Water Watch
Food Democracy Now!
Growing Power, Inc.
Housing Assistance Council
Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy
Indian Nations Conservation Alliance
Intertribal Agriculture Council
ISED Solutions
Jewish Farm School
League of Rural Voters
Live Real
Main Street Project
National Association of Counties
National Association of Development Organizations

National Association of Regional Councils
National Association of Resource Conservation and Development Councils
National Association of Towns and Townships
National Catholic Rural Life Conference
National Center for Appropriate Technology
National Family Farm Coalition
National Farmers Union
National Latino Farmers and Ranchers Trade Association
National League of Cities
National Rural Development Council
National Rural Health Association
National Rural Housing Coalition
National Rural Water Association
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition
National Women in Agriculture Association
National Young Farmers' Coalition
Oregon Tilth
Organic Farming Research Foundation
Partners for Rural America
The Praxis Project
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Office of Public Witness
Rural Advancement Fund
Rural Coalition
Rural Community Assistance Partnership
Rural Development Leadership Network
School Food FOCUS
Senior Entrepreneurs
Slow Food USA
Union of Concerned Scientists
United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries
WhyHunger
Women, Food and Agriculture Network

ACEnet, Inc
Adelante Mujeres
Agri-Tech Producers, LLC
Alabama State Association of Cooperatives
Alliance of Forest Workers and Harvesters
Alternative Energy Resources Organization
American Federation of Government Employees, Local 3354
Angelic Organics Learning Center

Appalachian Sustainable Development
Arkansas Land and Farm Development Corporation
Ashtabula, Lake, and Geauga Farmers Union (Ohio)
Boston Area Gleaners, Inc.
California Certified Organic Farmers
California FarmLink
California Food and Justice Coalition
Carolina Farm Stewardship Organization
CASA del Llano
Catskill Mountainkeeper
Cascade Harvest Coalition
Center for Land-Based Learning
Central Oregon Locavore
City Seed, Inc.
Community Alliance with Family Farmers
Community Farm Alliance
Community Food and Agriculture Coalition
Connecticut Northeast Organic Farming Association
Corporation for Economic Opportunity
Crawford Stewardship Project
Crossroads Community Food Network
Ecological Farming Association
Edible Planet
Family Farm Defenders
Farmworker Association of Florida
Fay-Penn Economic Development Council
Federation of Southern Cooperatives - Rural Training and Research Center
Field Goods
Florida Certified Organic Growers & Consumers
Food Chain Workers Alliance
Friends of Family Farmers
Future Harvest CASA
GardenShare
Goucher College
Greene County Democrat
Growing Our Own Naturally
GrowMemphis
Hunger Action Network of NYS
Idaho's Bounty Co-op
Illinois Stewardship Alliance
Iowa Environmental Council
Just Food
Kansas Rural Center

The Land Connection
Land Stewardship Project
Lansing Urban Farm Project
Latino Economic Development Center
Liberty Prairie Foundation
Lutheran Social Services
Maine Rural Partners
Michael Fields Agricultural Institute
Michigan Land Use Institute
Michigan Young Farmer Coalition
Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service
Missouri Rural Crisis Center
Montgomery Countryside Alliance
Montgomery Victory Gardens
National Women in Agriculture, Alabama Chapter
Nebraska Sustainable Agriculture Society
New Entry Sustainable Farming Project
New Mexico Acequia Association
NYC Food and Farm Bill Working Group
North Carolina Association of Black Lawyers, Land Loss Prevention Project
North Coast Food Web
Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance
Northeast Organic Farming Association Interstate Council
Northwest Farm Bill Action Group
Northwest Michigan Food and Farming Network
Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association
Ohio Farmers Union
Oklahoma Black Historical Research Project
Oregon Rural Action
Organización en California de Líderes Campesinas
PCC Farmland Trust
Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture
Pesticide Action Network
Plattsburgh Community Garden Group, Inc.
Practical Farmers of Iowa
Progressive Agriculture Organization
Quad Cities Food Hub
REAP Food Group
The Reinvestment Fund
Rogue Farm Corps
The Rogue Initiative for a Vital Economy
Roots of Change

Rural Action Sustainable Agriculture
Rural Advancement Foundation International -USA
Silver Lining Institute
Slow Food First Coast
Slow Food Hamilton College
Smart Markets, Inc.
Southern Sustainable Agriculture Working Group
Sustainable Living Project/Local Living Venture
The Sustainable Restaurant Corps
St. Mary's Episcopal Church Food Program
Taos County Economic Development Corporation
Tasting Awareness
Texas/Mexico Border Coalition
Think Local Umpqua
Tilth Producers of Washington
University of Alabama Environmental Council
Virginia Association for Biological Farming
Washington State University- Small Farms Team
Washington Sustainable Food & Farming Network
Washington Young Farmers Coalition
Western Sustainable Agriculture Working Group
West Side Campaign Against Hunger
Wisconsin Farmers Union
Wisconsin Local Food Network
World Farmers