

June 6, 2012  
The Honorable Pat Roberts  
United States Senate  
109 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510-1605

Dear Senator Roberts,

Thank you for all the hard work you and your staff have put into drafting the 2012 Farm Bill. As the bill moves ahead, we write to underscore the importance of funding for key rural development programs that support Kansas's rural small businesses and entrepreneurial agriculture development.

Specifically, we urge you to work with fellow committee members to secure mandatory funding for two important programs.

**Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program - \$10 million per year in mandatory funding**

In just two years of operation, Kansas groups have received \$500,000 in loan capital and \$105,000 in grants through the Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program to create jobs by assisting small business owners in rural communities. Nationwide more than 120 organizations in 41 states have received \$11 million grants and \$40 million in loan capital nationwide. For the Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program to continue to serve Kansas and the country, it must receive renewed funding in the farm bill.

**Value Added Producer Grant Program - \$20 million per year in mandatory funding**

Producers and farmer cooperatives in Kansas have received 29 Value Added Producer Grants totalling more than \$1,800,000 invested in entrepreneurial agriculture development in the state.

Both of these programs were funded in the 2008 farm bill, and have demonstrated track records for success in Kansas. Yet the committee bill provides zero dollars in mandatory funds for these programs.

**Water/Wastewater Backlog – \$100 million**

USDA operates several programs that provide technical and financial assistance for water and wastewater infrastructure upgrades in small towns and communities in rural areas. This funding is critical to helping many communities provide safe drinking water and ensuring that businesses are retained and attracted to rural places. Currently the backlog for USDA funding for water/wastewater upgrades tops \$3.6 billion. The 2002 farm bill provided \$360 million in funding to address the water and wastewater backlog. The 2008 farm bill included \$120 million for the same purpose. The committee bill provides no mandatory funding for this critical need.

We also support funding the **Beginning Farmer & Rancher Development Program** at the same level or more as the 2008 farm bill.

Kansas has already benefited greatly from these programs. We urge you to work to include funding for these critical programs in your manager's amendment as the Farm Bill moves to the Senate floor.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

**Organizations**

Atwood Chamber of Commerce  
Fort Scott Area Chamber of Commerce  
Fredonia Area Chamber of Commerce  
South Central Kansas Economic Development District, Inc.

Woodson County Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development  
Kansas Rural Center  
Center for Rural Affairs

**Individuals**

Daniel R Hartman, Logan County Economic Development\* Dighton, KS  
Jeff Hofaker, Phillips County Economic Development\*, Logan, KS  
David A. Alfaro, Butler County Economic Development\*  
Shelia Lampe, Iola Area Chamber of Commerce\*, Iola  
Kimberly Skillman-Robrahn, Coffeey County Commissioner\* and Kansas Association of Counties Board Member\*  
John Unruh, Kiowa County Commissioner\*  
Gerald Koehn, Scott County Lumber. Scott City\*  
Shane Faurot, Center Link Construction  
Rebecca J. Faurot, Attorney at Law, Scott City\*  
Darla Sutor Moore, H-Bar Ranch, Scott City\*  
James and Sarah Krehbiel, Farmer, Scott City

\*Organization for Identification Purposes Only