

July 13, 2010

Senator Harry Reid,
Majority Leader

Senator Mitch McConnell,
Minority Leader

Senator Barbara Boxer, Chairman
Committee on Environment & Public Works

Senator James M. Inhofe, Ranking Member
Committee on Environment & Public Works

Senator Blanche Lincoln, Chairman
Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition &
Forestry

Senator Saxby Chambliss, Ranking Member
Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition &
Forestry

Senator Jeff Bingaman, Chairman
Committee on Energy & Natural Resources

Senator Lisa Murkowski, Ranking Member
Committee on Energy & Natural Resources

Senator John D. Rockefeller IV, Chairman
Committee on Commerce, Science &
Transportation

Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison,
Ranking Member
Committee on Commerce, Science &
Transportation

Senator Max Baucus, Chairman
Committee on Finance

Senator Chuck Grassley, Ranking Member
Committee on Finance

Honorable Senators:

On behalf of our farmer, rancher and rural supporters, we the undersigned organizations urge you to pass comprehensive climate and energy legislation in this session of Congress. Dependent on weather and the availability of natural resources, agriculture is uniquely vulnerable to climate change and farmers and ranchers will be among the first impacted by increases in unpredictable weather events, rising temperatures and shifts in rainfall. The ability of farmers and ranchers to produce abundant crops and livestock is of course critical to our food security and the viability of our rural and urban communities. It is of importance to all of us to pass a comprehensive climate and energy bill that supports sustainable agriculture and provides resources for farmers to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

Not only will farmers and ranchers be among the first affected by a changing climate, but agriculture is also a key sector that has the ability to reduce greenhouse gas emissions while providing additional environmental benefits. Widespread agreement among the research community concludes that agriculture can help reduce human contributions to climate change and should play a role in effective mitigation and adaptation initiatives. More specifically, sustainable farming systems can help us minimize emissions of greenhouse gasses and increase sequestration of soil carbon, thereby reducing GHGs in the atmosphere.

Farmers should be supported in moving towards climate-friendly practices with the resources necessary to establish sustainable practices. Current research indicates that many sustainable and organic agriculture practices, such as using cover crops, leaving crop residue on fields, managed rotational grazing, and reducing or eliminating the use of synthetic fertilizers, can all contribute to reducing our nation's GHG emissions. By implementing innovative and sustainable farming practices we can reduce the heat-trapping gases emitted from farming and increase the amount of carbon stored in the soil on those farms.

We believe that a climate and energy bill should include support for the agricultural sector to move towards sustainable practices with scientifically proven climate benefits for both mitigation of emissions and adaptation of agriculture to changing conditions. USDA conservation programs that provide research, technical assistance and financial incentives, for agriculture to address climate change mitigation and adaptation should also be supported.

We appreciate your consideration and urge you to work towards passage of a strong climate and energy bill, which will help protect farmers, and our food supply while moving agriculture towards a viable and sustainable future.

Sincerely,

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