

July 21, 2010

The Honorable Harry Reid
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Majority Leader Reid:

We the undersigned organizations support speedy passage of the pending child nutrition reauthorization as well as the agriculture appropriations bill. We understand the critical need to provide additional funding and improved policy for school meal programs. We also know the importance of trying to clear the appropriations bills by near or close to the start of the new fiscal year.

We are also united, however, in fervently opposing any attempt to use farm bill conservation program mandatory funding as offsets for either the child nutrition or appropriations bills. We oppose the \$2.8 billion cut to the Environmental Quality Incentives Program contained in the child nutrition bill reported out by the Agriculture Committee, and we oppose the cuts to the EQIP, the Wetlands Reserve Program, Grasslands Reserve Program, Farm and Ranch Land Protection Program, and Agricultural Management Assistance Program in the agricultural appropriations bill reported out by the Appropriations Committee.

Farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners are eager to share the cost of protecting the environment, and indeed demand for participation in conservation programs routinely far outstrips available funding. Applied conservation helps provide clean air and water, energy conservation, erosion reduction, carbon sequestration, wildlife and pollinator habitat, wetland protection, pesticide reduction, and other important public benefits that should not be lost.

After long and careful negotiation, the 2008 Farm Bill moved in the right direction by increasing resources for these purposes, and was widely touted for doing so. Now is not the time to reverse course and sacrifice an improved environment.

We strongly support passage of child nutrition reauthorization and of agriculture appropriations, but we oppose using mandatory conservation funding to pay for it. We look forward to working with you and with other Senate leaders to find more appropriate alternatives to get the two jobs done and the child nutrition and agriculture appropriations bills to the President's desk in a timely fashion.

Sincerely,

Alberts Organics
American Beekeeping Federation
American Farmland Trust
American Rivers
Audubon California

Audubon Dakotas
California Climate and Agriculture Network
California Farmers Union
Center for Environmental Health (CA)
Chesapeake Wildlife Heritage
Church Women United of New York
Community Alliance with Family Farmers (CA)
Community CROPS (NE)
Connecticut Farmland Trust
Connecticut Forest and Parks Association
Conservation Law Foundation
Defenders of Wildlife
Environmental Defense Fund
Environmental Working Group
Farm Fresh Rhode Island
Foodways Alliance (AZ)
Izaak Walton League of America
Land Stewardship Program
Land Trust Alliance
Leopold Group, Iowa Sierra Club
Michael Fields Agricultural Institute (WI)
Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy
Montana Farmers Union
Montgomery Countryside Alliance (MD)
Montgomery County Community Action Development Commission (PA)
Mount Adams Resource Stewards (WA)
National Association of Conservation Districts
National Audubon Society
National Catholic Rural Life Conference
National Center for Appropriate Technology
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition
National Wildlife Federation
Natural Resources Defense Council
New England Farmers Union
New England Small Farm Institute
Northeast Organic Farming Association – Connecticut
Northeast Organic Farming Association – Massachusetts

Northeast Organic Farming Association – New Hampshire
Northeast Organic Farming Association – New Jersey
Northeast Organic Farming Association – New York
Northeast Organic Farming Association – Vermont
Northern New Mexico Stockman’s Association
Occidental Arts and Ecology Center (CA)
Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association
Ohio Farmers Union
Oklahoma Composting Council
Organic Farming Research Foundation
Partners for Sustainable Pollination
Pennypack Farm and Education Center (PA)
Pesticide Watch Education Fund (CA)
Pollinator Partnership
Prairie Rivers Network
REAP Food Group (WI)
Roots of Change
Seacoast Eat Local (NH)
South Carolina Wildlife Federation
Stone Barns Center for Food & Agriculture (NY)
Sustainable Northwest
The Nature Conservancy
The Ranchers Stewardship Alliance (MT)
Union of Concerned Scientists
Utah Farmers Union
Virginia Association for Biological Farming
Wild Friends Program (NM)
World Wildlife Fund
Women, Food and Agriculture Network
Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation