

STATEMENT REGARDING HOUSE DISASTER
ASSISTANCE LEGISLATION

The undersigned farm organizations support finding a path forward to reaching agreement on a new five-year farm bill before current program authorities expire on Sept. 30. We are disappointed that the House Republican leadership has decided to not move forward with the House Agriculture Committee's bill before adjourning for the August recess. That bill would provide the disaster relief our farm and ranch families need at this time.

Instead, we understand the House may consider a separate disaster bill, under suspension of the rules on August 2, to make supplemental agricultural disaster assistance available for Fiscal Year 2012. Specifically, the bill retroactively extends the Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP), the Livestock Forage Program (LFP), the Emergency Livestock Assistance Program (ELAP) and the Tree Assistance Program (TAP) so that producers are helped for Fiscal Year 2012. All of those programs expired in 2011. Offsets to pay for the disaster assistance would come from imposing caps on two conservation programs, the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) and the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).

We do not oppose passage of a disaster assistance bill, but note that almost identical provisions to retroactively extend these four programs are included in the Senate-passed farm bill and the bill reported by the House Agriculture Committee. Those measures would likely be included in any conference committee report. It is imperative that we pass a comprehensive, long-term farm bill. Farmers and ranchers always face decisions that carry very serious financial ramifications, such as planting a crop, buying land or building a herd, and we need clear and confident signals from our lawmakers.

Assistance for cattle and sheep producers is very important and something that we strongly support in the five-year farm bill, but it is also important that assistance be provided for other types of livestock and for producers of fruits and vegetables. The disaster assistance bill does not help hog or poultry producers and only provides limited assistance via the grazing program for the dairy industry. The bill does not help dairy producers who are not located in a designated disaster county with grazing assistance and does not address high feed prices for dairy, hog or poultry producers. Many producers of fruits and vegetables may not have crop insurance available to them as a risk management tool, and they too need some type of help, which this package does not address.

The Congressional Budget Office scores this one-year bill as costing \$383 million. That expense is offset by cuts of \$639 million from the CSP and EQIP programs, leaving \$256 million to go towards deficit reduction. If the House simply passed the five-year farm bill reported out of Committee on a bipartisan basis, this bill would not be necessary. While we understand that will not

happen before the August recess, this bill potentially costs more than \$600 million and would only provide relief to livestock producers a month or two earlier than a farm bill debated and passed in September. Agriculture will already provide a minimum of \$23 billion in deficit reduction by passing the farm bill. We do not need to provide additional deficit reduction in this package only a few months before we provide far more than agriculture's "fair share."

Both the Senate and the House Agriculture Committees have produced reform-minded, bipartisan bills that address many of the core principles we believe are important, such as strengthening crop insurance as a reliable risk management tool or ensuring strong agricultural research and development. We remain committed to attempting to pass a five-year farm bill as soon as possible, including the long-term provisions it includes that would help alleviate the emergency conditions we are seeing across the country.

American Farm Bureau Federation
American Soybean Association
National Association of Wheat Growers
National Barley Growers Association
National Corn Growers Association
National Farmers Union
National Milk Producers Federation
National Sunflower Association
United Fresh Produce Association
U.S. Canola Association
USA Dry Pea & Lentil Council
Western Growers