

June 24, 2011

The Honorable Daniel K. Inouye
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
The Capitol, S-128
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
The Capitol, S-128
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Inouye and Ranking Member Cochran:

As you work to establish subcommittee allocations for the Fiscal Year 2012 appropriations, we strongly encourage you to increase discretionary spending allocations for the Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies.

This funding is critical for job creation and protection in rural America, for the millions of Americans who rely on food assistance in these difficult economic times, for preserving our national investments in agriculture, and many other reasons. We recognize the difficult budgetary decisions the Committee must face this year, and that many one-time savings were realized during Fiscal Year 2011, but the discretionary spending programs in the agriculture appropriations bill improve the lives of Americans across the country.

These funding priorities reflect core American values of food security, conservation, innovation and energy independence. Your action in providing necessary resources will help our nation in this time of multiple pressing crises by:

- Allowing for high participation rates in domestic nutrition programs as assistance is needed for the growing at-risk population;
- Responding to the global need for food aid as rising food costs have increased food insecurity worldwide;
- Conserving natural resources by encouraging and assisting farmers to adhere to good land and water stewardship practices;
- Implementing a strong food safety system to ensure that the U.S. can respond quickly to threats, the need for which has again been demonstrated by the recent E. Coli outbreak in Europe;
- Providing farmers the opportunity to invest in the production of crops for the next generation of domestically-produced biofuels, as gasoline prices have again reached \$4 per gallon;
- Supporting implementation of energy efficiency and renewable energy programs as well as developing opportunities for home-grown energy in order to reduce energy costs and pollution and to foster new income streams for the next generation of farmers;

- Offering rural development assistance to the communities that have not yet been able to fully recover from the recession; and
- Continuing publicly funded research efforts to address food safety, energy development, and emerging threats to agriculture.

We urge the Committee to ensure that vitally important funding for nutrition, food safety, renewable energy and other Farm Bill investments remains strong by increasing discretionary appropriations to the Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration and Related Agencies.

Limiting mandatory spending levels for FY 2012 will influence the total baseline funding that will be available for these programs in the next farm bill. Imposing harsh limits on specific programs, as has been done in the House of Representatives' appropriations bill, is an attempt to advance policy goals through the appropriations process. These issues should be dealt with during the farm bill debate. The availability of funding for the next farm bill should not be compromised by the appropriations bill.

We look forward to working with you and your colleagues to ensure the priorities of our nation's citizens, both rural and urban, are met, and welcome any questions or concerns that may arise.

Signed,

Agricultural Retailers Association
Alliance for Global Food Security
Alliance to End Hunger
Center for Rural Affairs
Congressional Hunger Center
Environmental Defense Fund
Environmental Law and Policy Center
Feeding America
Growth Energy
Mercy Corps
National Association of Conservation Districts
National Association of Development Organizations
National Catholic Rural Life Conference
National Coalition for Food and Agriculture Research
National Farmers Union
National Organic Coalition
National Rural Housing Coalition
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition
Organic Farming Research Foundation
Organic Trade Association
Pollinator Partnership
Renewable Fuels Association