

Congress of the United States

October 14, 2011

The Honorable Patty Murray
Co-Chair
Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction
The Capitol
Washington, DC

The Honorable Jeb Hensarling
Co-Chair
Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction
The Capitol
Washington, DC

Dear Chairwoman Murray and Chairman Hensarling:

Pursuant to Section 401(b)(3)(ii) of the Budget Control Act of 2011, the Chair and Ranking Member of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry and the Chair and Ranking Member of the House Committee on Agriculture (the Agriculture Committees) recommend to the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction (the Joint Committee) \$23 billion in net deficit reduction from mandatory programs within our jurisdiction.

As you know, the Agriculture Committees reauthorize most of the mandatory and discretionary spending programs in our jurisdiction every five years through omnibus legislation commonly known as the Farm Bill. The current Farm Bill expires in 2012, and the Agriculture Committees have been working diligently on the many important policies we consider in this reauthorization process.

America's farmers and ranchers face a daunting challenge producing the food, fiber, and fuel for a rapidly growing global population. Farming and ranching are extremely high-risk undertakings – as clearly demonstrated by the devastating weather events across the nation this year. America's producers need tools to manage their risk in case of natural disasters and increasingly volatile prices; the Farm Bill provides those tools.

But the Farm Bill has a much broader focus than only production agriculture. Conservation efforts in the Farm Bill ensure the long-term productivity of our soil, keep our waterways clean, and support the restoration of wildlife habitats across the country. Nutrition programs provide food for hungry children and are more important than ever for families who are struggling in these difficult economic times.

Commodity program spending represents less than one quarter of one percent of the Federal Budget, and actual Commodity Title spending has been almost \$25 billion below Congressional Budget Office projections at the time the 2002 and 2008 Farm Bills were passed. Crop insurance

underwent \$6 billion in reductions through the most recent renegotiation of the Standard Reinsurance Agreement, \$6 billion in cuts in the last Farm Bill and \$2 billion in the 2002 Farm Bill. This totals \$14 billion since the passage of the Agriculture Risk Protection Act in 2000. Conservation has been cut by over \$3 billion during the last five years. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) was cut by nearly \$12 billion in the last Congress to offset other spending. In addition, there are also 37 programs, totaling nearly \$10 billion, which expire and have no baseline into future years.

We are currently finalizing the policies that would achieve \$23 billion in deficit reduction and will provide a complete legislative package by November 1, 2011. Deficit savings at this level is more than any sequestration process would achieve and should absolve the programs in our jurisdiction from any further reductions. We welcome the opportunity to explain this recommendation and the forthcoming legislative proposal upon request from the Joint Committee.

Sincerely,



Rep. Frank Lucas
Chairman



Sen. Debbie Stabenow
Chairwoman



Rep. Collin Peterson
Ranking Member



Sen. Pat Roberts
Ranking Member