

Att: Farm Bill

June 6, 2012

Dear Senator,

Creating jobs in rural America and ensuring the success of the next generation of farmers are national priorities. Earlier this spring, the Senate Agriculture Committee passed the bipartisan Agriculture Reform, Food and Jobs Act of 2012. We applaud Chairwoman Stabenow, Ranking Member Roberts, and members of the Committee for moving ahead with reauthorizing this wide-ranging and critical piece of legislation. While the Committee-passed bill takes modest steps to fulfill these priorities, the bill fails to make an adequate investment in rural economic development and in the next generation of farmers.

One of the proven job-creating titles of the farm bill is the Rural Development title, which authorizes essential grants and loan programs targeted at leveraging local initiatives to spur growth and opportunity in rural areas. Since 1996, Congress has provided an average of \$413 million per farm bill for the Rural Development title, while the new bill as reported by the Committee includes no funding at all.

We urge you to correct this deficiency by providing robust funding for the following successful Rural Development programs: Value-Added Producer Grants, Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program, Rural Energy Savings Program, and Water/Wastewater Backlog.

In addition to investing in the future of rural America, we must invest in the future of American agriculture. The average age of an American agricultural producer today is 57, and if we let current trends go unchecked, that number will only increase. Providing training and technical assistance to the next generation of farmers can help buck the trend and ensure future food security.

The Committee-passed bill falls far short of maintaining current investment in the training tools that new and diverse farmers need to succeed. We urge you to provide robust mandatory funding for the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program and Outreach and Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers Program (Section 2501).

We recognize the severity of our nation's fiscal situation. During the Committee markup, it was unclear without a Congressional Budget Office score whether there was funding available for these programs, and Senators agreed to continue the conversation about funding these key priorities before the floor debate. The final CBO score indicates that the Senate Agriculture Committee exceeded its commitment of \$23 billion in savings. We urge you to take advantage of this important opportunity to reinstate mandatory rural development funding and to improve investments in the future of American agriculture and rural communities.

Thank you for your attention to these important matters. We strongly encourage you to reach out to and work with Senator Brown of Ohio and other interested colleagues prior to the floor farm bill debate. These Senators are working on an amendment to fund these priorities.

By ensuring continued investments in rural economic development and in the next generation of farmers, we can ensure that the Farm Bill is a “jobs” bill that underpins and enables economic growth in rural communities throughout America. We look forward to working together on this important matter for American agriculture and America’s rural communities.

Sincerely,

Abundant Garden Life  
Alianza Nacional de Campesinas  
American Community Gardening Association  
American Indian Mothers, Inc.  
American Planning Association  
American Public Works Association  
American Sustainable Business Council  
Association for Enterprise Opportunity  
Center for Popular Research, Education and Policy  
Center for Rural Affairs  
Center for Social Inclusion  
ChangeLab Solutions  
ColorOfChange.org  
Community Food Security Coalition  
Council of State Community Development Agencies  
The Cornucopia Institute  
Corporation for Enterprise Development  
Environmental Working Group  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
Farmers’ Market Coalition  
FoodCorps  
Food and Water Watch  
Food Democracy Now!  
Growing Power, Inc.  
Housing Assistance Council  
Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy  
Indian Nations Conservation Alliance  
Intertribal Agriculture Council  
ISED Solutions  
Jewish Farm School  
League of Rural Voters  
Live Real  
Main Street Project  
National Association of Counties  
National Association of Development Organizations

National Association of Regional Councils  
National Association of Resource Conservation and Development Councils  
National Association of Towns and Townships  
National Catholic Rural Life Conference  
National Center for Appropriate Technology  
National Family Farm Coalition  
National Farmers Union  
National Latino Farmers and Ranchers Trade Association  
National League of Cities  
National Rural Development Council  
National Rural Health Association  
National Rural Housing Coalition  
National Rural Water Association  
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition  
National Women in Agriculture Association  
National Young Farmers' Coalition  
Oregon Tilth  
Organic Farming Research Foundation  
Partners for Rural America  
The Praxis Project  
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Office of Public Witness  
Rural Advancement Fund  
Rural Coalition  
Rural Community Assistance Partnership  
Rural Development Leadership Network  
School Food FOCUS  
Senior Entrepreneurs  
Slow Food USA  
Union of Concerned Scientists  
United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries  
WhyHunger  
Women, Food and Agriculture Network

ACEnet, Inc  
Adelante Mujeres  
Agri-Tech Producers, LLC  
Alabama State Association of Cooperatives  
Alliance of Forest Workers and Harvesters  
Alternative Energy Resources Organization  
American Federation of Government Employees, Local 3354  
Angelic Organics Learning Center

Appalachian Sustainable Development  
Arkansas Land and Farm Development Corporation  
Ashtabula, Lake, and Geauga Farmers Union (Ohio)  
Boston Area Gleaners, Inc.  
California Certified Organic Farmers  
California FarmLink  
California Food and Justice Coalition  
Carolina Farm Stewardship Organization  
CASA del Llano  
Catskill Mountainkeeper  
Cascade Harvest Coalition  
Center for Land-Based Learning  
Central Oregon Locavore  
City Seed, Inc.  
Community Alliance with Family Farmers  
Community Farm Alliance  
Community Food and Agriculture Coalition  
Connecticut Northeast Organic Farming Association  
Corporation for Economic Opportunity  
Crawford Stewardship Project  
Crossroads Community Food Network  
Ecological Farming Association  
Edible Planet  
Family Farm Defenders  
Farmworker Association of Florida  
Fay-Penn Economic Development Council  
Federation of Southern Cooperatives - Rural Training and Research Center  
Field Goods  
Florida Certified Organic Growers & Consumers  
Food Chain Workers Alliance  
Friends of Family Farmers  
Future Harvest CASA  
GardenShare  
Goucher College  
Greene County Democrat  
Growing Our Own Naturally  
GrowMemphis  
Hunger Action Network of NYS  
Idaho's Bounty Co-op  
Illinois Stewardship Alliance  
Iowa Environmental Council  
Just Food  
Kansas Rural Center

The Land Connection  
Land Stewardship Project  
Lansing Urban Farm Project  
Latino Economic Development Center  
Liberty Prairie Foundation  
Lutheran Social Services  
Maine Rural Partners  
Michael Fields Agricultural Institute  
Michigan Land Use Institute  
Michigan Young Farmer Coalition  
Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service  
Missouri Rural Crisis Center  
Montgomery Countryside Alliance  
Montgomery Victory Gardens  
National Women in Agriculture, Alabama Chapter  
Nebraska Sustainable Agriculture Society  
New Entry Sustainable Farming Project  
New Mexico Acequia Association  
NYC Food and Farm Bill Working Group  
North Carolina Association of Black Lawyers, Land Loss Prevention Project  
North Coast Food Web  
Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance  
Northeast Organic Farming Association Interstate Council  
Northwest Farm Bill Action Group  
Northwest Michigan Food and Farming Network  
Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association  
Ohio Farmers Union  
Oklahoma Black Historical Research Project  
Oregon Rural Action  
Organización en California de Líderes Campesinas  
PCC Farmland Trust  
Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture  
Pesticide Action Network  
Plattsburgh Community Garden Group, Inc.  
Practical Farmers of Iowa  
Progressive Agriculture Organization  
Quad Cities Food Hub  
REAP Food Group  
The Reinvestment Fund  
Rogue Farm Corps  
The Rogue Initiative for a Vital Economy  
Roots of Change

Rural Action Sustainable Agriculture  
Rural Advancement Foundation International -USA  
Silver Lining Institute  
Slow Food First Coast  
Slow Food Hamilton College  
Smart Markets, Inc.  
Southern Sustainable Agriculture Working Group  
Sustainable Living Project/Local Living Venture  
The Sustainable Restaurant Corps  
St. Mary's Episcopal Church Food Program  
Taos County Economic Development Corporation  
Tasting Awareness  
Texas/Mexico Border Coalition  
Think Local Umpqua  
Tilth Producers of Washington  
University of Alabama Environmental Council  
Virginia Association for Biological Farming  
Washington State University- Small Farms Team  
Washington Sustainable Food & Farming Network  
Washington Young Farmers Coalition  
Western Sustainable Agriculture Working Group  
West Side Campaign Against Hunger  
Wisconsin Farmers Union  
Wisconsin Local Food Network  
World Farmers