

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 16, 2013

The Honorable John Boehner
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Democratic Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
H-204 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Eric Cantor
Majority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
H-329 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Steny Hoyer
Democratic Whip
U.S. House of Representatives
H-148 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Frank Lucas
Chairman
House Agriculture Committee
1301 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Collin Peterson
Ranking Member
House Agriculture Committee
1305 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Boehner, Majority Leader Cantor, Minority Leader Pelosi, Minority Whip Hoyer, Chairman Lucas, and Ranking Member Peterson:

Local and regional agriculture is a major economic driver in the farm economy. While in 1970 farmers markets were few and far between, there are now almost 8,000 farmers markets throughout the United States. On the heels of that expansion, we are witnessing the rapid growth of local food markets that have scaled up beyond direct marketing and a renewal of mid-tier regional food system enterprises. According to USDA, local food sales now account for \$5 billion annually. Together, these markets represent important new job growth and economic development opportunities.

We are writing to urge you to adopt the strongest possible measures for local and regional agriculture as you piece together the new farm bill in conference committee. We urge you to adopt:

- The Senate-passed provisions for FSA credit for local and regional agricultural producers, organic certification cost-share funding through the AMA program, unrestricted eligibility for Agriculture and Food Research Initiative grants, and organic crop insurance;
- The House-passed bill's funding level for the expanded Farmers Market and Local Food Promotion Program; and
- Funding for the Value-Added Producer Grants program at no less than the Senate-passed level, and encourage the conference to find additional funding for the program.

We are pleased that both bills include RMA research and development authority as well as Whole Farm Diversified Risk Management Insurance, and note our support for the Senate version of the liability limit for this program.

Within the rural development title, we encourage the conference to give strong consideration to the important no-cost policy clarifications and improvements contained in two amendments that unfortunately were not debated during floor debate – the Senate amendment by Senator Sherrod Brown and the House amendment by Representatives Jeff Fortenberry and Chellie Pingree.

The House-passed bill unfortunately does not include a nutrition title at this point in time. We strongly urge the conference to adopt a comprehensive bill that includes the nutrition title. Based on the nutrition title that was reported by the House Agriculture Committee, we urge your support for:

- The House-passed provisions for pilot projects DOD Fresh and pilot projects and local option for USDA Foods;
- The Senate funding level for SNAP Incentives to increase consumption of local fresh fruits and vegetables; and
- The Senate authorization for Food and Agriculture Service Learning.

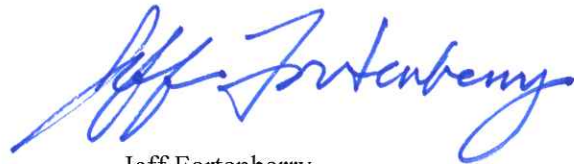
We are pleased both bills agree on EBT for farmer to consumer markets, allowing SNAP benefits to be redeemed by Community Supported Agriculture farms, increased funding for Community Food Grants, and an EBT mobile technology pilot. With respect to the latter, we urge the conference to include at least one pilot to test the inclusion of multiple nutrition assistance programs.

A new farm bill that includes these measures will support family farms, expand new farming opportunities, create new markets and jobs, and improve the health of American families. We thank you for your support.

Sincerely,



Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress



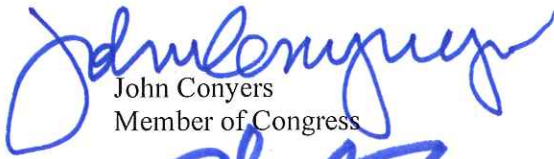
Jeff Fortenberry
Member of Congress



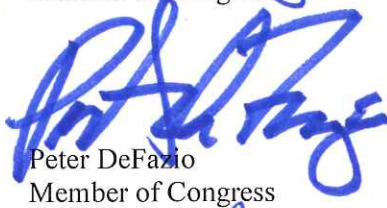
Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress



Madeleine Bordallo
Member of Congress


John Conyers
Member of Congress

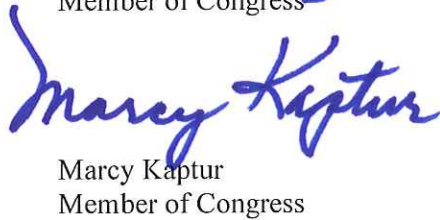

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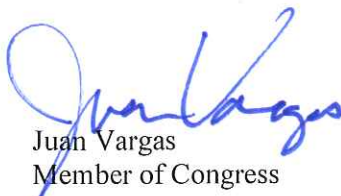

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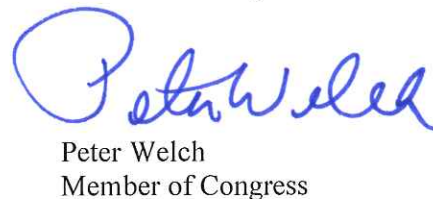

Michael Michaud
Member of Congress


Jim Moran
Member of Congress


Bill Owens
Member of Congress

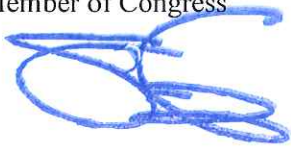

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