

April 8, 2019

The Honorable John Hoeven
Chairman
Subcommittee on Agriculture
Senate Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jeff Merkley
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Agriculture
Senate Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Sanford Bishop, Jr.
Chairman
Subcommittee on Agriculture
House Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jeff Fortenberry
Ranking Member
House Subcommittee on Agriculture
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Hoeven, Ranking Member Merkley, Chairman Bishop, Ranking Member Fortenberry,

We the undersigned food and agriculture organizations thank you for all your work to support a vibrant and sustainable food and farm system. The Agricultural Improvement Act of 2018 authorized the creation of an Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production (Sec. 12302) and an urban agriculture data collection initiative (Sec. 7212(b)); a critical first step in serving this growing sector of the U.S. agricultural economy. As you work to develop the Fiscal Year 2020 (FY20) agriculture appropriations bill, we recommend the inclusion of \$25 million for the Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production and related activities and \$14 million for the urban agriculture data collection data initiative.

As one component of local and regional food systems, urban agriculture generally refers to the cultivation, processing, and distribution of agricultural products in urban, suburban settings. Urban agriculture is longstanding and has begun to take many different forms, including outdoor and indoor vertical production, indoor warehouse farms, greenhouses, community gardens, rooftop farms, and even hydroponic and aquaponic facilities. Ultimately, agriculture produced in these settings has an array of social, environmental, and economic benefits for urban and surrounding regions.

Additionally, agriculture production in these regions can help foster community engagement, local enterprise and environmental resiliency among diverse populations. Growers engaged in this work have helped expand food access in urban and suburban parts of the country and provide many

environmental services, including carbon and heat sinks, as well as storm water absorption to mitigate flooding. Urban farms and agricultural enterprises promote greater biodiversity, access to nutritious foods, healthy education and create more green spaces. For many beginning farmers, urban agriculture is a pathway to start farming, gain experience, and expand operations into rural communities. Finally, this type of production has proven able to diversify and supplement producers' incomes.

The Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production will help institutionalize urban agriculture, so it receives the support and resources necessary for its continued growth. In addition to establishing an advisory committee, the office is responsible for managing a competitive grants program, coordinating activities with other USDA agencies, engaging stakeholders, identifying State and municipal best practices, and providing leadership for the further development of policies and resources to assist producers in establishing and growing urban farms and related enterprises. Moreover, competitive grants will support the development of urban agriculture and innovative production as will two pilot projects, one designed to create ten urban and suburban county committees and a second to increase community composting while reducing food waste. To better serve urban and emerging agricultural production, a national survey should be conducted to gather information about the size and scale of the current industry.

We recommend that \$25 million be included in the FY20 agriculture appropriation bills in order to establish the Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production within the USDA and to provide it with the necessary resources to establish the compost and food waste reduction pilots, the urban and suburban county committees, and an urban agriculture development competitive grants program. Furthermore, we recommend an additional \$14 million for the urban agriculture data collection initiative, which is the level of funding the National Agricultural Statistics Service has indicated it would need to conduct such a follow on study to the 2017 Census of Agriculture.

We appreciate the opportunity to speak to the importance of the Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production, and we'd like to once again stress the need for it and the data collection of urban agriculture to be fully funded as authorized in the Agricultural Improvement Act of 2018. Thank you for taking time to consider this request, and we look forward to partnering with you in the future to promote urban agriculture.

National Organizations

AeroFarms, Newark, NJ
Certified Naturally Grown, Brooklyn, NY
Ecological Farming Association, Soque, CA
Fair Food Network, Ann Arbor, MI
Farm Aid, Cambridge, MA
National Association of Conservation Districts, Washington, DC
National Association of State Departments of Agriculture, Arlington, VA
National Farmers Union, Washington, DC
National Recreation and Parks Association, Arlington, VA
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, Washington, DC
National Young Farmers Coalition, Washington, DC
Natural Resources Defense Council, Washington, DC
Organic Trade Association, Washington, DC
Pollinator Partnership, San Francisco, CA
Recirculating Farms Coalition, New Orleans, LA
Soil and Water Conservation Society, Ankeny, IA
The Conservation Fund, Arlington, VA
The Food Trust, Philadelphia, PA
The Wallace Center at Winrock International, Arlington, VA
Union of Concerned Scientists, Washington, DC
FoodCorps, Portland, OR
Urban County Farm Bureau Coalition, Washington, DC

State & Local Organizations

Advocates for Urban Agriculture, Chicago, IL
After the Harvest, Kansas City, MO and KS
Angelic Organics Learning Center, Caledonia and Chicago IL
Appetite for Change, Minneapolis, MN
Bee Wise Farms, Lansing and Newberry, MI
Brooklyn-Queens Land Trust, Brooklyn and Queens, NY
California Certified Organic Farmers, Santa Cruz, CA
California Restaurant Association, Sacramento, CA
Carolina Farm Stewardship Association, Pittsboro, NC
Center for Land-Based Learning, West Sacramento, CA
Central Louisiana Economic Development Alliance, Alexandria, LA
Chicago Food Policy Action Council, Chicago, IL
Community Farm Alliance, Berea, KY

Cultivate Kansas City, Kansas City, KS and MO
Cultivate Oregon, Portland, OR
Cultivating Community, Portland, ME
Detroit Food Policy Council, Detroit, MI
Eastern Market, Detroit, MI
Experimental Farm Network, Philadelphia, PA
Farm to City, Philadelphia, PA
Genesee Conservation District, Flint, MI
Germantown Kitchen Garden, Philadelphia, PA
Greater New Orleans Growers Alliance, New Orleans, LA
Groundwork Center for Resilient Communities, Traverse City, MI
Grow Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, PA
Growing Home, Chicago, IL
Growing Hope, Ypsilanti, MI
John Hopkins Center for a Livable Future, Baltimore, MD
Just Food, New York, NY
Just Harvest, Pittsburgh, PA
KC Healthy Kids, Kansas City, MO and KS
Keep Growing Detroit, Detroit, MI
Kelly Street Garden, New York, NY
Lansing Urban Farm Project, Lansing, MI
Massachusetts Avenue Project, Buffalo, NY
Michigan Food and Farming Systems, East Lansing, MI
Missouri Organic Recycling, Kansas City, MO
New England Farmers Union, New England
New York Farm Bureau, Albany, NY
Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Working Group, CT, DE, MA, ME, MD, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, VT, WV, and DC.
Northside Fresh Coalition, Minneapolis, MN
Oakland Avenue Urban Farm, Detroit, MI
Ohana Gardens, Highland Park, MI
Ohio Ecological Food and Farming Association, Columbus, OH
OKO Farms, Brooklyn, NY
OpenLands, Chicago, IL
Oregon Farm to School and School Garden Network, Eugene, OR
Our Kitchen Table, Grand Rapids, MI
Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture, Millheim, PA
Pittsburgh Food Policy Council – Urban Agriculture Working Group, Pittsburgh, PA
Sacramento Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce, Sacramento, CA
Slow Food USA, Brooklyn, NY

Southern Sustainable Agriculture Working Group, VA, NC, SC, GA, FL, AL, MS, LA, TX, OK,
AR, TN, and KY. And, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands

SPROUT NOLA, New Orleans, LA

The Greater Kansas City Food Policy Coalition, Kansas City, KS and MO

Urbanstead, Philadelphia, PA

Valley Vision, Sacramento, CA

Visit Sacramento, Sacramento, CA