



October 4, 2021

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
H-222 Capitol Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John Yarmuth
Chairman
House Committee on the Budget
U.S. House of Representatives
204-E Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Bernie Sanders
Chairman
Senate Committee on the Budget
U.S. Senate
624 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Majority Leader Schumer, Chairman Sanders and Chairman Yarmuth:

First and foremost, thank you for your service, leadership and continued work to use the budget reconciliation process to make transformational investments that will make families more safe, secure, and prosperous, create good paying jobs, advance equity, and fight climate change.

We are a national alliance¹ whose member organizations, and the farmers and ranchers they work with, understand that the climate crisis presents a severe and immediate threat to the agriculture sector and to rural and urban communities across the country.

On behalf of our members, we urge you to support the inclusion of robust investments in climate-friendly agriculture, sustainable agriculture research, and food and nutrition security as part of the *Build Back Better* budget reconciliation bill. We strongly support the agriculture and nutrition investments proposed in the current reconciliation package and urge you to protect against reductions in the size and scope of these farm, forestry, conservation, renewable energy, research, debt relief, food, nutrition, and rural development investments.

Protecting the proposed agriculture investments is especially important in the context of mandatory sequestration and the continued impacts that has had on food, agriculture and rural development programs.

¹ Represented NSAC Members: Agriculture and Land-Based Training Association Salinas, CA; CCOF Santa Cruz, CA; California FarmLink Santa Cruz, CA; C.A.S.A. del Llano (Communities Assuring a Sustainable Agriculture) Hereford, TX; Catholic Rural Life St Paul, MN; Center for Rural Affairs Lyons, NE; Claggett Farm/Chesapeake Bay Foundation Upper Marlboro, MD; Community Alliance with Family Farmers Davis, CA; Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture South Deerfield, MA; Dakota Rural Action Brookings, SD; Delta Land and Community, Inc. Almyra, AR; Ecological Farming Association Soquel, CA; Farmer-Veteran Coalition Davis, CA; Florida Organic Growers Gainesville, FL; FoodCorps, OR; GrassWorks New Holstein, WI; Hmong National Development, Inc. St Paul, MN and Washington, DC; Illinois Stewardship Alliance Springfield, IL; Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy Minneapolis, MN; Interfaith Sustainable Food Collaborative Sebastopol, CA; Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation Des Moines, IA; Izaak Walton League of America St. Paul, MN/Gaithersburg, MD; Kansas Rural Center Topeka, KS; The Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture Poteau, OK; Land Stewardship Project Minneapolis, MN; LiveWell Colorado Denver, CO; MAFO St Cloud, MN; Michael Fields Agricultural Institute East Troy, WI; Michigan Food & Farming Systems – MIFFS East Lansing, MI; Michigan Organic Food and Farm Alliance Lansing, MI; Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service Spring Valley, WI; Missouri Coalition for the Environment St. Louis, MO; Montana Organic Association Eureka, MT; The National Center for Appropriate Technology Butte, MT; National Center for Frontier Communities Silver City, NM; National Hmong American Farmers Fresno, CA; Nebraska Sustainable Agriculture Society Ceresco, NE; Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance Deerfield, MA; Northern Plains Sustainable Agriculture Society LaMoure, ND; Northwest Center for Alternatives to Pesticides Eugene, OR; Ohio Ecological Food & Farm Association Columbus, OH; Oregon Tilth Corvallis, OR; Organic Farming Research Foundation Santa Cruz, CA; Organic Seed Alliance Port Townsend, WA; Rural Advancement Foundation International – USA Pittsboro, NC; Union of Concerned Scientists Food and Environment Program Cambridge, MA; Virginia Association for Biological Farming Lexington, VA; Wild Farm Alliance, Watsonville, CA; Women, Food, and Agriculture Network Ames, IA. Full membership list, including participating members: <https://sustainableagriculture.net/about-us/members/>

Mandatory sequestration of farm bill programs, now extended through 2030², has been extended numerous times as an offset for other spending bills. This has unfairly diminished critical support for conservation, beginning farmers, socially disadvantaged farmers, local food systems, organic research, and more, resulting in across the board cuts to program funding in the amount of approximately 6-7% every year since 2011, continuing until at least 2030.

These cuts come at the expense of water quality, soil health, climate change mitigation, and agricultural productivity. That is why it is critical that as Congress moves forward with plans to pass reconciliation legislation that *food and agriculture investments be spared from any additional reductions* as part of ongoing negotiations to reduce the topline funding amount. Maintaining the agriculture and nutrition investments proposed in the current reconciliation package will help to make up for the previous and future sequestration cuts to agriculture programs and is only fair to our farmers and food producing communities. We also urge you to take the first available chance to rescind the thoughtless policy of mandatory sequestration.

As illustrated in the attached tables, the impact on farm bill spending resulting from the sequester will continue to be significant resulting in billions of dollars of cuts to vital agriculture and food systems programs. From fiscal year (FY) 2013 through FY 2020, mandatory sequestration has resulted in the sequestration of approximately \$10.6 billion in budget authority from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and its various agencies, services, and programs, one of the single largest areas of budget authority sequestration has been farm bill conservation programs which have been reduced by over \$2 billion during that same period of time³.

Protecting critical food and agriculture investments in the reconciliation bill will support our nation's sustainable farmers and ranchers in tackling our nation's response to the climate crisis. Thank you for your support of the food and agriculture components of the reconciliation bill, and for your attention to the harmful effects of mandatory sequestration on many of the best and most important food, farm, and environmental programs in the farm bill.

Sincerely,



Eric Deeble, V.M.D.
Policy Director
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition



Wes King
Senior Policy Specialist
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition

² The Bipartisan Budget Act of 2019 extended mandatory sequestration of farm programs from 2027 to 2029. The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (H.R. 748), the CARES act, extended direct/mandatory sequestration by another year to 2030; and the INVEST in America Act, proposes to extend mandatory sequestration by another year to 2031.

³ “Appendix C. Budget Sequestration” of the Congressional Research Service’s March 2020 report titled *Agriculture and Related Agencies FY2020 Appropriations* provides a detailed look at the impacts of mandatory sequestration in years passed as well as information about existing food and agriculture exemptions from mandatory sequestration.
<https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R45974>

**Table 1. Sequestration Cuts to Mandatory Farm Bill Spending⁴⁵ (2022 – 2030)
(dollars millions)**

	2 yr (7%) ⁶	5 yr (7%) ⁷	9 yr (7%) ⁸
Title I	439.11	1,296.4	3,020.08
ACEP	59.1	152.95	278.95
CSP	119.77	301.49	579.32
EQIP	245.14	643.58	1,206.38
RCP	33.18	93.17	177.17
Vaccine	4.2	4.2	4.2
LAMP	7	17.5	31.5
FOTO	6.3	16.8	28.35
SCBG	11.9	29.8	53.55
SCRI	11.2	28.0	50.4
OREI	5.6	16.1	30.1
Trade	53.6	89.3	160.65
TOTAL	996.1	2,689.29	5,620.65

Table 2. Mandatory Farm Bill Spending Subject to Sequestration (2022 – 2030)⁹

	2022	2023	2 yr	2024	2025	2026	5 yr	2027	2028	2029	2030	9 yr
Title I¹⁰	4,388	1,885	6,273	3,421	3,421	5,405	18,520	6,712	6,585	5,709	5,618	43,144
ACEP	416	427	843	442	450	450	2,185	450	450	450	450	3,985
CSP	971	740	1,711	810	865	921	4,307	969	1,000	1,000	1,000	8,276
EQIP	1,704	1,798	3,502	1,868	1,905	1,919	9,194	1,983	2,007	2,025	2,025	17,234
RCP	223	251	474	272	285	300	1,331	300	300	300	300	2,531
Vaccine	30	30	60				60					60
LAMP	50	50	100	50	50	50	250	50	50	50	50	450
FOTO	40	50	90	50	50	50	240	50	50	50	50	405
SCBG	85	85	170	85	85	85	425	85	85	85	85	765
SCRI	80	80	160	80	80	80	400	80	80	80	80	720
OREI	30	50	80	50	50	50	230	50	50	50	50	430
Trade	255	255	510	255	255	255	1,275	255	255	255	255	2,295

⁴ Assumes sequestration rate of 7%, reflecting average estimate of previous years' rates

⁵ Title 1 and ACEP, CSP, EQIP, and RCP figures are based on estimated outlays from CBOs July 2021 Farm Bill Baseline Projections report, <https://www.cbo.gov/system/files/2021-07/51317-2021-07-usda.pdf>, the remainder of those programs listed use the budget authority associated with each program.

⁶ Includes 2022-2023 – this is the total funding that will be sequestered from these programs under the remainder of the 2018 Farm Bill

⁷ Includes 2022 – 2026

⁸ Includes 2022 – 2030 based on the CARES act extension of mandatory sequestration. Does not include the INVEST Act's impacts.

⁹ Title 1 and ACEP, CSP, EQIP, and RCP figures are based on estimated outlays from CBOs July 2021 Farm Bill Baseline Projections report, <https://www.cbo.gov/system/files/2021-07/51317-2021-07-usda.pdf>, the remainder of those programs listed use the budget authority associated with each program.

¹⁰ Does not include Market Facilitation Payments