

April 19, 2012

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
Chairwoman
Senate Agriculture Committee
328 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Pat Roberts
Ranking Member
Senate Agriculture Committee
328 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Stabenow and Ranking Member Roberts:

We are writing to urge you to include two key programs that are part of a comprehensive package directed at supporting the next generation of family farmers and ranchers, including socially disadvantaged, beginning and limited resource producers in the mark for the 2012 Farm Bill.

With an aging farm population and a large segment of existing producers at or beyond retirement age, it is paramount to invest in those new entrepreneurs that will farm and ranch our nation's land in the future. It is also equally important to write a new farm bill that takes into account specific equity considerations by investing federal dollars into programs that support historically underserved groups and ensuring adequate access to federal training and technical assistance.

We therefore support a farm bill that prioritizes the unique needs of beginning and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers by **funding and strengthening programs from the last farm bill** that have successfully helped these groups maintain and strengthen their family farms, as well as start successful farming livelihoods. We have previously communicated with you about the breadth and depth of provisions we hope to see in the new farm bill.

We are writing today more specifically to urge you to renew and expand support for:

- **Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program at \$25 million in direct farm bill funding per year.** This highly successful and critically important program is the only program within USDA that is specifically aimed at beginning farmers and ranchers, and provides invaluable training, mentoring, land-linking, and education that beginning farmers need to be successful. In addition, current set aside provisions, matching requirements, and existing program purposes must be maintained in order to ensure adequate participation in new farmer training programs by socially disadvantaged producers and the groups that are best suited to serve and reach them.
- **2501 Outreach and Technical Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers at \$25 million in direct farm bill funding per year.** For decades, this program has served as the only farm bill program dedicated to addressing the needs of African-American, American-Indian, Asian-American and Latino family farmers and ranchers, and provides critical resources, outreach, and technical assistance to groups that have been historically underserved by federal programs. As documented in numerous U.S. Civil Rights reports, the USDA must continue the work of dismantling institutional discrimination in its delivery of programs and services to socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers. The 2501 program provides a necessary approach to improving equity and inclusion for socially disadvantaged producers in federal agricultural programs.

As you know, these two programs were moved forward together as a historic package in the last farm bill. It is our strongly held view that the same should be true in the new farm bill.

The mark you present for Committee consideration will ultimately lay the groundwork for all subsequent farm bill discussions. We urge you to make all funding and policy decisions with an eye toward the future and a commitment to all of our nation's farmers – especially those who can benefit the most from scarce federal resources, namely beginning and socially disadvantaged producers.

Sincerely,

National

American Federation of Government Employees, AFL-CIO, Washington, DC
Center for Rural Affairs, Lyons, NE
Community Food Security Coalition, Washington, DC
Environmental Working Group, Washington DC
Food and Water Watch, Washington, DC
Farmers Market Coalition, Charlottesville, VA
Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, Minneapolis, MN
Intertribal Agriculture Council, Billings, MT
Izaak Walton League of America, Gaithersburg, MD
National Catholic Rural Life Conference, Des Moines, IA
National Family Farm Coalition, Washington, DC
National Farmers Union, Washington, DC
National Hmong American Farmers, Inc., Fresno, CA
National Latino Farmers and Ranchers Trade Association, Washington, DC
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, Washington, DC
National Women In Agriculture Association, Oklahoma City, OK
National Young Farmers' Coalition, Tivoli, NY
Organic Valley, La Farge, WI
Rural Advancement Fund, Orangeburg, SC
Rural Coalition/Coalición Rural, Washington, DC
Slow Food USA, New York, NY
United Farmers USA, Manning, SC

Alabama

Carver Integrative Sustainability Center, Tuskegee University, Tuskegee, AL
Southern Regional Asset Building Coalition, Tuskegee, AL

Arkansas

Southern Sustainable Agriculture Working Group, Fayetteville, AR

California

California Farmers Union, Turlock, CA
California FarmLink, Santa Cruz, CA
California Food and Justice Coalition, Oakland, CA
Center for Land Based Learning, Winters, CA
Community Alliance with Family Farmers, Davis, CA
Environmental Working Group, Oakland, CA
Farmer-Veteran Coalition, Davis, CA
Food Chain Workers Alliance, Los Angeles, CA
Global Impact Green, San Marino, CA
National Hmong American Farmers, Inc., Fresno, CA
People Action to Save the Family Farm
Pesticide Action Network, San Francisco, CA
Public Health Law and Policy, Oakland, CA
William C. Velasquez Institute, Los Angeles, CA

Connecticut

National Organic Farming Association of Connecticut (NOFA-CT), Oxford, CT

District of Columbia

American Federation of Government Employees, AFL-CIO, Washington, DC
Community Food Security Coalition, Washington, DC
Environmental Working Group, Washington DC
FRESHFARM Markets, Washington, DC
Food and Water Watch, Washington, DC

The Praxis Project, Washington DC
National Family Farm Coalition, Washington, DC
National Farmers Union, Washington, DC
National Latino Farmers and Ranchers Trade Association, Washington, DC
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, Washington, DC
Rural Coalition/Coalición Rural, Washington, DC

Florida

Farmworker Association of Florida, Inc., Apopka, FL
Florida Certified Organic Growers and Consumers, Gainesville, FL
Slow Food First Coast, St. Augustine, FL

Georgia

Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund, East Point, GA

Iowa

Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement, Des Moines, IA
Leopold Group, S.E. Iowa Chapter of Iowa Sierra Club, Fairfield, IA
National Catholic Rural Life Conference, Des Moines, IA
Practical Farmers of Iowa, Ames, IA
Women, Food and Agriculture Network, Ames, IA

Idaho

Idaho Rural Council, Filer, ID

Illinois

Advocates for Urban Agriculture, Chicago, IL
Benton House, Chicago, IL
Chicago Botanic Garden, Glencoe, IL
Common Ground Food Co-op, Urbana, IL
Food Works, Carbondale, IL
Goldmine Farms, Pana, IL
Healthy Dining Chicago, Chicago, IL
Illinois Stewardship Alliance, Springfield, IL
In My Community, Chicago, IL
Liberty Prairie Foundation, Grayslake, IL
North Central Illinois Farmer Network, Ottawa, IL
Northbrook Farmers Market, Northbrook, IL
Reel Actions, Chicago, IL
Regional Food System, Carbondale, IL
The Abundance Project, Chicago, IL
The Land Connection, Bloomington, IL
Uncommon Ground, Chicago, IL

Kansas

Catholic Charities of Northeast Kansas, Kansas City, KS
Kansas Rural Center, Whiting, KS
Livingwater Aquaponics Center, Dover, KS
Local to Global Advocates for Justice, Topeka, KS
Pinwheel Farm, Lawrence, KS
Simple Food, Paola, KS
Spring Creek Farm, Baldwin City, KS
Trails West Farms, Eudora, KS
Tropnevad LLC, Hartford, KS
Yellow Brick Farm, Louisburg, KS

Massachusetts

Berkshire Grown, Great Barrington, MA
Live Real, Dorchester, MA
New England Farmers Union, Shelburne Falls, MA
New Entry Sustainable Farming Project, Lowell, MA
Northwest Atlantic Marine Alliance, Gloucester, MA

Maryland

Izaak Walton League of America, Gaithersburg, MD
Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future, Baltimore, MD
Montgomery Countryside Alliance, Poolesville, MD
University of Maryland Eastern Shore Extension, Small Farm Program, Princess Anne, MD

Maine

Cultivating Community, Portland, ME

Michigan

Beginning Farmers LLC, Lansing, MI
Center for Ecojustice Education, Ypsilanti, MI
Fair Food Network, Ann Arbor, MI
Food System Economic Partnership, Ann Arbor, MI
Lansing Urban Farm Project, Lansing, MI
Michigan Land Trustees, Lawton, MI
Michigan Land Use Institute, Traverse City, MI
Michigan Organic Food and Farm Alliance (MOFFA), Lansing, MI
Michigan Young Farmers Coalition, Ann Arbor, MI
Northwest Michigan Food and Farming Network, Suttons Bay, MI
Selma Cafe, Ann Arbor, MI
Slow Food Huron Valley, Ann Arbor, MI
Slow Food West Michigan, Belmont, MI
The Brinery, Ann Arbor, MI
The Giving Garden, Eastern Michigan University, Ypsilanti, MI

Minnesota

Community Bees on Bikes, Minneapolis, MN
Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, Minneapolis, MN
Izaak Walton League of America, St. Paul, MN
Land Stewardship Project, Minneapolis, MN
Minnesota Catholic Conference, St. Paul, MN
Minnesota COACT (Citizens Organized Acting Together), St. Paul, MN
Minnesota Farmers Union, St. Paul, MN
Minnesota Food Association, Marine on St. Croix, MN
Ndosi Enterprises, Golden Valley, MN
Renewing the Countryside II, St. Paul, MN
St. Paul/Ramsey County Food and Nutrition Commission, St. Paul, MN

Missouri

Missouri Rural Crisis Center, Columbia, MO

Mississippi

Rainbow Natural Grocery Cooperative, Jackson, MS

Montana

Alternative Energy Resources Organization (AERO), Helena, MT
Intertribal Agriculture Council, Billings, MT
Western Organization of Resource Councils, Billings, MT

North Carolina

Bountiful Backyards, Durham, NC
Carolina Farm Stewardship Association, Pittsboro, NC
Eastern Carolina Organics, Pittsboro, NC
Foothills Connect Business and Technology Center, Rutherfordton, NC
Inter-Faith Food Shuttle, Raleigh, NC
North Carolina Association of Black Lawyers Land Loss Prevention Project, Durham, NC
Operation Spring Plant, Inc, Henderson, NC
Tierra Negra Farm, Durham, NC

North Dakota

Dakota Resource Council, Dickinson, ND

Nebraska

Center for Rural Affairs, Lyons, NE
Community CROPS, Lincoln, NE
Nebraska Sustainable Agriculture Society, Ceresco, NE
Slow Food Nebraska, Lincoln, NE

New Hampshire

National Organic Farming Association of New Hampshire (NOFA-NH), Concord, NH
Organization for Refugee and Immigrant Success, Manchester NH

New Jersey

National Organic Farming Association of New Jersey (NOFA-NJ), Hillsborough, NJ

New Mexico

Farm to Table, Santa Fe, NM
New Mexico Acequia Association, Santa Fe, NM
New Mexico Food and Agriculture Policy Council, Santa Fe, NM
Richard Rosenstock Attorney At Law, Santa Fe, NM
Taos County Economic Development Corporation, Taos, NM

New York

Agricultural Missions, Inc, New York, NY
Church Women United of New York State, Albany, NY
GrowNYC/New Farmer Development Project, New York, NY
Just Food, New York, NY
National Young Farmers' Coalition, Tivoli, NY
New World Agriculture and Ecology Group at Cornell, Ithaca, NY
Northeast Organic Farming Association of New York, Inc. (NOFA-NY), Rochester, NY
Root 'n Roost Farm, Livingston Manor, NY
Rural Development Leadership Network, New York, NY
Slow Food USA, New York, NY
Stone Barns Center for Food and Agriculture, Pocantico Hills, NY
Tasting Awareness, New York, NY
The Second Chance Foundation, New York, NY
WhyHunger, New York, NY

Oklahoma

National Women In Agriculture Association, Oklahoma City, OK
Oklahoma Black Historical Research Project, Wewoka, OK
Okmulgee County Farmers and Ranchers, Henryetta, OK

Oregon

Adelante Mujeres, Forest Grove, OR
Friends of Family Farmers, Molalla, OR
Gorge Grown Food Network, Hood River, OR
Oregon Rural Action, La Grande, OR
Rogue Farm Corps, Ashland, OR
Slow Food Portland Oregon, Portland OR
The Rogue Initiative for a Vital Economy, Ashland, OR

Pennsylvania

Fay-Penn Economic Development Council, Lemont Furnace, PA
Pennypack Farm and Education Center, Horsham, PA

Rhode Island

Farm Fresh Rhode Island, Pawtucket, RI

South Carolina

Rural Advancement Fund, Orangeburg, SC
United Farmers USA, Manning, SC

South Dakota

Dakota Rural Action, Brookings, SD

Texas

Southwest Workers Union, San Antonio, TX
Sustainable Food Center, Austin, TX
Texas/Mexico Border Coalition CBO, San Isidro, TX

Virginia

Chesapeake CRAFT, Loudoun, VA
Farmers Market Coalition, Charlottesville, VA
Local Food Hub, Charlottesville, VA
Virginia Association for Biological Farming, Lexington, VA

Vermont

Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund, Montpelier, VT

Washington

Community Alliance for Global Justice, Seattle, WA
Institute for Washington's Future, Seattle, WA
PCC Farmland Trust, Seattle, WA
Tilth Producers of Washington, Seattle, WA
Washington Sustainable Food and Farming Network, Mount Vernon, WA

Wisconsin

Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship, Medford WI
Family Farm Defenders, Madison, WI
Farley Center, Madison, WI
GrassWorks, Inc., Hudson, WI
Michael Fields Agricultural Institute, East Troy, WI
Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service (MOSES), Spring Valley, WI
Milwaukee Food Council, Milwaukee, WI
Milwaukee River Greenway Coalition, Milwaukee, WI
Organic Valley, La Farge, WI
Slow Food Madison, Madison, WI
The Cornucopia Institute, Cornucopia, WI

Unitarian Universalist Church West, Brookfield, WI
Victory Garden Initiative, Milwaukee, WI
Wisconsin Association of RC&D Councils, Inc., Medford, WI
Wisconsin Farmers Union, Chippewa Falls, WI

cc: Members of the Senate Agriculture Committee