

VIA FACSIMILE

February 14, 2008

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman
Senate Committee on Agriculture,
Nutrition and Forestry
328A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Collin Peterson
Chairman
House Committee on Agriculture
1301 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Saxby Chambliss
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Agriculture,
Nutrition and Forestry
328A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Bob Goodlatte
Ranking Member
House Committee on Agriculture
1301 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen and Ranking Members:

We appreciate the efforts of Chairman Peterson and Ranking Member Goodlatte to move the farm bill process forward. Everyone is in agreement that initiating conference on the farm bill as quickly as possible is important to American agriculture.

Upon review, the undersigned organizations believe the framework negotiated between the House committee leadership and the administration is seriously under-funded. The Commodity Title has already experienced a 60 percent decrease in baseline spending. To strain the safety net for American agriculture with a further \$6.5 billion cut is excessive. While the administration is demanding that a bill be written with only \$6 billion in offsets, we believe that providing less than \$12.5 billion in additional funding will require the farmer safety net to bear the unfair burden of paying for increases in spending in other areas of the bill.

It is easy for some to say that, in these times of good prices, the safety net for agriculture can or should be weakened. However, we should learn from the past. Markets move. During the life of the 1996 Farm Bill, generally good prices in 1995-1996 quickly turned to poor prices in 1999 and beyond. Combined with the dramatic increases in farm input prices already faced by agriculture producers today, a downturn in commodity costs could prove disastrous for American agriculture. For this reason, it is imperative that prices today not be used as a justification to erode the future safety net for agriculture.

Additionally, the administration is insisting on including policy provisions that were considered and rejected by both the House and the Senate committees, and which are disconcerting to production agriculture. Both of your committees worked diligently to

craft thoughtful and balanced legislation, and we strongly believe conference negotiations should remain within the boundaries set by these two bills.

We look forward to working with you to continue to craft a conference report that meets the needs of rural America.

Sincerely,

Alabama Peanut Producers Association
Amcot
American Agriculture Movement
American Beekeeping Federation
American Corn Growers Association
American Cotton Shippers Association
American Farm Bureau Federation
American Honey Producers Association
American Sheep Industry Association
American Soybean Association
American Sugar Alliance
Atlantic Cotton Association
Crop Insurance Professionals Association
Farm Credit Council
Florida Peanut Producers Association
Georgia Peanut Commission
National Association of Farmer Elected Committees
National Association of Wheat Growers
National Barley Growers Association
National Council of Farmer Cooperatives
National Cotton Council
National Farmers Organization
National Farmers Union
National Women Involved in Farm Economics
National Sorghum Producers
National Sunflower Association
North Carolina Peanut Growers Association
Northeast States Association for Agriculture Stewardship
Peanut Growers Cooperative Marketing Association
Ricebelt Warehouses
Southern Cotton Association
Southern Peanut Farmers Federation
Southwest Council of Agribusiness
Texas Cotton Association
United Dairymen of Arizona
US Canola Association
US Rice Producers Association
USA Dry Pea & Lentil Council

USA Rice Federation
Virginia Peanut Growers Association
Western Cotton Shippers Association
Western Peanut Growers

cc: Senate Conferees
House Agriculture Committee