July 18, 2017

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We are writing to call attention to the ongoing economic struggles of thousands of American cotton farming families across the country and their need for an effective safety net. Without some action by the Federal government, these families will continue to see their equity erode or take on a greater debt load as they hope to keep their family farms in operation.

In the past decade, American cotton farmers have had to endure sharply increasing foreign subsidies, tariffs, and non-tariff trade barriers along with multiple years of significant weather-related crop losses, all under a significantly weakened and uncertain U.S. safety net. In recent years, these factors have resulted in the United States experiencing a 30-year low in cotton planted area; global cotton prices approaching $2.00 per pound before plummeting to as low as 57 cents per pound; and record production costs far outpacing market returns for the last 3 years.

As a consequence, America’s cotton farming families are struggling to compete on a lopsided global playing field heavily weighted to our competitors in countries like China and India that benefit from sharply rising government subsidies.

In addition, the safety net for American cotton farmers is not on par with the safety net for other staple crop farmers, meaning cotton farmers are much more exposed to the predatory trade practices of foreign countries. This impact on our country’s cotton farmers is also severely impacting the U.S. cotton industry’s infrastructure that includes not only farms but also gins, warehouses, marketing cooperatives, merchants, cottonseed processors, merchandisers, and textile manufacturers across the 17-state Cotton Belt from Virginia to California. For example, over the past decade, the numbers of businesses involved in the ginning and warehousing of cotton have declined by 33 and 21 percent, respectively. It is imperative that we protect the remaining 20,000 businesses in this industry that employ 126,000 people and generate over $21 billion in revenue or America risks losing this important sector of our economy in the same way we lost much of our textile industry, once the largest part of the U.S. manufacturing sector.

Mr. President, in an effort to help stabilize the entire industry, we strongly urge you to use your authority to operate on an ongoing basis the Cotton Ginning Cost Share Program effective beginning with the 2016 crop year. The cost share program, administered by the Department of Agriculture, is desperately needed to provide policy stability in the absence of a comprehensive policy for cotton farmers in the existing farm bill to effectively respond to sustained and deep economic losses due
to price and revenue declines. This cost share program was operated by the previous Administration for the 2015 crop year and is an effective and efficient means of providing economic relief to America’s cotton farming families.

Mr. President, we respectfully urge you to take this critical action and we stand ready to work with you, the Department of Agriculture, and the industry to address this important need as quickly as possible.

Thank you for your consideration and support.

Sincerely,

Chairman K. Michael Conaway (TX-11)
Committee on Agriculture

Chairman Rick Crawford (AR-01)
Subcommittee on General Farm Commodities and Risk Management, Committee on Agriculture

Chairman Robert B. Aderholt (AL-04)
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies, Committee on Appropriations

Representative Jodey Arrington (TX-19)

Representative Michael Rogers (AL-03)

Ranking Member Collin C. Peterson (MN-07)
Committee on Agriculture

Ranking Member Richard M. Nolan (MN-08)
Subcommittee on General Farm Commodities and Risk Management, Committee on Agriculture

Ranking Member Sanford D. Bishop, Jr. (GA-02)
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies, Committee on Appropriations

Representative Tom O’Halleran (AZ-01)

Representative Ted S. Yoho, D.V.M. (FL-03)
Representative Bill Flores (TX-17)

Representative Tom Rice (SC-07)

Representative Adam Kinzinger (IL-16)

Representative Jeff Denham (CA-10)

Representative Eddie Bernice Johnson (TX-30)

Representative A. Drew Ferguson, IV DMD (GA-03)

Representative French Hill (AR-02)

Representative Stephen Womack (AR-03)

Representative Steven Palazzo (MS-04)

Representative Pete Sessions (TX-32)

Representative Gene Green (TX-29)

Representative Terri A. Sewell (AL-07)

Representative Scott DesJarlais, M.D. (TN-04)

Representative John Carter (TX-31)

Representative Thomas J. Rooney (FL-17)

Representative Michelle Lujan Grisham (NM-01)

Representative Bradley Byrne (AL-01)

Representative Ted Poe (TX-02)
Representative Joe Barton (TX-06)  
Representative Richard Hudson (NC-08)  
Representative Trent Franks (AZ-08)  
Representative John Ratcliffe (TX-04)  
Representative A. Donald McEachin (VA-04)  
Representative Doug Collins (GA-09)  
Representative Jim Costa (CA-16)  
Representative Doug LaMalfa (CA-01)  
Representative Lamar Smith (TX-21)  
Representative Kenny Marchant (TX-24)  
Representative Robert C. “Bobby” Scott (VA-03)  
Representative John J. Faso (NY-19)  
Representative Henry Cuellar (TX-28)  
Representative Michael T. McCaul (TX-10)  
Representative James Comer (KY-01)  
Representative Marsha Blackburn (TN-07)  
Representative Markwayne Mullin (OK-02)  
Representative Pete Olson (TX-22)
Representative Mo Brooks (AL-05)

Representative Patrick McHenry (NC-10)

Representative Scott Taylor (VA-02)

Representative Joe Wilson (SC-02)

Representative Kevin McCarthy (CA-23)

Representative Roger Williams (TX-25)

Representative Al Lawson, Jr. (FL-05)

Representative Rob Woodall (GA-07)

Representative Don Bacon (NE-02)

CC: The Honorable Sonny Perdue, United States Secretary of Agriculture