



August 1, 2013

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
Chairwoman, Committee on Agriculture
U.S. Senate
328A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Ranking Member, Committee on Agriculture
U.S. Senate
328A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Frank Lucas
Chairman, Committee on Agriculture
U.S. House of Representatives
1301 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Collin Peterson
Ranking Member, Committee on Agriculture
U.S. House of Representatives
1305 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Stabenow, Senator Cochran, Chairman Lucas and Congressman Peterson:

Thank you for your work and leadership to move a comprehensive Farm Bill through Congress before the 2008 Farm Bill extension expires at the end of the fiscal year.

As the process moves forward, the undersigned organizations respectfully urge you to provide a robust Rural Development title that promotes economic growth and stability in rural areas by creating jobs and ensuring the success of our next generation of farmers.

Since 1996, the Rural Development title has averaged \$413 million in mandatory funding per Farm Bill. While the bills from both chambers are well below this average, the House bill authorizes only \$50 million in mandatory funding as opposed to the \$227 million authorized by the Senate. We respectfully request that the conference agrees to no less than the Senate funding levels, but would urge you to look for ways to further boost those levels in the final bill.

Additionally, within the Rural Development title, we would ask that you support the Senate bill's mandatory funding levels for the Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program, the Water/Wastewater Backlog and Value Added Producer Grants. These programs are vital to the success and sustainability of rural communities throughout America.

We also urge you to support the Senate's approach to streamlining the authorizing language for rural development programs which is designed to assist the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) in administering programs and improving accessibility for rural constituents. We also continue to support provisions within the Senate bill which would allow USDA to focus

resources on strategic community and economic development plans on a multijurisdictional basis.

We commend your support for a new technical assistance authority for the Essential Community Facilities Program and urge you to support similar provisions aimed at promoting efficiency, maximizing resources and ensuring strategic investment in rural areas.

Thank you for your consideration of these important issues. We look forward to a continued dialogue as the process moves forward and stand ready to work with you to complete passage of the new five-year Farm Bill before the current law expires.

Sincerely,

American Public Works Association
California FarmLink
Center for Rural Affairs
Dakota Rural Action
Delta Land and Community
Fay-Penn Economic Development Council
HMS – Center for Health Innovation
Kansas Rural Center
Maine Rural Partners
Michael Fields Agriculture Institute
National Association of Counties
National Association of Development Organizations
National Association of Regional Councils
National Association of Towns and Townships
National Catholic Rural Life Conference
National Center for Frontier Communities
National Grange
National Latino Farmers & Ranchers Trade Association
National Rural Health Association
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition
Northeast Organic Farming Association – Interstate Council
Rural Community Assistance Corporation
Rural Community Assistance Partnership
Virginia Association of Biological Farming