

December 19, 2007

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman, Committee on Agriculture,
Nutrition, and Forestry
United States Senate

The Honorable Saxby Chambliss
Ranking Member, Committee on Agriculture,
Nutrition, and Forestry
United States Senate

The Honorable Collin Peterson
Chairman, Committee on Agriculture
United States House of Representatives

The Honorable Bob Goodlatte
Ranking Member, Committee on Agriculture
United States House of Representatives

Dear Chairmen Harkin and Peterson and Ranking Members Chambliss and Goodlatte:

Thank you for your strong leadership in successfully passing the 2007 Farm Bill.

The versions of the Farm Bill approved by both the United States House and Senate not only work to provide a strong safety net for our nation's farm and ranch families, but also meet the critical new needs in the areas of conservation, nutrition, rural development, and renewable energy.

We are especially encouraged by the bipartisan and overwhelming support for this vitally important legislation which you and the members of your committees worked hard to craft and move forward in the face of considerable challenges.

Based upon the exceptional work of both the House and the Senate, we are confident that a strong new Farm Bill can be approved by Congress and signed into law by the President early next year.

As you know, this is the time of year when farm and ranch families, along with their lenders, need to make serious financial decisions for the upcoming crop year. Some farm families actually expect to head into the fields in just two months and, of course, fall-planted crops are already in the ground. So we cannot overstate the critical importance of completing the Farm Bill and having a safety net in place by late January or early February.

The need to improve nutrition for children and low-income families, as well as the conservation, rural development, and renewable energy incentives advanced in the House and Senate Farm Bills add even greater urgency to the timely completion of this must-pass bill.

We applaud the bipartisan decision of Congress to move forward on the authorization of a full, five-year Farm Bill. Sound policy and long-term certainty are absolutely essential for everyone served by the farm bill and the versions produced by the House and the Senate offer both. As Congress prepares to adjourn for the year, we appreciate the three month extension of current law which will preserve the budget baseline and avoid disruption.

Accordingly, we urge you to convene a House-Senate conference committee to negotiate this legislation as quickly as possible in order to complete a conference report to the Farm Bill by no later than late January or early February.

Thank you once again for your extraordinary work in the passage of legislation that we believe will greatly improve the food, fiber, and energy security of our nation.

Sincerely,

American Association of Crop Insurers
American Beekeeping Federation
American Farm Bureau Federation
American Malting Barley Association
American Sheep Industry Association
American Soybean Association
American Sugar Alliance
Corn Producers Association of Texas
Crop Insurance Professionals Association
Minnesota Corn Growers Association
National Association of Wheat Growers
National Barley Growers Association
National Cotton Council
National Farmers Union
National Milk Producers Federation
National Sorghum Producers
National Sunflower Association
New Mexico Peanut Growers Association
North Carolina Peanut Growers Association
Northeast States Association for Agricultural Stewardship
Oklahoma Peanut Commission
Peanut Growers Cooperative Marketing Association
Rain and Hail, LLC
Ricebelt Warehouses
Rural Community Insurance Services
Southern Peanut Farmers Federation
Southwest Council of Agribusiness
US Canola Association
US Rice Producers Association
USA Dry Pea and Lentil Council
USA Rice Federation
Virginia Peanut Growers Association
Western Peanut Growers

cc: Members of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry
Members of the House Committee on Agriculture