



March 17, 2008

The Honorable Herbert Kohl  
United States Senate  
330 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Robert Bennett  
United States Senate  
431 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Kohl and Ranking Member Bennett:

On behalf of the family farmers, ranchers and rural resident members of National Farmers Union (NFU), I write in support of \$7.5 million in funding for the Rural Cooperative Development Grants (RCDG) program in the fiscal year (FY) 2009 agricultural appropriations bill and encourage you both to support its inclusion within the final bill.

The RCDG program is a competitive program that provides funding for cooperative development in rural America. The funds are used by cooperative development centers to organize cooperatives, develop business and feasibility plans, train cooperative board members, and provide marketing assistance.

This is an extremely cost effective, small program that results in the creation of valuable businesses and jobs in rural communities across the country. Cooperative development centers have helped create more than 400 new businesses and more than 5,800 new jobs. Though the program is authorized at \$50 million it has only been appropriated at \$6 million to \$6.5 million for the past several years. The President's FY2009 budget proposes a 25 percent cut to FY2008 appropriated program level.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to working with you throughout the appropriations process to help secure the future viability of the RCDG program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom Buis". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Tom" and last name "Buis" clearly legible.

Tom Buis, President  
National Farmers Union