



April 10, 2009

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

The Honorable Sam Brownback
United States Senate
303 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Kohl and Ranking Member Brownback:

On behalf of the family farmers, ranchers and rural resident members of National Farmers Union (NFU), I write in support of \$8.25 million in funding for the Rural Cooperative Development Grants (RCDG) program in the fiscal year (FY) 2010 agriculture 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 establishment 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. Now, more than ever, cooperative development centers can play a critical role in fostering employment opportunities and growing the rural economy.

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, appearing to read "Roger Johnson".

Roger Johnson, President
National Farmers Union