



UNITED TO GROW FAMILY AGRICULTURE

July 3, 2012

The Honorable Frank Lucas
Chairman
House Committee on Agriculture
1301 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Collin Peterson
Ranking Member
House Committee on Agriculture
1305 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Lucas and Ranking Member Peterson:


On behalf of the 200,000 family farmer, rancher and rural resident members of National Farmers Union (NFU), I commend you for your prior bipartisan, collaborative work with the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry formulating your recommendations to the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction. This action created the framework for the Agriculture Reform, Food and Jobs Act of 2012 passed last week by the U.S. Senate, particularly by setting the level of spending cuts deemed appropriate for the 2012 Farm Bill to bear.

As you begin your work on the nutrition title of the 2012 Farm Bill, I urge you to maintain similar spending cuts as those included in the nutrition title of the Senate-passed farm bill. The \$4.5 billion in reductions is an appropriate level for nutrition programs to accept, particularly in this uncertain economic climate. Just as crop insurance and commodity programs serve as a safety net for farmers who face losses caused by weather-related disasters or price collapse, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is a lifeline for those in dire situations who face unexpected hardship. Unemployment remains high, and many people who never thought they would need government support now find themselves dependent upon SNAP to help them make ends meet. Additional cuts would be extremely detrimental to the program and its ability to provide help to those who need it.

SNAP is an important source of aid for rural families. In 2010, 14.6 percent of rural households depended on SNAP benefits, compared with 14.8 percent of central city residents and nine percent of suburban households. In addition, SNAP acts as an economic stimulus, with every \$5 in new SNAP benefits generating \$9 in total community spending. Every additional dollar's worth of SNAP benefits generates 17 to 47 cents of new spending on food and, on average, \$1 billion of retail food demand by SNAP recipients generates close to 3,000 farm jobs.

Maintaining nutrition cuts made in the Senate-passed Farm Bill will contribute to deficit reduction while preserving benefits for millions of needy Americans; ensuring consistency between the House and Senate versions of the legislation will also help to ease the conference process. Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to continuing to work with you to ensure the bill's final passage before its Sept. 30 expiration.

Sincerely,



Roger Johnson
President

cc: House Committee on Agriculture members