

Re: Farm Bill

November 2, 2007

Dear Senator,

We are writing to urge you to support the bi-partisan payment limitation amendment being offered by Senators Byron L. Dorgan (D-N.D.) and Charles E. Grassley (R-IA).

The time has come for real reform that closes loopholes and caps mega-farm subsidies. The Agriculture Committee bill is not reform. It would impose no reduction in payments on the vast majority of the nation's mega-farms. As drafted, only single, unmarried farmers will face a payment limitation reduction in years of high crop prices. In years of low crop prices, mega-farms – married and single – will still get unlimited subsidies to drive smaller operations out of business.

Likewise, the Committee's means test will have little effect. It prohibits high-income non farmers from directly receiving farm payments. But most of these non farmers are landlords, who given the opportunity, will switch to cash rents. Doing so will enable their tenant-farmers to receive the government payments, which will then be returned to the landlord in the form of cash rent payments.

Directly or indirectly, federal subsidies will flow unabated to large mega-farms and rich non farmers alike. The money could be far better spent, as the Dorgan-Grassley amendment intends, on nutrition, rural development, beginning farmer and conservation programs.

The amendment would place a hard cap of \$250,000 on annual payments and close the loopholes. Mega-farms would no longer be able to get unlimited payment by creating a complex web of legal entities. All payments would count toward the limits, including the generic certificates created as a mechanism to avoid the limitations.

Finally, the amendment would ensure that all payments flow to working farmers. Consistent with the recommendations of the USDA Payment Limit Commission and the Government Accountability Office, the amendment would create measurable and objective standards for participation in on-farm labor or management.

The savings from these commonsense reforms would be committed to high priority investments in the future of America through investing in nutrition, rural development, beginning farmer and conservation programs.

We strongly urge you to vote for the Dorgan-Grassley payment limitation amendment to the farm bill.

Sincerely,

Agricultural Missions, Inc.
American Agriculture Movement
Bread for the World

Center for Rural Affairs
Church World Service
Council for Citizens Against Government Waste
Community Food Security Coalition
Environmental Working Group
Evangelical Lutheran Church of America
Family Farm Defenders
Izaak Walton League of America
Justice and Witness Ministries, United Church of Christ
Land Stewardship Project
National Campaign for Sustainable Agriculture
National Catholic Rural Life Conference
National Grange
NETWORK, A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby
Organic Farming Research Foundation
Oxfam America
Presbyterian Church (USA) Washington Office
Sustainable Agriculture Coalition
Taxpayers for Common Sense Action
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
William C. Velasquez Institute
Women Food and Agriculture Network

1000 Friends of Iowa
Agriculture Committee of California, Nevada Regional Conservation Committee (CNRCC) of
the Sierra Club
Agriculture and Land Based Training Association (CA)
Big River Economic & Agricultural Development Alliance (BREADA)
California Coalition for Food and Farming
California Food and Justice Coalition
Catholic Charities of Kansas City-St. Joseph, Inc.
Catholic Charities of Louisville Parish Social Ministry Department (KY)
Catholic Daughters of the Americas, Steuben/Chemung Counties NY
Catholic Rural Life & Community Development, Archdiocese of Dubuque, IA
Chemung County NY Pomona Grange #1 of Chemung County NY
Church Women United of Chemung County NY
Church Women United of NYS Court St Joseph #139,
Connecticut Chapter of Northeast Organic Farming Association (CT NOFA)
Co-op Partners Warehouse, St. Paul, MN
Cornucopia Institute
Costal Enterprises, Inc. (ME)
Dakota Rural Action (SD)
Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon
Farm Fresh Rhode Island (Providence, RI)
FGE Food and Nutrition Team
Florida Organic Growers and Consumers (FOG)
Foodlink, Rochester, NY

Georgia Organics
Horseheads Grange #1118
Illinois Stewardship Alliance
Iowa Farmers Union
Kansas City Food Circle
Kansas Rural Center
Kentucky Environmental Foundation/Chemical Weapons Working Group
Kentucky Resources Council, Inc.
Ladies of Charity of Chemung County NY
Maine Food Security Group
Michael Fields Agriculture Institute (WI)
Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service
Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance
Northeast Organic Farming Association of New York (NOFA NY)
Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont (NOFA VT)
Northern Plains Conference of the United Church of Christ
Northern Plains Sustainable Agriculture Society
Past Regents Club of the Diocese of Rochester NY
Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture
Small Potatoes Gleaning Project, (project of Community to Community Development, WA)
Soil Born Farm, Urban Agriculture Project, Sacramento, CA
The Minnesota Project
Verley Family, LLC
Vermont Campaign to End Childhood Hunger
Vermont Grass Farmers Association
Western Sustainable Agriculture Working Group (WSAWG)