



## SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE COALITION

110 Maryland Avenue N.E. Phone 202.547.5754  
Washington, D.C. 20002 Fax 202.547.1837  
www.msawg.org

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**Contact:** Aimee Witteman  
PH: 202-547-5754

### **DORGAN-GRASSLEY AMENDMENT: LAST CHANCE FOR REAL FARM BILL REFORM**

*Washington, D.C. November 2, 2007* – In a letter delivered to U.S. Senators today, the Sustainable Agriculture Coalition joined seventy other organizations in urging Members to vote for an amendment that places a hard cap of \$250,000 on farm commodity payments, closes loopholes in the commodity payment policy, and shifts the savings to beginning and minority farmers, conservation, rural development, and nutrition and anti-hunger programs. Senators will have an opportunity to show their support for the amendment when it is introduced by Senators Byron Dorgan (D-ND) and Charles Grassley (R-IA) during next week's Farm Bill debate on the floor of the Senate.

The full U.S. Senate's consideration and vote on the farm bill next week marks the final stages of months of negotiations over reauthorization of the omnibus package of federal legislation. Much of the public attention paid to this round of farm bill reauthorization has been focused on the current commodity program payments. The Dorgan-Grassley payment limitation reform amendment would address the public and taxpayer concern that a small percentage of commodity producers in the U.S. receive the lion's share of farm payments and that the current structure and distribution of these payments contribute to farm consolidation and the demise of family farms. A similar amendment was approved by the Senate in 2002, but did not become law.

“The House and Senate Agriculture Committee unfortunately failed to change the status quo of mega payments to mega farms,” said Ferd Hoefner, Policy Director for the Sustainable Agriculture Coalition. “It's now up to the full Senate to show responsible leadership by re-affirming its support for reasonable commodity payment limits and passing the Dorgan-Grassley amendment. Dorgan-Grassley represents real reform to keep family farmers on the land and increase support for beginning farmers, rural development, conservation, and anti-hunger programs.”

The Dorgan-Grassley Farm Program Payment Limitation Reform Amendment would establish effective caps of \$40,000 on direct (and fixed) payments, \$60,000 on counter cyclical (and crop revenue) payments, and \$150,000 on loan deficiency payments and marketing loan gains, including gains on generic certificates and forfeited commodities. The combined limit would be \$250,000.

The \$1.15 billion in 10-year savings from the Dorgan-Grassley amendment would provide funding for the Food Stamp Program, Temporary Emergency Food Assistance Program, Grassland Reserve Program, Farmland Protection Program, Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program, Beginning Farmer and Rancher Individual Development Accounts, Rural Microenterprise Assistance Program, Community Food Grants, Farmers Market Promotion Program, Seniors Farmers Market Nutrition Program, and the *Pigford* class action settlement involving black farmers.

“The Dorgan-Grassley amendment is good for rural communities who have seen large farms get larger and mid-sized farms get squeezed out. It is high time the taxpayer was not forced to subsidize this destruction. We cannot wait for the next Farm Bill to come along to make these simple changes that are good for family farmers, rural communities, and taxpayers.”

A copy of the letter is **attached**.

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*The Sustainable Agriculture Coalition represents grassroots farm, rural, and conservation organizations from across the country that advocate for federal policies and programs supporting the long-term economic and environmental sustainability of agriculture, natural resources, and rural communities.*