

VIA FACSIMILE

«Fax»

February 11, 2008

The Honorable Tom Harkin, Chairman
Senate Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry
Committee
328-A Russell Senate Office Building

The Honorable Collin Peterson, Chairman
House Committee on Agriculture
1301 Longworth House Office Building

The Honorable Saxby Chambliss, Ranking
Member
Senate Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry
Committee
328-A Russell Senate Office Building

The Honorable Bob Goodlatte, Ranking
Member
House Committee on Agriculture
1301 Longworth House Office Building

Dear Mr. Chairmen and Ranking Members:

The undersigned organizations respectfully urge you to initiate meetings of the conference committee on the 2008 farm bill as soon as possible, and to complete a final version of this legislation prior to expiration of 2002 farm bill authorities on March 15, 2008.

Farmers and ranchers are currently operating in the dark – the winter wheat crop is already planted and spring crop producers are in the process of procuring inputs and securing financing for the 2008 crop year. Other vital programs for conservation, rural development, renewable energy and nutrition are also awaiting final congressional action on the farm bill. Without a farm bill enacted by March 15, permanent law will be triggered.

We fully believe the new farm bill must not be shortchanged. The budget baseline for the Commodity Title has already been reduced by 60 percent compared to the 2002 farm bill, and further budget reductions will not result in a comprehensive farm policy to address the challenges across rural America. Therefore, the Administration's opposition to providing adequate revenue to fund the new farm bill is short-sighted for American agriculture.

Further, the administration is insisting on policy provisions that were considered and rejected by both of your committees. To the extent a compromise can be reached within the scope of the two bills already passed, we encourage you to work to reach agreement on a final bill that is acceptable to the president. However, our organizations will not support legislation that is inadequate in protecting the future of American farmers and ranchers.

Both the House and the Senate versions of the farm bill were reported with unanimous bipartisan support by your committees; and the Senate bill was approved by the widest margin of bipartisan support since 1948. While our organizations each have different policy priorities, we all strongly support writing the final legislation within the parameters of these two popular bills. Accordingly, we

oppose including provisions that fall outside the realm of the House and Senate versions of the farm bill.

We look forward to working with you to quickly craft a conference report that meets the needs of rural America.

Sincerely,

Alabama Peanut Producers Association
American Beekeeping Federation
American Farm Bureau Federation
American Malting Barley Association
American Sheep Industry Association
American Soybean Association
American Sugar Alliance
Florida Peanut Producers Association
Georgia Peanut Commission
National Association of Wheat Growers
National Barley Growers Association
National Cotton Council
National Farmers Union
National Sorghum Producers
National Sunflowers Association
Northeast States Association for Agriculture Stewardship
Ricebelt Warehouses
Southern Peanut Farmers Federation
Southwest Council of Agribusiness
United Dairymen of Arizona
US Canola Association
US Rice Producers Association
USA Rice Federation

Cc: Senate Conferees
House Agriculture Committee