

March 25, 2019

The Honorable Sanford Bishop
Chairman
Subcommittee on Agriculture
House Committee on Appropriations
2632-A Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jeff Fortenberry
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Agriculture
House Committee on Appropriations
1514 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Hoeven
Chairman
Subcommittee on Agriculture
Senate Committee on Appropriations
338 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jeff Merkley
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Agriculture
Senate Committee on Appropriations
313 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairmen Bishop and Hoeven and Ranking Members Fortenberry and Merkley,

We, the undersigned agriculture and rural organizations representing millions of members across the country, thank you for your work on behalf of American agriculture. We appreciate the inclusion of the pilot program to address farmer stress and suicide in the fiscal year 2019 appropriations bill. We recommend fully funding the Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network (FRSAN) for FY 2020 and ask for your support.

The 2018 Farm Bill reauthorized the FRSAN, which provides grants for extension services, state departments of agriculture, nonprofit organizations and other entities to provide stress assistance programs to farmers, ranchers, farmworkers, and other agriculture-related occupations. Eligible programs include farm helplines and websites, training programs and workshops, outreach services, and home delivery of assistance. The \$2 million provided for a pilot of the program in the FY 2019 appropriations bill will create an on-ramp to full program implementation.

As you know, farming is a high-stress occupation. Financial risk, volatile markets, unpredictable weather, and heavy workloads can all place a significant strain on farmers', ranchers', and farmworkers' mental and emotional well-being. This is exacerbated by the fact that 60 percent of rural residents live in areas that suffer from mental health professional shortages.

The current prolonged farm economy downturn is causing even greater stress for farmers and ranchers. Net farm income in 2018 was nearly 50 percent less than it was in 2013. While current projections suggest slight improvements in 2019, a significant rebound could be years away.

As the Subcommittee develops the FY 2020 agriculture appropriations bill, we urge you to fully fund the FRSAN at \$10 million. This funding will be critically important in meeting the needs of farmers and ranchers as they endure increasing financial and mental stress.

Sincerely,

Alianza Nacional de Campesinas, Inc.
American Agri-Women
American Farm Bureau Federation
American Pulse Association
American Soybean Association
Catholic Rural Life
Council of State Governments Midwestern Legislative Conference
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Farm Aid
Farm Credit Council
Farmer Veteran Coalition
Farmers' Legal Action Group
National Association for Rural Mental Health
National Association of State Departments of Agriculture
National Association of Wheat Growers
National Barley Growers Association
National Corn Growers Association
National Cotton Council
National Council of Farmer Cooperatives
National Family Farm Coalition
National Farmers Organization
National Farmers Union
National Grange
National Latino Farmers and Ranchers Trade Association
National Milk Producers Federation
National Rural Health Association
National Sorghum Producers
National Sunflower Association
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition
National Young Farmers Coalition
Northwest Forest Worker Center
Pesticide Action Network
Rural Advancement Foundation International-USA
Rural and Agricultural Council of America
Rural Coalition
Rural Development Leadership Network
State Agricultural and Rural Leaders
Sustainable Food Policy Alliance
United States Cattlemen's Association
USA Dry Pea & Lentil Council
USA Rice
U.S. Canola Association
US Dry Bean Council