



CALIFORNIA FARM BUREAU FEDERATION

NATIONAL AFFAIRS & RESEARCH DIVISION

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The Honorable
Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and
Forestry
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable
Committee on Agriculture
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Stabenow, Chairman Lucas, Ranking Members Roberts and Peterson:

The California Farm Bureau Federation thanks you for your leadership in designing a Farm Bill for the future. We recognize that tough decisions will have to be made. As the representative of 76,500 members in the largest agricultural state, please find below the top Farm Bill priorities for California farmers and ranchers.

Specialty Crops

Growers of specialty crops now have a Farm Bill title and we call for the Congress to preserve and build upon the title in the next bill. The **Specialty Crop Block Grant Program** allows states to tailor programs to the unique needs of each state and address the issues that are impacting producers. Maintaining the specialty crop block grant program and mandatory dollars is a top priority for California farmers. In addition, the block grant should also encourage more multi-state partnerships.

As a state that is facing multiple invasive pest and disease threats we propose maintaining the funding for the APHIS **Plant Pest and Disease Program** (sec. 10201). This program has been an important tool to protecting our agricultural production by maintaining the highest level of detection and eradication of pests and diseases at our points-of-entry. **We ask that the program stay in the Farm Bill and additional dollars be allocated.** The devastation caused by pests, diseases, and resulting in production losses, quarantines, and trade restrictions ought to be vigilantly protected.

As was required in the last Farm Bill, the planting prohibition should continue and the planting flexibility pilot provision in the 2008 bill should be repealed. As long as some farmers receive federal payments, they should not be allowed to plant fruits and vegetables on that program acreage.

Dairy

The dairy industry is the long time leading agricultural sector in California. Therefore, we support a move away from the federal dairy price support program and the Milk Income Loss Contract (MILC) to a gross margin insurance program. Any program should permit dairy farmers to receive a price that enables them to produce a stable and dependable milk supply.

Nutrition

Expand the healthy incentives pilot that creates incentives for the purchase of fruits and vegetables by people using the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. The Farm Bill allocated \$20m for the pilot program to create new and innovative approaches that empower low-income Americans to consume diets that include optimal levels of fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and other healthful foods. We are proposing additional dollars for the pilot program and making the money eligible to non-profit organizations to distribute the dollars to reach more eligible Americans.

Organic

To strengthen the authorities of the National Organic Program (NOP) the Farm Bill should provide subpoena authority and stop sale authority of products being sold in violation of the organic standard.

In addition to strengthening the NOP's authorities the Farm Bill should direct the program, by 2014, to create a database for tracking certifiers, producers, complaints and actions taken in the program. Currently, the NOP does not have the IT infrastructure to do these actions effectively. An IT database will allow for remote information input; faster processing of complaints; and the issuing of certificates for export; which are all critical to effectively manage a program.

Food Safety

There are multiple produce food safety research and technical assistance efforts at USDA, FDA and in the private sector. However, there is a lack of coordination between USDA, FDA and stakeholders to prioritize and fund produce food safety research and technical assistance for a more effective and streamlined implementation of the Food Safety Modernization Act. With the pending FDA produce regulations expected next year and potential research gaps, there should be an effort to focus food safety research on specific priorities that will address the needs of produce growers throughout the nation.

The Specialty Crops Title should contain language that directs USDA, in consultation with the Department of Health and Human Services, to annually identify food safety research and technical assistance priorities. These priorities should be used by both departments to coordinate funding and resources. A committee of fruit, vegetable and nut growers and handlers should play a role in establishing the priorities.

Conservation

Conservation programs are critical to keeping working farmland in California while preserving the landscape and habitat. We propose increasing funding for ***Environmental Quality Incentive Program*** (EQIP) and ***Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program*** (WHIP). We propose also reauthorizing and funding the ***Grasslands Reserve Program*** (GRP) to provide working lands easements on grazing lands. These programs are beneficial to California agriculture.

Research

California producers benefit from a strong research title and we believe that the next Farm Bill should preserve research funds. To ensure the best use of the dollars the ***specialty crop research initiative project*** proposals should be reviewed by industry stakeholders. This could be achieved by having an industry panel review the proposals and rank those projects that have merit.

Market Development

Recognizing that there is a growing customer base outside the U.S. we strongly support

USDA's market development programs to improve trade. As we face increased competition in foreign markets, the U.S. must be more aggressive, with increased funding for programs that result in greater market development and access for U.S. agriculture. ***The Market Access Program (MAP)*** has shown to be effective by leveraging industry dollars with Federal funds to develop new markets. We support ***mandatory funding of \$200 million per year.***

As producers who face a number of non-tariff trade barriers that limit the movement of products to foreign markets, we want to see continued authorization and funding for the ***Technical Assistance for Specialty Crops (TASC)***. ***Mandatory funding of \$45 million over 5 years*** should be in the Farm Bill.

Rural Development

Many areas in California are not eligible to participate in Farm Bill programs because of the "rural" designation required by USDA. Due to the increased population throughout our state, the definition precludes communities such as Fresno, Chico, and Stockton from participating in rural development programs. Producers in these areas should be eligible for programs they are currently denied.

Also, the Congress should continue to provide funding for ***Value-added producer*** grants through mandatory funding.

California Rice, Wheat and Cotton

CFBF supports California rice, cotton and wheat farmers who are a vital part to California's rural communities and landscape. We support these producers as they define a farm program (risk management and crop insurance) that keeps them working on the land.

The California Farm Bureau Federation works to protect family farms and ranches on behalf of approximately 76,500 members statewide and as part of a nationwide network of nearly 6.3 million Farm Bureau members.

Sincerely,



Paul Wenger
President

cc: Congressman Cardoza
Congressman Costa
Congressman Baca
Senator Feinstein
Senator Boxer