

February 24, 2012

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow  
Chairwoman  
Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Pat Roberts  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Stabenow and Roberts:

Thank you for your leadership on the 2012 farm bill. We are heartened to see committee work progressing, and look forward to the upcoming Senate hearing on “Strengthening Conservation Through the 2012 Farm Bill.”

We write to express our support for the framework for Title II, the Conservation Title, developed as part of the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction process. That framework, as we understand it, contained provisions strongly supported by the farmers our organizations represent: simplification, flexibility, and consolidation.

The number and complexity of USDA conservation programs is daunting to many growers. Your success in consolidating 23 programs into 13 – reducing the number almost by half – is welcome news. We applaud your efforts to simplify these programs, keeping the same tools but merging them into fewer programs.

We also support your efforts to focus on working lands conservation. These programs have grown to be the largest in the conservation portfolio, and for good reason. Farmers value their ability to partner with USDA in protecting and conserving soil, water and other natural resources, particularly as a tool to help them prevent and/or comply with regulation. Agricultural conservation programs truly provide a win-win in this respect.

We appreciate the valuable work the committee has undertaken on Title II, and we offer our support in completing reauthorization of the farm bill this year.

Sincerely,

American Farm Bureau Federation  
American Soybean Association  
National Association of Wheat Growers  
National Barley Growers Association  
National Corn Growers Association  
National Cotton Council  
National Farmers Union  
National Sorghum Producers  
US Canola Association  
USA Rice Federation