

**Senate Agriculture Committee**  
**Field Hearing Testimony**  
**April 9, 2011**  
**Mr. Jim Reid**  
**Jeddo, Michigan**

Senator Stabenow and Senator Roberts, thank you for holding this first official field hearing on the upcoming reauthorization of our nation's Farm Bill. I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony regarding the reallocation of the Rural Energy for American Program through the Rural Development Department of USDA . My name is Jim Reid and I am a dairy farmer from Jeddo, Michigan. Our farm is located in St Clair County, just 4 miles from the Lake Huron shoreline.

I was born and raised on a dairy farm in St. Clair County, I worked along side my father through my school years and into college. After graduation from Michigan State University and pursuing a teaching career for 5 years, my wife Pam and I purchased an operating dairy farm in 1978. We combined my father's herd and our new cows to establish a 50-cow dairy. As the years went on, we gradually grew the dairy and cash crop farm to a 1,000 acre, 90-cow herd by 2007. That same year we began planning and implementing a project that would bring us to today's level of 225 cows and 1,100 acres. My son , Jeff, is currently enrolled in Michigan State University's Dairy Management program and will hopefully continue to grow the family farm into the future.

I recently had the opportunity to use a REAP grant to install a solar power system on our 225-cow dairy operation in the "thumb" of Michigan. After exploring several renewable energy alternatives including wind power, we chose solar power as a way to provide energy to our farm. We installed 96, 205-watt Evergreen Solar Photovoltaic

panels on the roof of our freestall barn. These panels will generate roughly 27,000 kilowatts per year, or about a third of our energy needs on the farm.

While the use of solar power is beneficial to us in the reduction of energy costs on the farm, the cost of the solar panels and installation would have been cost prohibitive without the assistance through the REAP program and other incentives offered through DTE.

The total investment cost in installing the solar panels was over \$140,000. Our reduction in energy costs is expected to be approximately \$5,000 a year. As you can see without any financial assistance the return on investment would have taken over 28 years. With the REAP grants and other incentives the return on investment is now around 4 years.

Aside from the financial gain of using solar energy, the implementation of renewable energy fits well into our overall farm strategy and priorities. Over the past several years we have worked to make our farm as environmentally-friendly as possible. Working through the Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program we have implemented new management strategies to protect the livestock and land on our farm. We are certified in all three of the MAEAP programs: Farmstead, Livestock and Cropping. This past winter our efforts to be good stewards of our resources earned us the selection of Ag Ecologist of the Year for the Michigan Farm Bureau.

Many of the changes we have made around the farm, including renovating buildings, were made to help make way for the next generation, my son, to continue working on our family farm.

Programs like the REAP help farms implement new areas of energy efficiency and conservation on the farm. While we used the program to install a renewable energy program on our farm, other farmers have used the program to make relatively small changes on the farm that result in large savings of energy consumption. Farmers, by their personal nature, want to conserve and protect our natural resources as much as possible. The REAP program makes it financially feasible for us to explore new energy sources on the farm.

Supporting efforts like the REAP is one more step in our nation's move toward less dependence on foreign energy sources. President Obama has called for 10 percent of our nation's energy to come from renewable sources, like wind and solar by 2012 and 25 percent by 2025. We are proud to have done our part in the effort to gain energy independence. We encourage you to continue the REAP program to allow other farmers the chance to bring renewable energy and energy conservation to their operations.