

February 3, 2005

The Honorable Mike Johanns  
United States Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Ave, SW  
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We are writing to express our concerns regarding the Fiscal Year 2006 budget. The diverse group of organizations signing this letter is concerned that program reductions and/or restructurings could seriously undermine many nutrition, conservation, crop insurance and farm programs that are important to all Americans. We look forward to working closely with you to prevent any ill effects that such reductions would have on these important programs.

All of the American families and industries impacted by USDA's programs have labored hard to work with Congress and USDA to create programs in the Farm Bill that work for our constituents within the specific budget limits provided by Congress. Many of these critically important programs already have sustained budget reductions in recent years. For example, the agricultural appropriations bill is the only appropriations bill to have its 302 (b) allocation reduced in both of the previous two years. These reduced resources, coupled with the need to fund hurricane and other disaster assistance, have necessitated reductions in funding for many discretionary agriculture programs, as well as reductions of \$4 billion in mandatory agriculture programs. As another example, the nutrition of the nation's low-income people is still suffering because of the budget cuts of the 1990s.

The Farm Bill programs play a critical role in the country's economy and benefit all Americans. The 2002 Farm Bill's conservation provisions already are benefiting the environment as part of the "greenest" farm bill ever enacted. USDA's nutrition programs have recently been re-authorized, improving their efficiencies in providing food to the most vulnerable members of our society. Through the first three years of the 2002 Farm Bill, farm program costs have been more than \$15 billion less than the costs initially projected by the Congressional Budget Office when Congress passed the 2002 bill. A budget that requires further cuts or structural weakening in these important programs will put at risk the promising environmental benefits of the bill, and the nutritional health of some of the poorest populations in our country. In addition, with prices for many major commodities falling sharply from last year, reductions to farm programs would come at precisely the time that these supports are most needed in rural America.

We look forward to working with you to maintain the viability and success of these programs of critical importance to our rural, suburban, and urban citizens, as the Fiscal Year 2006 budget is developed.

Sincerely,

Agricultural Retailers Association  
Alabama Farmers Federation  
Alabama Peanut Producers Association  
America's Second Harvest, The Nation's Food Bank Network  
American Association of Crop Insurers  
American Association of School Administrators  
American Baptist Churches USA  
American Beekeeping Federation  
American Corn Growers Association  
American Commodity Distribution Association  
American Cotton Shippers Association  
American Dietetic Association (ADA)  
American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF)  
American Farmland Trust  
American Federation of State, County & Municipal Employees (AFSCME)  
American Sheep Industry Association  
American Society of Farm Managers & Rural Appraisers  
American Soybean Association  
American Sugar Alliance  
Americans for Democratic Action (ADA)  
Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs  
Association of State Wetlands Managers  
CACFP National Professional Association  
Catholic Charities USA  
Certified Crop Advisors  
Certified Professionals in Erosion and Sediment Control  
Children's Defense Fund  
Children's Foundation  
Children's Sentinel Nutrition Assessment Program (C-SNAP)  
Coalition on Human Needs  
Community Action Partnership  
Community Food Security Coalition  
Community Liaisons, Inc.  
Congressional Hunger Center  
Crop Insurance Research Bureau  
Dairy Farmers of America  
Defenders of Wildlife  
Ducks Unlimited  
EBT Industry Council of the Electronic Funds Transfer Association  
Electronic Funds Transfer Association  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
Families USA  
Farm Credit Council  
Florida Peanut Producers Association  
Food Research and Action Center (FRAC)  
Georgia Peanut Commission

Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative  
Jewish Council for Public Affairs  
Independent Bankers Association of America  
Independent Community Bankers of America  
Independent Insurance Agents and Brokers of America  
International Erosion Control Association  
MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger  
Michigan Milk Producers Federation  
Migrant Legal Action Program  
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd  
National Association Conservation Districts  
National Association of Farmer Elected Committeemen  
National Association of State Conservation Agencies  
National Association of State Foresters  
National Association of Wheat Growers  
National Barley Growers Association  
National CACFP Forum  
National Conservation District Employee Association  
National Corn Growers Association  
National Cotton Council  
National Council of Farmer Cooperatives  
National Council of La Raza  
National Education Association  
National Farmers Organization  
National Farmers Union  
National Grain Sorghum Producers  
National Grange  
National Head Start Association  
National Health Care for the Homeless Council  
National Immigration Law Center  
National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty  
National Low Income Housing Coalition  
National Milk Producers Federation  
National Recreation & Park Association  
National Sunflower Association  
National Watershed Coalition  
National WIC Association  
National Wild Turkey Federation  
Nature Conservancy  
NETWORK  
Northeast States Association for Agricultural Stewardship  
Partners' Action for Children  
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Washington Office  
Rain & Hail Insurance Society  
RESULTS  
Rural Community Insurance Services

Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law  
Save-A-Lot  
School Nutrition Association  
Share Our Strength  
Society for Nutrition Education  
Southeast Dairy Farmers Association  
Southern Peanuts Farmers Federation  
Soybean Producers of America  
Sustainable Agriculture Coalition  
The Alliance of Western Milk Producers  
United Church of Christ Justice and Witness Ministries  
United Egg Producers  
United Food & Commercial Workers Union (UFCW)  
United States Conference of Mayors  
U.S. Canola Association  
U.S. Rice Producers Association  
USA Dry Pea & Lentil Council  
USA Rice Federation  
Voices for America's Children  
Volunteers of America  
Welfare Law Center  
Wells Fargo Bank  
Western Growers  
Western Peanut Growers Association  
Western United Dairymen  
Wildlife Management Institute  
Women Involved in Farm Economics  
World Hunger Year

Cc: House Budget Committee, Senate Budget Committee