

July 19, 2011

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States

The Honorable John Boehner
Speaker of the House of Representatives

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader, United States Senate

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader, House of Representatives

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader, United States Senate

Dear President Obama, Speaker Boehner, Majority Leader Reid, Minority Leader McConnell, and Minority Leader Pelosi:

As organizations that have a stake in agriculture and a robust rural economy, we urge a timely resolution to the ongoing debt ceiling negotiations. A long-term, comprehensive solution that reduces federal deficits must be found to help ensure our Nation's fiscal integrity and economic strength. Such an agreement will also establish budget certainty for all federal policies, including upcoming farm bill negotiations.

Agriculture is prepared to take a proportionate share of budget cuts provided everything is on the table. Last year, agriculture absorbed a net \$6 billion reduction, according to the Congressional Budget Office, thus making it clear we have and will do our part to help with spending and deficit control.

Sufficient resources are needed to ensure the continued production of food, fiber, feed and fuel, which is the lifeblood of the rural economy. In this time of economic uncertainty and weather-related disasters, the farm bill provides safeguards for farmers and ranchers to consistently provide a safe and stable food supply. The farm bill also provides assistance for our nation's most vulnerable people, helps to conserve valuable natural resources, encourages the production of renewable energy, and aids in the economic development of rural communities.

Any decision to reduce agriculture spending must allow the Senate and House Agriculture Committees to determine how the reductions are made. These Committees have the expertise to best evaluate specific programs and to include any changes in the 2012 Farm Bill in a manner that does not disrupt long-term commitments reflected in current farm legislation.

Agriculture continues to lead our national economic recovery and contributes to domestic and global food security. To ensure this role going forward, we need a rational long-term agreement on raising the debt ceiling that asks agriculture to only contribute reductions proportionate to its share of the federal budget. Doing so will provide the certainty needed to write a strong and effective farm bill.

We urge you to act very soon on this matter. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Agricultural Retailers Association
American Agriculture Movement
American Association of Crop Insurers
American Corn Growers Association
American Farm Bureau Federation
American Soybean Association
American Sugar Alliance
Crop Insurance Professionals Association
Farm Credit Council
Growth Energy
Housing Assistance Council
Midwest Dairy Coalition
National Association of Counties
National Association of State Departments of Agriculture
National Association of Wheat Growers
National Barley Growers Association
National Coalition for Food and Agricultural Research
National Cooperative Business Association
National Corn Growers Association
National Cotton Council
National Council of Farmer Cooperatives
National Farmers Union
National Milk Producers Federation
National Sorghum Producers
National Sunflower Association
Pollinator Partnership
Rural Community Assistance Partnership
Southwest Council of Agribusiness
Sustainable Bioenergy Crops Coalition
Syngenta
U.S. Canola Association
USA Dry Pea & Lentil Council
USA Rice Federation
Western Peanut Growers