

June 25, 2009

The Honorable Tom Harkin, Chairman
United States Senate
Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry
328A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Saxby Chambliss, Ranking Member
United States Senate
Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry
416 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Harkin and Ranking Member Chambliss:

In preparation for potential consideration of climate change legislation in the United States Senate, the undersigned organizations urge the Senate Agriculture Committee to conduct a series of hearings to examine the range of opportunities for agriculture and forestry.

The leadership of the Senate Agriculture committee is needed to ensure legislation is crafted in a way that maximizes the participation of farmers, ranchers, and forest owners while minimizing the economic burden in the climate change equation. Further from an environmental perspective, maximizing agriculture and forestry's role results in significant low-cost carbon benefits to the country and provides a vital component to addressing global warming.

While the hearing your committee convened in May 2008, *"Creating Jobs with Climate Solutions: How Agriculture and Forestry Can Help Lower Costs in a Low-Carbon Economy"* was informative, the debate has progressed considerably. Many of our organizations have been diligently working through legislative text, program concepts and detailed analysis to ensure adequate construction of an agriculture and forestry offset program.

The legislation currently being considered by the United States House of Representatives will result in significant impacts on the agricultural and forestry community and contains deficiencies in maximizing opportunities for agriculture and forestry. Properly designing opportunities for producers to utilize allowances, participate in an offset program as well as fully contribute to electricity generation will require thoughtful and detailed analysis best undertaken by your committee. Similarly, a complete examination of provisions that impact the agriculture and forestry community must also be undertaken to ensure that any economic burdens are minimized.

Again, we urge the committee to conduct a series of hearings, with increasing levels of detail and focus, to examine the role of agriculture and forestry within any proposed climate change legislation. Given the aggressive timeline of potential action, we urge the first of these hearings be scheduled and held before the August recess.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

American Farmland Trust

American Soybean Association

National Association of Wheat Growers

National Cattlemen's Beef Association

National Corn Growers Association

National Farmers Union

National Milk Producers Federation

American Forest Foundation

American Society of Agronomy

Crop Science Society of America

National Alfalfa & Forage Alliance

Soil Science Society of America

cc: Majority Leader Harry Reid
Minority Leader Mitch McConnell
Members of the United States Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry