

November 16, 2007

United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator:

We are writing to urge you NOT to co-sponsor or support S. 2228, the Farm, Ranch, Equity, Stewardship and Health (FRESH) Act, as either a stand-alone bill or as an amendment to the Farm Bill.

The FRESH Act eliminates the current safety net provided to US producers and shifts considerable funding to conservation, nutrition, energy and other programs. It is easy to look at current high prices for most agricultural commodities and assume it is a “good time” to lower government supports. It is critical to remember that farm bills are written for the long-term rather than short-term and that there is no assurance high prices will continue over the next 5-10 years.

Additionally, the commodity title of the farm bill has already taken a \$57 billion cut. In 2002 Congress committed \$98.9 billion to commodity programs. According to the March 2007 CBO baseline, commodity title outlays are projected at only \$42 billion over the life of the new farm bill. All told, the commodity programs are projected to be about 10 percent of total farm bill spending, while more than 80 percent of the farm bill spending is already slated for nutrition and conservation programs.

Our organizations support the safety net provided in the bill which was unanimously approved by the Senate Agriculture Committee. The stringent requirements placed on the risk management accounts that replace this safety net in the FRESH Act would not provide producers with the necessary flexibility to effectively manage their operations. Aside from crop losses, producers can face a wide range of challenges, including dramatically increasing input prices.

Our organizations believe the farm bill can live up to our current WTO obligations without gutting the critical safety net needed by producers. US farm policy should continue toward a more level playing field in the global market by providing assistance to America’s farmers. However, this goal is not achieved by writing a farm bill that complies with what someone assumes will be the potential outcome of the WTO negotiations.

Finally, while we support strong conservation, nutrition, and energy programs, additional support for these programs should not come at the expense of adequate funding for the safety net for American farmers.

We ask that you do not sign on as a cosponsor or support S. 2228 as a stand-alone bill or as an amendment to the Farm Bill.

Sincerely,

American Farm Bureau  
National Farmers Union  
National Association of Wheat Growers  
Southern Peanut Farmers Federation

USA Rice Federation  
American Soybean Association  
Peanut Growers Marketing Cooperative  
North Carolina Peanut Growers  
Virginia Peanut Growers  
American Beekeeping Federation  
Rice Belt Warehouses Inc.  
United Dairymen of Arizona  
American Association of Crop Insurers  
National Sorghum Producers  
US Rice Producers Association  
Crop Insurance Professionals Association  
American Sheep Industry Association  
National Council of Farmer Cooperatives  
Western Peanut Growers Association  
National Cotton Council  
American Sugar Alliance  
National Barley Growers Association  
National Sunflower Association  
USA Dry Pea & Lentil Council  
US Canola Association  
American Honey Producers Association