



April 30, 2008

VIA FACSIMILE

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

The Honorable Collin Peterson
Chairman
House Committee on Agriculture
1301 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Saxby Chambliss
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Agriculture,
Nutrition and Forestry
328A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Bob Goodlatte
Ranking Member
House Committee on Agriculture
1301 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairmen and Ranking Members:

As the grower president of the National Association of Wheat Growers, I would like to take this opportunity to once again reiterate our support for a full and whole direct payment program in the new farm bill.

As we have said throughout this process, the direct payment program is and has been our number one priority for a new farm bill, more important even than the small target price and loan rate increases included in House- and Senate-passed versions of new farm policy and recent draft text of a conference bill.

Direct payments are critically important to wheat growers and other agricultural producers for a number of reasons. First, direct payments are the most World Trade Organization-compliant farm safety net mechanism we have in our toolbox. The continuing barrage of WTO challenges to our programs makes it vitally important that we preserve our Green Box programs. As an industry that finds almost half of its market overseas, a WTO-friendly farm bill is of particular importance to the wheat industry.

Secondly, direct payments provide a shot of stability to farm operations by providing consistent cash flow that can be taken to the bank. Though many people are currently talking about record high commodity prices, we in farm country know that inputs are also hitting records, and the credit crunch is

filtering down into the farm economy. Having a stable, consistent direct payment program is vital for the financial stability of family farm operations and rural communities.

Finally, the direct payment program is the only Title I program that is there for a producer in times of disaster and crop loss. In cases of drought, flood or freeze – situations that are unfortunately too familiar to wheat growers – prices rise because of short crops and the marketing loan and countercyclical payments evaporate.

We urge you in the strongest possible terms to maintain a full and whole direct payment program in the 2008 farm bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Cleavinger". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

David Cleavinger
President
National Association of Wheat Growers

cc: House and Senate Agriculture Committee Conferees