

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 19, 2007

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

The Honorable Bob Goodlatte
Ranking Member
House Committee on Agriculture
1305 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Peterson and Ranking Member Goodlatte:

As members of the California Congressional delegation representing urban and suburban districts, the Farm Bill significantly impact the issues of hunger, poverty, and access to quality foods for our communities. As you draft the 2007 Farm Bill, we urge you to emphasize initiatives that address the problem of hunger and poverty in our communities. In addition, it is critical to increase access to high-quality fresh and healthy foods for all Americans, support family farms, promote local food systems and connections to regional agriculture, and leave a legacy of healthy land, water, and air for our children.

Despite being the country's major provider of fruits and vegetables, many low-income and communities of color across California cannot afford, or lack access to, fresh fruits and vegetables and other healthy foods. This lack of healthy food has contributed to the alarming increases in rates of obesity and diet-related diseases. If current trends continue, one in three Caucasian children and one in two African American and Latino children in California will have diabetes by the time they are eighteen. We are concerned that current subsidies exacerbate the problem by encouraging an abundance of "cheap" food that is calorie dense and nutrition deficient in our low-income communities and schools.

We strongly urge the House Agriculture Committee to support the following priorities during consideration of the 2007 Farm Bill:

Reduce hunger and Improve Access to Healthy Food

- Improve benefit levels so that families have more than an average of \$1 per person per meal.
- Simplify the application process and extend eligibility to all who need food, including single adults and documented immigrants.
- Modernize Food Stamp Nutrition Education (FSNE) to allow comprehensive public health approaches that support community food security interventions.
- Increase funding for emergency food providers to help them meet growing demand.

Connect Specialty Crop Producers to Low-Income Consumers

- Increase funding for Specialty Crop Purchases and Department of Defense (DoD) Fresh Program so schools can purchase more fruits and vegetables.
- Increase funding for the Farmers Market Promotion Program (FMPP) and provide funds to support EBT use at farmers' markets.
- Increase funding for both the WIC and Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Programs.
- Expand the Community Food Projects Competitive Grants Program and expand the scope of the program to include projects that supply healthy local foods to underserved communities.

Encourage Strong Regional Agricultural Economies

- Increase funding for organic agriculture and Value-Added Producer and Rural Business Enterprise and Opportunity grants to increase market access through innovative marketing, distribution and business ventures.
- Allow geographic preferences within bids and increased flexibility within all Federal nutrition programs, including the DoD Fresh Program and USDA National School Lunch and Breakfast programs, to bring new markets to regional farmers.

Protect the Environment and the Future of Agriculture

- Fully fund the Conservation Security Program (CSP) and expand EQIP funding.
- Expand the Farm and Ranch Land Protection Program in order to protect farmland on our urban edges.
- Fully fund the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development and Outreach and Technical Assistance to Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers programs and increase the cost-share for participation by socially disadvantaged farmers in conservation programs.
- Establish a process to address complaints by socially disadvantaged farmers against USDA.

The 2007 Farm Bill is a historic opportunity to help reverse the alarming trends of hunger, poor health, failing farms and environmental degradation by emphasizing programs that strengthen local food systems and increase access to healthy foods. We respectfully request that the aforementioned priorities be addressed during consideration of the 2007 Farm Bill. We look forward to working with you to advance food, farm and nutrition policies that will improve the physical and economic wellbeing of our cities and rural communities.

Sincerely,

Hilda L. Aols

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Susan Davis

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