



ACTION ALERT

HOUSE RURAL DEVELOPMENT SUBCOMMITTEE MARKUP EXPECTED
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 6th

URGE SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS TO SUPPORT VALUE-ADDED AGRICULTURE AND RURAL MICRO-ENTERPRISE!!

The House Agriculture Committee Chairman Colin Peterson (D-MN) is expected to release the Rural Development section of his farm bill proposal early next week, with the House Agriculture Subcommittee on Specialty Crops, Rural Development, and Foreign Agriculture meeting Wednesday, June 6th to offer amendments and vote on it.

Between now and June 6th, if you are in a district or state of a member who is on the Rural Development House Subcommittee (see list below), please urge them to support the Value-Added Producer Grant Program, and the Rural Entrepreneurship and Micro-Enterprise Program.

PLEASE CALL OR FAX IMMEDIATELY

The message is simple. I am a constituent (or resident of the state the Congressman/woman represents) and I am calling to urge Representative _____ to stand up and express their support for the Value Added Producer Grant Program and Rural Entrepreneurship and Micro-enterprise Program during the House Agriculture Subcommittee markup by requesting:

- \$60 million in annual mandatory funding for the Value-Added Producer Grant program, and
- \$50 million in annual mandatory funding for the Rural Entrepreneurship and Micro-Enterprise Program.

These programs support family farmer viability, healthy communities, and successful rural economies and should be fully funded in the 2007 Farm Bill.

It's easy to call or write. Please call your Representative's office (phone numbers below). Ask the receptionist to connect you with the staff person responsible for agriculture. If the agriculture aid is unavailable, leave your name, phone number, and the message above on the aid's voice mail, or if necessary, with the receptionist.

If you prefer to write, fax a brief letter with the same points above, along with your name, address, and contact information (fax numbers below).

Background

- **Value Added Producer Grant** - The VAPG program provides assistance to farmers to pursue market opportunities that will add value to their agricultural operations and raise their incomes. Funding for this program should be raised from \$40 million to at least \$60 million annually, with a priority for projects that improve the profitability of small and mid-sized farms and improve land stewardship. Ten percent of the grant funds available under the program should support local food systems and should be made available for outreach and technical assistance, and specially targeted to underserved states and populations. Congress should create new granting categories for local food system development, family farm viability grants, and the development of food value chains that help mid-sized farms thrive through the marketing of high value, differentiated products in partnership with local and regional processors and distributors.

The Value-Added Producer Grant program reauthorization with many of these changes was included in the “Local Food and Farm Support Act” (H.R. 2364) introduced earlier this year by Representative Earl Blumenauer (D-OR) and co-sponsored by Rep. Thomas Allen (D-ME), Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), Donald Payne (D-NJ), Janice Schakowsky (D-IL), Nancy Boyda (D-KS), Steve Kagen (D-WI), and Bobby Rush (D-IL).

- **Rural Entrepreneurship and Micro-Enterprise Program** – Most new jobs in predominantly rural areas come from small non-farm proprietorships. Micro-enterprises are businesses that employ five or few individuals and do not have access to the commercial banking sector. A Rural Entrepreneur and Micro-Enterprise Program would establish a program at the USDA to provide valuable technical and financial assistance to these “micro-enterprises”, specifically targeting economically disadvantaged entrepreneurs who would not otherwise be able to access credit.

Earlier this year, Senators Ben Nelson (D-NE) and Ken Salazar (D-CO) introduced the Rural Entrepreneur and Micro-Enterprise Assistance Act of 2007 (S. 566) that would establish such a program. Congress nearly passed a rural micro-enterprise program in the last farm bill, but it was dropped at the last minute. The 2007 Farm Bill should authorize the program and fund it at no less than \$50 million a year in mandatory funding.

**HOUSE AGRICULTURE SUBCOMMITTEE ON
SPECIALTY CROPS, RURAL DEVELOPMENT, AND FOREIGN AGRICULTURE**

Democrats

Member	Phone	Fax
Mike McIntyre, (NC-7) – Chair	202-225-2731	202-225-5773
Jim Marshall, (GA-8)	202-225-6531	202-225-3013
Henry Cuellar, (TX-28)	202-225-1640	202-225-1641
John Salazar, (CO-3)	202-225-4761	202-226-9669
John Barrow, (GA-12)	202-225-2823	202-225-3377
Earl Pomeroy, (ND-at large)	202-225-2611	202-226-0893

Republicans

Member	Phone	Fax
Marilyn Musgrave, (CO-4)	202-225-4676	202-225-5870
Ranking Member		
Terry Everett, (AL-2)	202-225-2901	202-225-8913
Adrian Smith, (NE-3)	202-225-6435	202-225-0207
Jeff Fortenberry, (NE-1)	202-225-4806	202-225-5686
Robin Hayes, (NC-8)	202-225-3715	202-225-4036

For more information, or to receive future action alerts from the **Sustainable Agriculture Coalition**, please contact Aimee Witteman at (202) 547-5754 or visit the Farm Bill Action Center at www.sustainableagriculturecoalition.org