

December 6, 2007

RE: Wyden-Harkin Amendment to the Senate Farm Bill

Dear Senator,

The organizations signed onto this letter urge you to support the Wyden-Harkin Amendment to the Senate farm bill which provides critical improvements to a new Bioenergy Crop Transition Assistance Program in the farm bill's Energy Title.

Sustainable bioenergy production from agriculture holds substantial promise for promoting rural economic development, reducing dependence on imported fuels, enhancing the environment and reducing greenhouse gases. While the farm bill Energy Title contains several programs for research and development of the next generation of bioenergy refineries, the Bioenergy Crop Transition Assistance Program is the only measure designed to assist farmers and foresters who want to start producing cellulosic bioenergy crops.

The Bioenergy Crop Transition Assistance Program was originally designed to provide incentives to farmers and foresters to plant and grow bioenergy crops in a sustainable manner. Many bioenergy crops - particularly perennial native species - will be grown for production for the first time in regions across the country. The goal of the original measure was to give farmers and foresters financial assistance and incentives to use good conservation measures with new bioenergy crop systems and to generate information that other farmers can use to grow sustainable bioenergy crops.

The current Senate farm bill language, however, will not achieve these original goals. A farmer or forester cannot participate unless there is a formal financial commitment from a biomass energy facility. This prevents farmers and foresters from undertaking trial plantings of bioenergy crops and would exclude bioenergy facilities under development from participating. Adequate conservation goals are missing and funding could be used to support agricultural or forest practices that harm wildlife and destroy native habitat. The limited funds are not targeted to perennial systems which can increase soil quality and carbon sequestration and decrease soil erosion and field run-off.

The Wyden-Harkin Amendment would help ensure that the farm bill's incentives for bioenergy production to increase the nation's energy security and achieve substantial economic gain for rural communities at the same time improve the rural environment and conserve the nation's natural resources. It would help accelerate the challenging transition from traditional row crops to more sustainable perennial feedstocks for bioenergy.

The Amendment would provide modest grant funding for groups of farmers or foresters and local entities to join with the bioenergy sector in conducting feasibility studies for bioenergy crop production. It allows participating farmers and foresters to undertake trial plantings of bioenergy crops at the planning stages for biorefinery development. The Program's limited funding is targeted to perennial crop systems that can increase soil quality and carbon sequestration and decrease erosion and field run-off. The Amendment restores conservation goals to ensure that

funding under this Program does not increase environmental degradation, harm wildlife or destroy native habitat.

The emerging bioenergy sector provides a unique opportunity to create an industry that supports agriculture, environmental goals, energy security, and local economic development. Policies that do not consider all of these issues could fracture the coalition that supports bioenergy production thereby making future policy initiatives all the more difficult.

Thank you for your consideration of our request that you support the Wyden-Harkin Amendment to the Senate farm bill.

Sincerely,

AERO, Alternative Energy Resources Organization

Agricultural Missions, Inc. (NY)

Agri-Process Innovations (AR)

Alliance for a Sustainable Future

American Agriculture Movement

American Corn Growers Association

American Farmland Trust

American Society of Agronomy

Animal Answers (VT)

Audubon Minnesota (MN)

BioLyle's Biodiesel Workshop (WA)

Biomass Gas & Electric LLC (GA)

Bronx Greens (NY)

California Institute for Rural Studies

Caney Fork Headwaters Association (TN)

C.A.S.A. del Llano, Inc. (TX)

Catholic Charities of Kansas City-St. Joseph

Center for Earth Spirituality and Rural Ministry (MN)

Center for Rural Affairs

Center for Sustaining Agriculture & Natural Resources, Washington State University (WA)

Clean Fuels Development Coalition

Clean Up the River Environment (MN)

Coevolution Institute

Cornucopia Institute

Crop Science Society of America

CROPP Cooperative / Organic Valley

Cumberland Countians for Peace & Justice (TN)

Dakota Resource Council

Dakota Rural Action

Defenders of Wildlife

Endangered Habitats League (CA)

Environmental Defense

Environmental & Energy Study Institute

Environmental Law & Policy Center

Farmworker Association of Florida

Fresh Energy (MN)

Friends of the Earth

Hancock Public Affairs (NY)

Illinois Stewardship Alliance

Independent Beef Association of North Dakota

Innovative Farmers of Ohio  
Institute for Agriculture & Trade Policy  
Iowa Farmers Union  
Izaak Walton League of America  
Kansas City Food Circle, a Project of Heart of America Action Linkage  
Kansas Rural Center  
Land Stewardship Project  
Local 20/20 (Jefferson County WA)  
Maysie's Farm Conservation Center (PA)  
Michigan Land Trustees  
Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy  
Minnesota Conservation Federation  
Minnesota Farmers Union  
Minnesota Food Association  
Minnesota Project  
Mississippi Biomass Council  
National Audubon Society  
National Campaign for Sustainable Agriculture  
National Catholic Rural Life Conference  
National Center for Appropriate Technology  
National Farmers Organization  
National Wildlife Federation  
Nebraska Wildlife Federation

Network for Environmental & Economic Responsibility (TN)

New Fuels Alliance

NOFA/Mass (Northeast Organic Farming Association / Mass)

Northern Plains Sustainable Agriculture Society

Northwest Biofuels Association

Orapa Limited (TN)

Oregon Environmental Council

Organic Consumers Association

Pacific Biofuels

Pennypack Farm Education Center for Sustainable Food Systems (PA)

Pinchot Institute for Conservation

Progressive Christians Uniting

ReEnergizeKC, a Project of Heart of America Action Linkage

Robyn Van Eyn Center (PA)

Rural Advantage (MN)

Sierra Club

Social Concerns Office – Diocese of Jefferson City (MO)

Soil Science Society of America

Southern Alliance for Clean Energy

Southern Sustainable Agriculture Working Group

SUN DAY Campaign (MD)

Sundays Energy (MN)

Sustainable Agriculture Coalition

The Corporation for Economic Opportunity (SC)

Union of Concerned Scientists

Washington Sustainable Food & Farming Network

Western Organization of Resource Councils

World Wildlife Fund - US