June 9, 2014

Dear Representative:

As you prepare for floor consideration of the Agriculture Appropriations bill, the undersigned organizations urge you to oppose any amendment that would undermine the Agricultural Act of 2014 (the Farm Bill), including the important risk management tools provided through Federal Crop Insurance.

The Farm Bill was enacted into law only four months ago and most of its provisions have yet to be implemented. The Farm Bill was the subject of a long and intense debate, beginning with hearings in 2010. In fact, forty hearings were held in all. The Farm Bill was discussed in 2011 as part of the super committee process, was considered by the Agriculture Committees in both 2012 and 2013 and was, in one fashion or another, debated nine times on the House and Senate floors, including two debates over an extension of the 2008 Farm Bill. The Farm Bill was finally enacted into law after a four month-long conference committee reported the measure.

This protracted process created a great deal of uncertainty in rural America. Quite frankly, significant uncertainty remains due to the substantial reforms and budget reductions made by the Farm Bill. Even as planting season for many crops nears its conclusion across the country, the rules implementing entirely new provisions designed to take effect this crop year are still being promulgated by the Department of Agriculture. Producers will need to carefully consider the new commodity and risk management tools and select what works best for their operations. Congress must respect the importance of these decisions and allow the reforms included in the 2014 Farm Bill to achieve their full effect.

Relative to budget reductions, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) projected a more than 30 percent reduction in the funding of the Commodity Title during debate over the Farm Bill but increased expected savings by about $3 billion in its updated forecast announced this past April. These budget savings are in addition to the approximately $17 billion in legislative and administrative reductions made to crop insurance over the past seven years. During the House floor debate over the Farm Bill, various amendments seeking still further cuts and changes to the Farm Bill and crop insurance were considered. Some of those amendments were adopted and, ultimately, incorporated into the conference report while other amendments were rejected by the House.

There are a great many issues outside of the Farm Bill that are creating anxiety in rural America, crossing the gamut from tax, trade, regulatory issues and access to a stable workforce to market and weather conditions. Allowing farmers and ranchers an opportunity to adjust to the new Farm Bill without further changes to this very recently enacted measure will help reduce the level of anxiety in farm country and pay economic dividends.

Given these circumstances, we urge you to oppose amendments to the Agriculture Appropriations bill that would harm the Farm Bill or Crop Insurance.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
American Association of Crop Insurers
American Farm Bureau Federation
American Soybean Association
American Sugar Alliance
American Sugarbeet Growers Association
American Sugar Cane League
Crop Insurance and Reinsurance Bureau
Crop Insurance Professionals Association
Farm Credit Council
Florida Sugar Cane League
Hawaii Sugar Farmers
Independent Community Bankers of America
Independent Insurance Agents & Brokers of America
National Association of Wheat Growers
National Barley Growers Association
National Corn Growers Association
National Cotton Council
National Council of Farmer Cooperatives
National Farmers Union
National Milk Producers Federation
National Sorghum Producers
National Sunflower Association
Rio Grande Valley Sugar Growers
Select Milk Producers, Inc.
Southern Peanut Farmers Federation
Southwest Council of Agribusiness
US Canola Association
US Dry Bean Council
US Rice Producers Association
U.S. Beet Sugar Association
USA Dry Pea & Lentil Council
USA Rice Federation
Western Peanut Growers Association