

FORWARDED FROM THE US Council of Catholic Bishops

Dear Colleagues,

Thank you all for your hard work, your calls, e-mails and faxes to your Representatives in Congress. Your efforts have made an impact in the shaping of a better Farm Bill. The House of Representatives approved H.R. 2419, a five-year Farm Bill (\$286 billion) on a 231-191 vote.

The **good news** is that in working with others we were able to secure significant new investments and improvements in efforts to help hungry people here and abroad. The **bad news** is that there was no significant progress toward targeting agricultural assistance to those family farmers who need it most rather than large, powerful enterprises that need it least. The subsidies and priorities which shortchange family farmers and rural communities are not fundamentally changed and those subsidies that hurt poor farmers in poor countries remain in place.

While there are important improvements in the House Farm Bill, we need to re-double our efforts in the Senate to hold on to these gains and to bring about real targeting of farm programs to those farmers and rural communities who need the most help, instead of those who have the most power in Washington. Attached you will find a brief summary of the House bill as passed.

Please join with us and our Catholic Partners (National Catholic Rural Life Conference, Catholic Relief Services and Catholic Charities USA) and our religious and other allies in sending a clear message to Congress that our farm and food policies must reflect our values, providing a safety net to smaller and moderate size farmers and helping farmers in developing countries to feed their families and make a decent living. Our current policies should not displace smaller family farmers and ranchers out of the marketplace, nor threaten the livelihoods of farmers in developing countries.

We will continue to work with you and our partners, CRS, CCUSA and NCRLC, to shape the debate and decisions in the Senate in a way that builds on what was accomplished in the House, but also bring about real targeting and reform for those in greatest need. We are already working with Senate leaders to make our case. We want to retain important provisions, but especially we hope to obtain real reform in the Senate. We will then work to influence the Conference committee where the final compromises on the Farm Bill will be made.

As we address the Farm Bill, we are not another interest group with narrow agendas and self-interest motivations. We are a community of faith made up of farmers, ranchers and consumers; we serve and stand with hungry families in our own land and in the poorest places on earth; we are called to feed the hungry and care for the earth. We are compelled to speak for the weak and the voiceless. All this can make our common work on the Farm Bill in the days and weeks ahead unique, influential and indispensable.

For more information, please contact:

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Sincerely,
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