August 14, 2018

The Honorable Pat Roberts  
Chairman, Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry  
328A Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow  
Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry  
328A Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable K. Michael Conaway  
Chairman, House Committee on Agriculture  
1301 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Collin C. Peterson  
Ranking Member, House Committee on Agriculture  
1305 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

CC Farm Bill Conference Committee

Dear Chairman Roberts, Chairman Conaway, Ranking Member Stabenow, and Ranking Member Peterson:

On behalf of our millions of members, supporters, or customers, the 168 undersigned organizations and companies are writing to urge the Farm Bill Conference Committee to support and advance organic agriculture in the United States by maintaining all provisions that support organic and conservation agriculture from the House and Senate bills in the final Farm Bill and removing all language that undermines the organic standards and the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB).

Organic farming is a bright spot in the U.S. rural economy. Data show that organic farms are 35 percent more profitable than the average farm and that rural counties with a high level of organic farms and businesses have higher household incomes and reduced poverty rates by as much as 1.35 percent, even more than major anti-poverty programs.1,2 Domestically, the organic sector is home to over 26,000 certified organic family farms and businesses.3

A growing body of research demonstrates that organic farming systems provide an impressive range of conservation benefits. Organic farms support 50 percent more pollinator species, sequester carbon in the soil, and deliver greater resilience in the face of climate-related weather impacts like drought and floods by improving soil structure and soil water-holding capacity.4,5,6

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3 USDA Organic Integrity Database. https://organic.ams.usda.gov/integrity/
Research also shows that organic food and farming reduce human exposure to toxic pesticides for consumers, farmers, farmworkers, and rural communities.\(^7\)

The number of organic consumers is steadily growing. Data shows that over 80 percent of U.S. households buy organic food, and the demographics of organic buyers matches the diversity of the American population.\(^8\) Organic remains the fastest-growing sector of the food industry — while the overall food market experiences a stagnant 0.6 percent growth rate, organic sales grew 8.4 percent from 2016 to 2017.\(^9\)

Yet, domestic production is not keeping up with this booming consumer demand. The U.S. accounts for 44 percent of global organic sales, but just four percent of global farmland under organic production.\(^10\) Approximately 25 percent of organic corn and 75 percent of organic soybeans used in the country are imported.\(^11\) U.S. farmers are losing out on the chance to feed Americans’ growing appetite for organic food.

At a time when so many farmers and rural communities across America are struggling, we need more policy support for organic agriculture. The undersigned organizations and companies urge the Farm Bill Conference Committee to maintain all positive provisions for organic and conservation agriculture from the House and Senate bills in the final Farm Bill and remove all language that changes the authorities and composition of the NOSB.

**First and foremost, we urge you to oppose any changes that would undermine the National Organic Standards Board in the Farm Bill.** Consumer confidence in the integrity of the USDA organic seal is a key driving factor in the exponential growth in the organic sector. Making changes to the authorities or composition of the NOSB could harm the integrity of the organic program, undermine consumer trust in the organic label, and severely damage the reputation of the industry as a whole. [House bill section 9006 (b),(c),(d) and Senate bill section 10104 (e)].

We also urge you to maintain key elements of the House and Senate Farm Bills that support organic and conservation agriculture, including the following:

**Provide mandatory funding of $11.5 million annually for the National Organic Certification Cost Share Program (NOCCSP) and keep the Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA) program intact.** These programs encourage small and mid-size farmers to transition to organic and help farmers afford organic certification. (Senate bill Section 10105);

**Increase funding for the Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative (OREI) to $50 million by fiscal year 2022 and beyond**, thus achieving permanent baseline funding status. Organic and non-organic farmers alike benefit from this research. For example, cover cropping is standard practice on organic farms but has been widely adopted by non-organic farms as well (Senate bill Section 7210);

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\(^7\) Bradman, A., et al., Effect of organic diet intervention on pesticide exposures in young children living in low-income urban and agricultural communities. Environ Health Perspectives. 2015.


Fully fund the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), the nation's largest conservation program by acreage and a critically important program that supports organic farmers. CSP is the only Farm Bill program focused on advancing conservation systems to comprehensively protect natural resources, including soil health, water quality, and wildlife habitat (as detailed in the Senate bill);

Create a new allocation within CSP to allocate funds to each State to “support organic production and transition to organic” (Senate bill Section 2204);

Increase payment limits under the Organic Initiative within the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP OI), to $160,000 over the 5-years to ensure equal opportunity for organic farmers to participate in this key conservation program (Senate bill Section 2303);

Amend the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) to make it easier for landowners with CRP contracts to start the 3-year organic transition process prior to the expiration of their CRP contract to be eligible for certification when the contract expires (House bill Section 2206(b)(1)(B));

Support public plant and animal breeding programs by amending the National Genetic Resources Advisory Committee (NGRAC) to require the advisory committee to do an assessment of needs related to public cultivar development and to make recommendations to the Secretary regarding funding gaps. In addition, require the Secretary to designate four seats on the NGRAC for members with public cultivar and animal breed development expertise and require the USDA to develop a national strategic germplasm and cultivar collection assessment and utilization plan. (Senate bill Sections 7205 and 7206). We also urge conferees to include additional provisions in the final bill to require USDA to use existing competitive grant research programs to expend at least $50 million annually on public cultivar and breed development activities, and to establish a Coordinator position within the National Institute for Food and Agriculture (NIFA) to oversee these activities;

Create a level playing field for U.S. organic family farms by increasing funding for the National Organic Program, providing funding to improve import data tracking, and creating better mechanisms to ensure that all organic imports comply with U.S. standards. This should include $5 million in one-time mandatory funding for improving import data tracking systems, detailed language about circumstances that should trigger expedited investigations with regard to organic import fraud, a clear plan for inter-agency coordination to ensure full collaboration between USDA and relevant border and customs agencies, and authority for the National Organic Program to perform more frequent accreditation reviews of satellite offices of organic certifiers operating in countries with higher risk of fraudulent activity. (Senate bill Section 10104 (a),(b),(c),(d),(f),(g),(h),(i) and House bill Section 9006(a),(e),(f),(g),(h);

Provide $5 million in one-time mandatory Farm Bill funding for the Organic Data Initiative to ensure consistent and reliable data about production and sales trends. (Senate bill Section 10103 and House bill Section 9006(i); and

Include Risk Management Program Reforms that clarify that sustainable and organic practices should be considered “good farming practices” (Senate bill Section 11107); require continuing education for crop insurance agents to ensure they understand sustainable and organic farming practices; and add a new provision to continue Whole Farm Revenue Protection established in the 2014 Farm Bill and recognize the change in farm revenue after a farm has transitioned to organic. Eliminate the 30% cap on increased production value under the expansion provision.
We also urge you to protect critical organic programs that lack baseline funding if a short-term extension to the Farm Bill is necessary.

Organic farmers and businesses depend on consumer trust in the organic seal and support from the programs outlined above. We urge you to uphold the integrity of the organic standard by opposing any changes that would undermine the National Organic Standards Board and to maintain the above provisions from the House and Senate Farm Bills in order to grow the American organic sector.

Thank you,

Friends of the Earth
Accredited Certifiers Association
Alliance for Natural Health USA
Beyond Pesticides
Blue River Organic Seeds
Center for Biological Diversity
Center for Environmental Health
Center for Food Safety
Consumer Federation of America
Consumers Union
Endangered Species Coalition
Fair World Project
Family Farm Defenders
Farm Aid
Farm and Ranch Freedom Alliance
Farmworker Justice
Food & Water Watch
Food Animal Concerns Trust
Grow Ahead
HEAL Food Alliance
National Latino Farmers and Ranchers Association
National Organic Coalition
Natural Grocers
Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance
OneCert, Inc.
Organic Consumers Association
Organic & Natural Health Association
Organic Farmers' Agency for Relationship Marketing
Organic Seed Alliance
Organic Seed Growers and Trade Association (OSGATA)
Pesticide Action Network
Rachel Carson Council
Rural Coalition
Sierra Club
Wild Farm Alliance
Nature's Path Foods Inc.
Dietrick Institute for Applied Insect Ecology

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British Columbia
California
Edible East Bay magazine
Rincon-Vitova Insectaries
Double M Dairy LLC
Dr. Bronner's
Straus Family Creamery
Catalyst Miami
Farmworker Association of Florida
Florida Immigrant Coalition
Florida School of Holistic Living
Friends of Broward Detainees
Friends of Miami-Dade Detainees
Gainesville Interfaith Alliance for Immigrant Justice
Hispanic Federation
Latin-American Coalition
Organize Florida
SEIU Florida Public Services Union
The Farmworker Association of Florida, Inc.
WeCount!
Central Florida Bread for the World
Lady Moon Farms, Inc.
Kanalani Ohana Farm
Chicago Religious Leadership Network on Latin America
Edible Indy
Buckhaven Ridge Farm
Driver Farms Ltd
Eco Lips, Inc
FarmTable Procurement and Delivery
Garden on Garden
Green Vale Farm
Hidden Acres Organic
Iowa Organic Association
Lee Weers
Lenz Organic Farm
Lubke's Organic Acres
Lyn Farm
Midwest Organics
Okoboji Organics
Red Barn Organic
Red Leaf Farms, LLC
Redeemed Farms, LLC
Reinert Farms Inc.
Stonebridge Ltd
Thorland Organics, LLC
Tigner Consulting
Narrow Gate Farm
Orchard On Sand Road

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Florida, Georgia, Pennsylvania
Hawaii
Illinois
Indiana
Iowa
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Cottonwood Creek Farms, Kansas
Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association, Maine
Portland Food Co-op, Maine
Benedictine Sisters of Baltimore, Maryland
Butterfly Brigade, Maryland
Central Maryland Beekeepers Association, Maryland
Fair Farms, Maryland
Maryland Pesticide Education Network, Maryland
Maryland Ornithological Society, Maryland
Equal Exchange Inc, Massachusetts
Leverett Village Co-operative, Massachusetts
Northeast Organic Farming Association - Interstate Council, Massachusetts
Northeast Organic Farming Association of MA, Massachusetts
Wild Oats Market, Massachusetts
CoWorkr, Michigan
Dream Acres Farm, Michigan
Ecology Center, Michigan
Edible Grande Traverse, Michigan
Field & Fire LLC, Michigan
Gardening 365, Michigan
Happy Homestead Farm, Michigan
Local Food Alliance of Northern Michigan, Michigan
Making Shade Farms, Michigan
Marilla Field & Flora, Michigan
Michigan Organic Food and Farm Alliance, Michigan
Michigan State University Extension, Michigan
Michigan Young Farmer Coalition, Michigan
New Bee Apiaries, LLC, Michigan
Perich Advertising and Design, Michigan
Photonic Legal PLC, Michigan
Skinny Farm, Michigan
Skinny Farm Co-op, Michigan
Sleeping Bear Press, Michigan
Songbird Farm, Michigan
Tamarack Camps Farber Farm, Michigan
Edible Michiana, Michigan, Indiana
Old Mill Honey Company, Minnesota
Albert Lea Seed, Minnesota
Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture, Minnesota
Suståne Natural Fertilizer Inc, Minnesota
International Organic Inspectors Association, Montana
Nature's Path Foods Inc., British Columbia
Organic Aronia Farm, Nebraska
OPINS Coop, Nebraska, Iowa, South Dakota, Kansas
New England Farmers Union New England
Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Working Group New England
Neighboring Food Co-op Association New England, New York
Northeast Organic Farming Association of NH New Hampshire
GMO Free NJ New Jersey
Northeast Organic Farming Association of NJ New Jersey
Cuatro Puertas New Mexico
Church Women United in New York State New York
DRUM: Desis Rising Up and Moving New York
Global Justice Ecology Project New York
Green Beacon Coalition New York
Hudson Valley Biofuel New York
LaBella Associates New York
Made Safe New York
Northeast Organic Farming Association of New York New York
Partnership for Community Development New York
Regional Farm and Food Project New York
Carolina Farm Stewardship Association North and South Carolina
Nuestro Centro North Carolina
Levin Family Foundation Ohio
Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association Ohio
Shagbark Seed & Mill Ohio
Three Springs Farm Oklahoma
Oregon Tilth Oregon
Ridgeline Meadows Farm Oregon
Beyond Toxics Oregon
BJE Poultry Pennsylvania
Kovar Organic Equipment Pennsylvania
Comunidades Unidas en una Voz Tennessee
Sustainable Food Center Texas
Texas Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association Texas
Hunger Mountain Cooperative Vermont
Middlebury Natural Foods Co-op Vermont
Northeast Organic Farming Association of VT Vermont
Diane's Market Kitchen LLC Washington
PCC Community Markets Washington
Dammen Organic Farms Wisconsin
Edible Door Wisconsin
FairShare CSA Coalition Wisconsin
MOSA Certified Organic Wisconsin
MOSES (Midwest Organic & Sustainable Education Service) Wisconsin