



Department of Social Development and World Peace

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November 6, 2007

United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator:

As the Senate prepares to act on the 2007 Farm Bill, we ask that you support a Farm Bill that provides for the poor and the hungry, offers effective support for those who grow our food, is fair to farmers and ranchers, and promotes good stewardship of the land. In a special way, we insist that this Farm Bill target limited resources to those who need the most help rather than those who need it least.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, the National Catholic Rural Life Conference, Catholic Charities USA, and Catholic Relief Services bring both principles and depth of experience to the farm policy debate. We lead a community of faith that is present in rural America and in rural communities around the globe. Our community is comprised of farmers and farmworkers, land owners and contract growers, business owners and workers - and hungry people and those who feed the hungry. We know from personal experience how the Farm Bill affects us all, but most significantly, those who are hungry, living in poverty, and struggling to keep farming a viable way of life.

Passing a fair Farm Bill will require you to take courageous steps to reform and strengthen U.S. agriculture policies that too often and for far too long have responded to special interests rather than special needs. We strongly support a genuine safety net for U.S. farmers and their families who work on the land. Agricultural resources should be especially targeted to small and moderate sized farms.

Our prosperity as a nation will be judged by our care for the most vulnerable. The Farm Bill includes an essential part of the national safety net for poor and hungry people. We support the vital and long-overdue increases in benefit levels which have been made and we call for other changes as the bill moves to the Senate floor. Our experience as Catholic leaders reaches beyond our own borders to some of the most vulnerable populations on the planet. Catholic Relief Services and the USCCB support important changes that are a part of the Committee-passed bill and urge you to oppose efforts that may weaken these measures which address global food aid.

We urge the Senate to take the following vital steps:

- **Support the Dorgan-Grassley Payment Limits Amendment:** Pass a fair commodity title that better targets payments to those who need them while closing loopholes that have permitted some to collect multiple payments. Today, 10 percent of commodity farmers receive more than 70 percent of all commodity payments while most farmers

receive no support and many of those on small family farms struggle to make ends meet. The status quo where the majority of payments go to large and wealthy agribusinesses while leaving behind the majority of farm families is unacceptable.

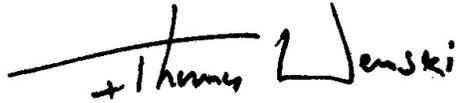
- **Domestic hunger:** Support Amendments that would provide additional funding for Food Stamps and for The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP). Further increase Food Stamp benefit levels and standard deductions so that more needy people can access the program. Oppose attempts to weaken Committee-passed improvements on Food Stamps or the Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP).
- **International food security:** Support the food aid provisions of the bill, especially the safebox, with no waivers, which sets aside \$600 million of PL 480 Title II resources for development programs. We must protect Title II resources that address chronic hunger, in order to address future emergencies and to help the poorest reach long term food security. Oppose attempts to weaken Committee-passed provisions on Food Aid.
- **Equity in agriculture policy:** Support amendments that would make Title I more equitable and just, by promoting diversity of production and entrepreneurship and offering support where and when it is needed regardless of crop grown. Support efforts that would bring to an end trade distortions, better prepare U.S. farmers to compete fairly in a global marketplace, and lessen the harm to the most vulnerable farmers around the world.

Sweeping legislation such as the Farm Bill invariably involves compromise. However, elements of the Committee-passed Farm Bill fall short and perpetuate a system that continues to neglect struggling farmers at home and abroad. The poor and the hungry need your support on the Senate floor. Desperate communities cannot wait another five years for a better Farm Bill. We urge you to reject the demands of narrow interests and pursue the common good in agriculture, with all that this means for hungry people and hurting farmers in our land and around the world.

Sincerely,



Most Rev. Nicholas DiMarzio, Ph.D., D.D.
Bishop of Brooklyn
Chairman, Domestic Policy Committee
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops



Most Rev. Thomas G. Wenski
Bishop of Orlando
Chairman, Committee on International Policy
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Rev. Larry Snyder
President of Catholic Charities USA



Most Rev. Ronald M. Gilmore
Bishop of Dodge City,
Chairman of the Board
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Ken Hackett
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