

March XX, 2019

The Honorable Sanford Bishop  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Agriculture  
House Committee on Appropriations  
2632-A Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Hoeven  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Agriculture  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
338 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jeff Fortenberry  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Agriculture  
House Committee on Appropriations  
1514 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jeff Merkley  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Agriculture  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
313 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairmen Bishop and Hoeven and Ranking Members Fortenberry and Merkley,

We, the undersigned agriculture and rural organizations representing millions of members across the country, thank you for your work on behalf of American agriculture. We appreciate the inclusion of the pilot program to address farmer stress and suicide in the fiscal year 2019 appropriations bill. We recommend fully funding the Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network (FRSAN) for FY 2020 and ask for your support.

The 2018 Farm Bill reauthorized the FRSAN, which provides grants for extension services, state departments of agriculture, nonprofit organizations and other entities to provide stress assistance programs to farmers, ranchers, farmworkers, and other agriculture-related occupations. Eligible programs include farm helplines and websites, training programs and workshops, outreach services, and home delivery of assistance. The \$2 million provided for a pilot of the program in the FY 2019 appropriations bill will create an on-ramp to full program implementation.

As you know, farming is a high-stress occupation. Financial risk, volatile markets, unpredictable weather, and heavy workloads can all place a significant strain on farmers', ranchers', and farmworkers' mental and emotional well-being. This is exacerbated by the fact that 60 percent of rural residents live in areas that suffer from mental health professional shortages.

The current prolonged farm economy downturn is causing even greater stress for farmers and ranchers. Net farm income in 2018 was nearly 50 percent less than it was in 2013. While current projections suggest slight improvements in 2019, a significant rebound could be years away.

As the Subcommittee develops the FY 2020 agriculture appropriations bill, we urge you to fully fund the FRSAN at \$10 million. This funding will be critically important in meeting the needs of farmers and ranchers as they endure increasing financial and mental stress.

Sincerely,

American Farm Bureau Federation  
American Soybean Association  
Catholic Rural Life  
Council of State Governments Midwestern Legislative Conference  
Farm Aid  
Farmers Legal Action Group  
Farmer Veteran Coalition  
National Association of State Departments of Agriculture  
National Corn Growers Association  
National Council of Farmer Cooperatives  
National Farmers Union  
National Grange  
National Latino Farmers and Ranchers Trade Association  
National Milk Producer's Federation  
National Rural Health Association  
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition  
National Young Farmers Coalition  
Rural Advancement Foundation International – USA  
Rural and Agricultural Council of America  
Rural Coalition  
State Agricultural and Rural Leaders  
Society for Range Management  
Sustainable Food Policy Alliance