



May 21st, 2013

The Honorable Senator Dianne Feinstein
331 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Feinstein,

I am writing on behalf of the California Caucus of the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, representing the state's leading sustainable food and farming advocates. The Senate Agriculture Committee's farm bill reflects many of our priorities. However, we want to make sure that as the full Senate debates the farm bill over the coming days you are aware of our strong support for the following amendments:

EQIP Organic Initiative Payment Limit Elimination - Senators Leahy (D-VT) - Eliminates the separate payment limit for farmers participating in the EQIP Organic Initiative so that all farmers are subject to the same payment limitations in EQIP. Your leadership in supporting Senator Leahy will be crucial here.

Beginning Farmer Microloans - Senators Casey (D-PA) and Harkin (D-IA) - Authorizes and establishes terms for microloans, including to beginning farmers and ranchers and military veteran farmers and ranchers in the Farm Service Agency direct operating loan program. Includes option for intermediary lending and revolving loan fund. This would benefit non-profit organizations certified as lenders including California FarmLink.

Increased funding for 2501 - Senator Udall (D-NM) – The Outreach for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers Program has supported training and technical assistance for farmers in many regions of California who benefit from grants to non-profits that have competed successfully for funding. This programs consistently provided core program funding for ALBA, the Salinas-based farm-business incubator serving former farmworkers and others.

Crop Insurance \$750k AGI Limit - Senators Coburn (R-OK) and Durbin (D-IL) - same as last year's amendment. This amendment would ensure a fiscally responsible farm safety net by reducing by 15 percent annual crop insurance premium subsidies for program participants whose adjusted gross annual income exceeds \$750,000 (\$1.5 million for most married participants). This amendment would save close to \$1.3 billion over ten years.

Repeal "Monsanto Protection Act" from the Continuing Resolution - Senator Merkley (D-OR)

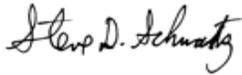
The amendment would repeal language from the previously approved continuing resolution that striped judges of their constitutional mandate to protect consumer and farmer rights and the environment.

Local Farms, Food and Jobs

The California Caucus of NSAC also supports the Local Farms, Food and Jobs Act introduced by Senator Brown (D-Ohio). The identical House version of the bill is co-sponsored by 14 members of the California delegation. Key aspects of the bill were not included in the Senate Agriculture Committee bill. We have not confirmed yet if Senator Cowan will offer an amendment to strengthen the farm bill regarding support of local farms and production and marketing of locally produced food. However we support amendments that will further support local farms based on Senator Brown's marker bill.

We urge your support for the amendments. As additional amendments come forward in the next few days our colleagues at NSAC will be in touch with your office. If I can provide further information or clarification regarding any of these amendments or others you are evaluating please do not hesitate to contact me at CaliforniaNSAC@gmail.com or (707) 217-5603.

Sincerely,



Steve Schwartz
Coordinator, California Caucus of the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition