

September 20, 2024

The Honorable Mike Johnson
Speaker
United States House of Representatives
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
S-221, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
H-204, O'Neill House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
S-337, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Johnson, Majority Leader Schumer, Minority Leader Jeffries, and Minority Leader McConnell:

The agricultural economy is in a recession. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), net farm income, when adjusted for inflation, is expected to have decreased \$42 billion, over the past two years.¹ This is on top of a record agricultural trade deficit for the second year in a row. The thin margin farmers and ranchers are operating on is rapidly eroding.

As such, the American Farm Bureau Federation and all 51 state Farm Bureaus write to express the dire need for Congress to pass a new farm bill that makes additional, meaningful investments in the farm safety net. We also call on Congress to provide funds for natural disaster and economic assistance to bridge the gap until a new farm bill is enacted and implemented.

The ongoing struggles of the agricultural economy have painted a grim reality for many farmers and ranchers – many of whom have already thrown in the towel. The most recent Census of Agriculture shows there were 141,733 fewer farms in the U.S. in 2022 than in 2017. The number of acres in production agriculture fell to 880,100,848, a loss of more than 20 million acres from just five years earlier.² This should be a major concern for consumers who rely on farmers and ranchers for a stable, domestic food supply. To change this trajectory, leaders in Congress must get serious about investing more resources in the farm safety net. It is no fault of hardworking farm and ranch families that Congress's disfunction has resulted in a major delay of the farm bill, putting agriculture and our national food security in serious jeopardy.

We look for any solution that puts us a step closer to passing a new and improved farm bill. We are pleased the U.S. House Committee on Agriculture passed the Farm, Food, and National Security Act of 2024 out of committee with a bipartisan vote. We thank the members of the committee from both sides of the political aisle who supported farmers, ranchers, and consumers by voting to report the bipartisan legislation out of committee. We also commend Chairman G.T.

1. American Farm Bureau Federation. (2024, September 6). *Agriculture in the red: Net farm income drops again in 2024 forecast*. <https://www.fb.org/market-intel/agriculture-in-the-red-net-farm-income-drops-again-in-2024-forecast>
2. United States Department of Agriculture. (n.d.). *Census of Agriculture*. National Agricultural Statistics Service. <https://www.nass.usda.gov/AgCensus/>

Thompson for his leadership on drafting a bill that will make an historical investment in American agriculture not seen since the 2002 farm bill.

We also thank leaders of the U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry for releasing farm bill frameworks. As the curtain begins to close for the 118th Congress, we eagerly await further action in each chamber to move us closer to passing a new farm bill.

The 2018 farm bill has already been extended once through September 30, 2024, putting farm and ranch families in a difficult position as they work to have a successful crop year and gain access to capital for the next season. Another extension of the 2018 farm bill is insufficient and unacceptable as outdated farm safety-net programs create uncertainty for agricultural producers.

Even if a new farm bill is enacted in 2024, producers would not realize the benefits until 2026, and any new crop insurance mechanisms would take even longer to come online. To bridge this gap, we also call for Congress to provide adequate funding for needed disaster and economic assistance for farmers and ranchers. This should take into account production and economic losses faced by our nation's agricultural producers in both 2023 and 2024.

To ensure the food security of our nation and to continue to be a leader in feeding, fueling, and clothing the world, leaders in Washington must make real investments in hardworking American farm and ranch families, as well as our rural communities that support them. All consumers rely on a strong and vibrant food economy each time they visit a restaurant, grocery store, or food pantry.

We respectfully ask Congressional leaders to act on a stronger farm safety net by passing a new farm bill and providing needed disaster and economic assistance before the end of the year. The food security of our nation is dependent on Congress delivering immediate results.

Sincerely,

American Farm Bureau Federation
Alabama Farmers Federation
Alaska Farm Bureau
Arizona Farm Bureau Federation
Arkansas Farm Bureau Federation
California Farm Bureau Federation
Colorado Farm Bureau Federation
Connecticut Farm Bureau Association, Inc.
Delaware Farm Bureau, Inc.
Florida Farm Bureau Federation
Georgia Farm Bureau Federation
Hawaii Farm Bureau Federation
Idaho Farm Bureau Federation
Illinois Farm Bureau
Indiana Farm Bureau, Inc.
Iowa Farm Bureau Federation

Kansas Farm Bureau
Kentucky Farm Bureau Federation
Louisiana Farm Bureau
Maine Farm Bureau Association
Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.
Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation Inc.
Michigan Farm Bureau
Minnesota Farm Bureau Federation
Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation
Missouri Farm Bureau Federation
Montana Farm Bureau Federation
Nebraska Farm Bureau Federation
Nevada Farm Bureau Federation
New Hampshire Farm Bureau Federation, Inc.
New Jersey Farm Bureau
New Mexico Farm & Livestock Bureau
New York Farm Bureau, Inc.
North Carolina Farm Bureau Federation, Inc.
North Dakota Farm Bureau
Ohio Farm Bureau Federation, Inc.
Oklahoma Farm Bureau
Oregon Farm Bureau
Pennsylvania Farm Bureau
Puerto Rico Farm Bureau
Rhode Island Farm Bureau Federation, Inc.
South Carolina Farm Bureau Federation
South Dakota Farm Bureau Federation
Tennessee Farm Bureau Federation
Texas Farm Bureau
Utah Farm Bureau Federation
Vermont Farm Bureau, Inc.
Virginia Farm Bureau Federation
Washington Farm Bureau
West Virginia Farm Bureau, Inc.
Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation
Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation

CC: Chair Patty Murray
Vice Chair Susan Collins
Chairman Tom Cole
Chairman Andy Harris
Ranking Member Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member Sanford Bishop

Chairwoman Debbie Stabenow
Ranking Member John Boozman
Chairman G.T. Thompson
Ranking Member David Scott
Members of the U.S. Senate
Members of the U.S. House of Representatives