



October 22, 2013

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow  
Chairwoman, Committee on Agriculture  
U.S. Senate  
328A Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Thad Cochran  
Ranking Member, Committee on Agriculture  
U.S. Senate  
328A Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Frank Lucas  
Chairman, Committee on Agriculture  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1301 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Collin Peterson  
Ranking Member, Committee on Agriculture  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1305 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Stabenow, Senator Cochran, Chairman Lucas and Congressman Peterson:

On behalf of the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO), thank you for your work and continued leadership to move a comprehensive Farm Bill through Congress this year.

As the conference committee process moves forward, NADO respectfully urges you to provide a robust Rural Development title that promotes economic growth and stability in rural areas by creating jobs and ensuring the success of the next generation of rural Americans.

Since 1996, the Rural Development title has averaged \$413 million in mandatory funding per Farm Bill. While the bills from both chambers are well below this average, the House bill authorizes only \$50 million in mandatory funding as opposed to the \$227 million authorized by the Senate. We respectfully request that the conference agrees to no less than the Senate funding levels, but would urge you to look for ways to further boost those levels in the final bill.

Additionally, within the Rural Development title, we would ask that you support the Senate bill's mandatory funding levels for the Water/Wastewater Backlog, the Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program, and the Value Added Producer Grants. These programs are vital to the stability and success of rural communities throughout America.

We also urge you to support the Senate's approach to streamlining the authorizing language for rural development programs which is designed to assist the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) in administering programs and improving accessibility for rural constituents. NADO continues to support provisions in the Senate bill which would allow USDA to focus resources on strategic community and economic development plans on a regional and multijurisdictional basis.

NADO commends your support for the reauthorization of all regional economic development commissions established in the 2008 Farm Bill. These commissions are designed to promote efficiency, maximize resources, and ensure strategic investment in rural areas.

Thank you again and we stand ready to work with you to complete passage of a new five-year Farm Bill this year.

Sincerely,



Joe C. McKinney  
Executive Director