



Department of Social Development and World Peace

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June 15, 2007

The Honorable Bob Etheridge
Chairman
Subcommittee on General Farm Commodities and Risk Management
House Committee on Agriculture
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

In light of the subcommittee's forthcoming action on the 2007 Farm bill, we would like to highlight areas of particular interest to the Catholic community. We are writing to urge you to support important adjustments to Title I of the Farm Bill that would make its programs more equitable by targeting support to active farmers that need it most and phasing out support to those that have the most and need it least. We also ask that you significantly reduce trade distorting support programs that disadvantage farmers in poor countries. Savings produced should be redirected to programs that assist poor and hungry people, and that encourage responsible stewardship of the land and rural development.

The Catholic community brings the teaching of our Church and the everyday experience of our community of faith in rural communities in the United States and abroad to its concern for food and farm policy. Our experience is both broad and deep in rural communities across the United States. We are farmers, ranchers and farmworkers, we are landowners and contract growers, business operators and workers, producers and consumers.

The U.S. Bishops stated: "The primary goals of agricultural policies should be providing food for all people and reducing poverty among farmers and farmworkers in this country and abroad." (*For I Was Hungry and You Gave Me Food: Catholic Reflections on Food, Farmers and Farmworkers*). The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, the National Catholic Rural Life Conference, Catholic Charities USA, and Catholic Relief Services are working together to support policies in the 2007 Farm Bill that support rural communities and family farms; strengthen and expand domestic anti-hunger programs; promote conservation and good stewardship of the land; ensure safe living and working conditions for farmworkers, promote fairness for farmers in developing countries; and provide food security aid efficiently and effectively to hungry people worldwide.

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We continue to insist that U.S. farmers need a strong safety net that helps them mitigate risks that they face as a result of the unique nature of farming. The current safety net is broken – reaching too few and requiring annual “fixes” that are costly and create on-going uncertainty for farmers. The 2007 Farm Bill should be an opportunity to refashion that safety net in a way that targets benefits to those in greatest need of assistance regardless of crop grown and promotes diversity of production and entrepreneurship.

In the face of severe budgetary constraints, reform of Title I based on the demands of equity would help strengthen our commitment to active farmers and rural communities, offering support where and when it is needed as well as redirecting resources to the poor and hungry.

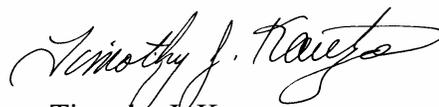
Sincerely,



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



Rev. Larry Snyder
President of Catholic Charities USA



Timothy J. Kautza
Executive Director (interim)
National Catholic Rural Life Conference



Ken Hackett
President
Catholic Relief Services

cc: Subcommittee on General Farm Commodities and Risk Management