



Department of Social Development and World Peace

3211 FOURTH STREET NE • WASHINGTON DC 20017-1194 • FAX 202-541-3339

WEBSITE: WWW.USCCB.ORG/SDWP

July 26, 2007

U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative:

Last week, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) wrote to the Speaker and the House Leadership, together with a broad group of U.S. Christian leaders, to support a 2007 farm bill that gives real help to those who need it most by redirecting large payments from those who need them least. As you prepare to vote on the U.S. Farm Bill (H.R. 2419), I too urge you to support amendments that represent hope for the many millions who are hungry and live in poverty at home and around the world.

We are a community of faith, present throughout rural America and rural communities around the globe. Within our community are farmers and farmworkers, land owners and contract growers, business owners and workers. We also know first hand how the Farm Bill impacts all people, especially those living in poverty, those without enough to eat and trying to make ends meet on very limited resources.

Together with the National Catholic Rural Life Conference, Catholic Charities USA, and Catholic Relief Services, USCCB welcomes some important improvements made in the Committee-passed bill to programs that address hunger at home and overseas. However, on the whole, this bill fails to seize a unique opportunity for real reform. I urge you to support Amendments offered on the House floor that would cap payments and target resources to more worthy priorities. The following amendments merit your support because they move U.S. Farm policy in the right direction toward genuine reform:

- **Fairness in Farm and Food Policy Amendment** offered by Rep. Ron Kind that would reform U.S. subsidies to help small and moderate-sized farmers as well as poor farmers overseas. Savings from reduced payments to large producers would go to assistance for small and beginning farmers, nutrition, conservation, rural development and other worthy objectives. In particular, this amendment would provide \$5.6 billion for the food stamp program, which we strongly support. It would also tighten payment limits and close loopholes in order to ensure that help goes to those who need it most.
- **Payment Limits Amendment** offered by Reps. Blumenauer, Ryan, Flake and Kind that would limit farm commodity payments to \$250,000 per year.

Secretariat
202-541-3180

Domestic Social Development
202-541-3185

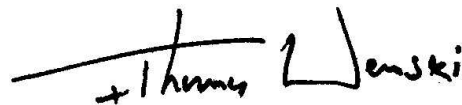
International Justice and Peace
202-541-3199

Diocesan Relations
202-541-3195

- **Local/Regional Purchase of Food Aid Amendment** offered by Reps. Blumenauer, Payne that would create a pilot project for local and regional purchase of food aid. The pilot provides up to \$100 million, and an independent evaluation would be required at the end of the pilot. This program would allow food aid to be delivered expeditiously by allowing some local purchase of emergency food supplies.
- **Food Stamp/Overseas School Nutrition Program Amendment** offered by Reps. Cooper, McGovern and Duncan to expand domestic and international nutrition programs. This would increase funding for the Food Stamp Program by \$1.7 billion to \$5.7 billion and would provide mandatory funding for the McGovern-Dole Program that supports international nutrition programs.

Legislating invariably requires compromise, especially omnibus legislation such as the Farm Bill. However, the Committee-passed Farm Bill (H.R. 2419) perpetuates a system that at its core continues to harm struggling farmers at home and abroad. The poor and the hungry should not continue to be burdened due to a failure to forge a new consensus on U.S. agriculture policy. Desperate communities cannot wait another five years for a better Farm Bill. I urge you to reject the wants of special interests and to work for the needs of the common good of all.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas Wenski". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending to the left of the name.

Bishop Thomas G. Wenski
Bishop of Orlando
Chairman, Committee on International Policy