

May 10, 2018

Dear Representative,

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we urge you to vote NO on H.R. 2, the Agriculture and Nutrition Act of 2018. This Farm Bill promotes corporate agriculture over American family farms, will result in even more corporate concentration across the agricultural industry and will harm family farmers, rural communities and the environment.

In this difficult farm economy, it is critical that public money is spent wisely, reaching the most family farmers possible. But too often and for too long, Farm Bill programs have supported corporate interests, including corporate-controlled industrial livestock operations, at the expense of independent farm families. The bill coming to the House floor ignores needed reforms to programs used extensively by industrialized concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) and eliminates programs and protections for family farmers.

One clear example is in the Conservation Title (Title II). The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) was designed to provide cost-share and incentive payments to agricultural producers to address natural resource concerns on their farms and it has been used by hundreds of thousands of farmers nationwide to make environmental improvements that benefit the land, family farm operations and their communities. At EQIP's inception, CAFOs were excluded from eligibility for federal EQIP dollars and the maximum cost-share was \$50,000.

Unfortunately, corporate industrial livestock special interests successfully worked to open up EQIP conservation funds to CAFOs, which house thousands of animals and generate massive quantities of manure, and to increase EQIP's funding cap to \$450,000. Since this time, CAFOs have used federal taxpayer dollars extensively to expand across the country in a time of low prices and over-production, working to drive independent livestock producers out of business.

H.R. 2 does NOT prohibit EQIP funding for new and expanding concentrated animal feeding operations, nor does it lower the \$450,000 cap that has encouraged this abuse of the program. It also fails to require increased transparency so the public knows how and where public dollars are going. Without these needed reforms, CAFOs will continue to be established, expanded, and subsidized to the detriment of family farmers, rural economies and the environment.

Not only does this bill fail to reform EQIP, it also opens more public conservation money to be used by CAFOs. The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) is a popular nationwide program designed to help farmers manage whole farm conservation plans that address resource concerns on their farm. This program covers over 70 million acres across the country and especially benefits family farmers who are invested in sustaining their land's productivity for generations to come.

Unfortunately, this Farm Bill eliminates CSP and attempts to replace it with vague "stewardship contracts" inside EQIP. These "stewardship contracts" retain very little of the important core elements of CSP. For example, this proposed Farm Bill eliminates CSP's comprehensive whole

farm conservation approach and the eligibility requirement to reach certain environmental stewardship levels before enrolling.

Even worse, this bill opens “stewardship contracts” to be used by CAFOs. Presently, CSP cannot be used to pay for manure management systems and other practices used primarily by CAFOs. This bill will direct more public funds towards helping establish and expand corporate industrial livestock operations.

Furthermore, this proposed bill would increase the Guaranteed Loan limit to \$1.75 million, financing larger CAFOs and burdening contract farmers with more debt. Guaranteed Farm Loans have been used extensively for building and expanding corporate CAFOs, and CAFO companies encourage contract farmers to take out large, risky loans to finance their operations. To the contrary, this bill should prohibit CAFOs from receiving these loans so the funds can focus on their original purpose of getting credit to family farmers who cannot be privately financed.

While the agricultural portion of this Farm Bill further loosens restrictions for CAFOs to receive public money, the bill also increases the requirements SNAP recipients need to meet to receive basic food support. This bill would result in fewer people, including rural residents, being able to feed themselves and buy the food family farmers grow. The proposed changes to SNAP will negatively impact both our rural and urban communities.

This bill was created in secret and is now being rushed through the U.S. House of Representatives. It is clear that our democratic process is weakened when backroom deals and political agendas are placed over the voices and participation of family farmers and the people. This is characteristic of corporate-controlled politics rather than government led by the people.

This proposed Farm Bill, the Agriculture and Nutrition Act of 2018, helps finance corporate agriculture and CAFOs at the expense of family farmers, the environment, people in need and rural communities. The House Agriculture Committee’s vote to pass this bill through committee on Wednesday, April 18th, 2018 shows how out of touch our lawmakers in Washington D.C. are from the needs of family farmers and rural communities.

We urge you to vote “no” when this bill is heard by the whole U.S. House of Representatives and to instead demand a bill that truly supports family farmers, rural communities and the environment. Please contact any of us if you have questions about these issues or need more information as the Farm Bill process moves forward.

Sincerely,

The Campaign for Family Farms and the Environment

Food & Water Watch, Patty Lovera, (202) 683-2465

Dakota Rural Action, Frank James, (605) 697-5204

Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, Ben Lilliston, (612) 870-0453

Iowa CCI, Erica Blair, (515) 282-0484

Land Stewardship Project, Ben Anderson, (612) 760-3129

Missouri Rural Crisis Center, Tim Gibbons, (573) 449-1336

Additional Signatories – National Organizations:

Center for Food Safety

Family Farm Defenders

Farm Aid

Farm and Ranch Freedom Alliance

Food Animal Concerns Trust

Friends of the Earth

Health Care Without Harm

National Family Farm Coalition

Organic Consumers Association

Sierra Club

Women, Food and Agriculture Network

Additional Signatories – State and Local Organizations:

Buffalo River Watershed Alliance (AR)

Western Colorado Congress (CO)

Idaho Organization of Resource Councils (ID)

Treasure Valley Food Coalition (ID)

Illinois Citizens for Clean Air and Water (IL)

Helping Others Maintain Environmental Standards (IL)

Bernadotte Township (IL)

Neighbors Opposed to Polluted Environment (IL)

Food for Maine's Future (ME)

American Federation of Government Employees (AFL-CIO) Local 3354 (MO)

Northeast Organic Farming Association of New Jersey (NJ)

Northeast Organic Farming Association of New York (NY)

Citizens Sustainability League (ND)

Ashtabula, Geauga, Lake Counties Farmers Union (OH)

Farm Women United (PA)

Oregon Rural Action (OR)

Community Alliance for Global Justice (WA)