

March 9, 2020

The Honorable Sanford Bishop
Chairman
Subcommittee on Agriculture
House Committee on Appropriations
2632-A Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jeff Fortenberry
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Agriculture
House Committee on Appropriations
1514 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Hoeven
Chairman
Subcommittee on Agriculture
Senate Committee on Appropriations
338 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jeff Merkley
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Agriculture
Senate Committee on Appropriations
313 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairmen Bishop and Hoeven and Ranking Members Fortenberry and Merkley,

We, the undersigned agriculture, rural, and mental health professional organizations representing millions of members across the country, thank you for your leadership in providing \$10 million for the Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network (FRSAN) in the FY 2020 appropriations package. We urge you to continue this important work by fully funding FRSAN for FY 2021.

After inclusion of the FRSAN pilot program in FY 2019, agriculture and rural organizations utilized the funding to create four regional centers that are working to map rural stress needs, identify new partners, and scale training and services needed. The request for applications for the \$10 million provided in FY 2020 opens on March 31st, and we anticipate a wide range of interest to help scale this program and achieve full implementation.

While optimism is increasing regarding the farm economy, financial risk, volatile markets, and unpredictable weather continue to strain farmers', ranchers', and farmworkers' mental and emotional well-being. While 48% of rural residents reported experiencing more mental health challenges compared with one year ago, only 31% had sought assistance. Farmers, farmworkers and rural residents in general ranked cost, embarrassment and stigma as main barriers to seeking help. This is exacerbated by the fact that 60% of rural residents live in areas with mental health professional shortages.

The 2018 Farm Bill reauthorized the FRSAN, which provides grants for extension services, state departments of agriculture, nonprofit organizations and other entities to provide stress assistance programs to agriculture-related occupations. Eligible programs include farm helplines and websites, training programs and workshops, outreach services, and home delivery of assistance.

As the Subcommittee develops the FY 2021 agriculture appropriations bill, we urge you to fully fund the FRSAN at \$10 million. This funding will be critically important in meeting the needs of farmers and ranchers as they endure increasing financial and mental stress.

Sincerely,

Agricultural Retailers Association
AgriSafe
American Agri-Women
American Farm Bureau Federation
American Psychological Association
American Seed Trade Association
American Soybean Association
Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities
Farm Aid
Farmer Veteran Coalition
National Association of Counties
National Association of State Departments of Agriculture
National Association of Wheat Growers
National Center for Appropriate Technology
National Corn Growers Association
National Cotton Council
National Council of Farmer Cooperatives
National Family Farm Coalition
National Farmers Union
National Grange
National Latino Farmers & Ranchers Trade Association
National Milk Producers Federation
National Pork Producers Council
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition
National Young Farmers Coalition
Organic Trade Association
Rural & Agriculture Council of America
Rural Advancement Foundation International - USA
Rural Coalition
Sustainable Food Policy Alliance
United States Cattlemen's Association
USA Rice

