

April 20, 2021

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin
Chair, Subcommittee on Agriculture
Senate Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable John Hoeven
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Agriculture
Senate Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Sanford Bishop
Chair, Subcommittee on Agriculture
House Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Jeff Fortenberry
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Agriculture
House Committee on Appropriations

Dear Chairwoman Baldwin and Chairman Bishop, and Ranking Members Hoeven and Fortenberry,

We, the undersigned agriculture, rural, and mental health professional organizations representing millions of members across the country, thank you for your leadership in providing strong funding for the Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network (FRSAN) in recent appropriations packages. **We urge you to continue this important work by fully funding FRSAN for FY 2022.**

The purpose of FRSAN is to establish and fund a service provider network that connects individuals and their families engaged in farming, ranching, and other agriculture-related occupations to stress assistance programs. Funding thus far has been used to create four regional centers that are coordinating efforts to serve the unique needs of their respective populations. These centers evaluate the needs in their regions, and then develop and implement training and services to address farm stress issues.

The need for FRSAN funding is greater than ever given the immense stress caused by the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. According to a Morning Consult poll conducted in December 2020¹, two in three farmers or farmworkers say the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted their mental health. And farmers and farmworkers are 7 percent more likely than other rural adults to say stress and mental health have become more of a problem in their community in the past year. Thankfully, approximately 90 percent of farmers and farmworkers surveyed also say it is important to reduce stigma about mental health in the agriculture community, a role already being played by FRSAN-funded projects.

Even once the pandemic has been defeated, the need to address farm stress will persist. There are many reasons for ongoing farm stress and mental health challenges, including volatility in the farm economy, the financial risk involved in agriculture, weather unpredictability, and a changing climate. Moreover, 60 percent of rural residents live in areas with mental health professional shortages. Continued funding is essential as the FRSAN regional centers continue to develop their networks and programming to serve populations where the need is great, and resources are often limited.

¹ https://www.fb.org/files/Impacts_of_COVID-19_on_Rural_Mental_Health_1.6.21.pdf

As the Subcommittees develop the FY 2022 agriculture appropriations bill, we urge you to fully fund FR SAN at \$10 million. This funding will be critically important in meeting the mental health needs of farmers, ranchers, and their families.

Sincerely,

Agricultural Retailers Association
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
Farm Credit Council
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 Cooperative Business Association CLUSA
National Corn Growers Association
National Cotton Council
National Council of Farmer Cooperatives
National Family Farm Coalition
National Farmers Union
National Grange
National Milk Producers Federation
National Rural Health Association
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition
National Young Farmers Coalition
Organic Trade Association
Rural and Agriculture Council of America
Rural Advancement Foundation International – USA
Rural Coalition
Sustainable Food Policy Alliance
United States Cattlemen’s Association
USA Rice