Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 21, 2012

The Honorable John Boehner
Speaker of the House
H-232, the Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
H-204, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Boehner and Minority Leader Pelosi:

As Members committed to the success of family farms, economic growth of rural America, and the ability to provide the world with the most safe and abundant food, we want to stress how important it is to pass, and sign into law, a farm bill in 2012 as soon as possible.

The farm bill process is a bipartisan opportunity for Congress to make much needed updates to our nation's agriculture, trade, conservation, energy, rural development, research, and nutrition policy. As you know, the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 will expire on September 30, 2012. We owe it to our farmers, ranchers, and those that rely on agriculture production, to enact a farm bill before October to avoid the consequences of extensions or lame duck action.

While it may be unavoidable, finalizing a Farm Bill during a "lame duck" session of Congress adversely impacts farmers' ability to make critical decisions well in advance of the planting season. For instance, winter wheat will start planting in the fall. Other crops such as corn, soybeans, peanuts, rice, or cotton will start planting in early 2013. In order to make important planting decisions, farmers need the certainty in knowing how farm disaster and safety net programs will change from today. Additionally, USDA will require sufficient lead time to implement any changes to the farm safety net programs.

We should also strive to avoid a simple short-term extension of the 2008 Farm Bill. As part of their planting decision process, farmers also need the certainty that a multi-year farm bill provides for future planning. In addition, a simple short-term extension is politically unrealistic

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because it fails to reflect the new budgetary environment facing the country or to adapt our agriculture policy to meet new and current challenges.

The House Agriculture Committee is expected to begin action on the next farm bill. The Committee began holding hearings in 2010 under Chairman Collin Peterson and continued with audit hearings throughout 2011 under Chairman Frank Lucas. Members and agriculture stakeholders are ready with their ideas, ready to contribute, and ready to start. We stand prepared to work with you in a bipartisan fashion to make the farm bill a reality. In a year with a shortened legislative calendar, it is imperative we begin the process early. Our agriculture community deserves our fullest and best effort; not just extensions of current law or waiting for the lame duck session. We stand ready to work with you to pass a comprehensive, bipartisan farm bill in 2012 in a timely manner.

Sincerely,

Rep. Tim Walz
Member of Congress

Rep. Joe Baca
Member of Congress

Rep. Tammy Baldwin
Member of Congress

Rep. Charles Boustany, Jr.
Member of Congress

Rep. Leonard Boswell
Member of Congress

Rep. Bruce Braley
Member of Congress

Rep. Lois Capps
Member of Congress

Rep. Dennis Cardoza
Member of Congress

Rep. Hansen Clarke
Member of Congress

Rep. Jim Costa
Member of Congress

Rep. Jerry Costello
Member of Congress

Rep. Joe Courtney
Member of Congress

Rep. Henry Cuellar
Member of Congress

Rep. Sam Farr
Member of Congress

Rep. John Garamendi
Member of Congress

Rep. Vicky Hartzler
Member of Congress

Rep. Tim Holden
Member of Congress

Rep. Jesse Jackson, Jr.
Member of Congress

Rep. Walter B. Jones
Member of Congress

Rep. Larry Kissell
Member of Congress

Rep. Dennis Kucinich
Member of Congress

Rep. Jim Langevin
Member of Congress

Rep. Tom Latham
Member of Congress

Rep. David Loebsack
Member of Congress

Rep. Mike McIntyre
Member of Congress

Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Member of Congress

Rep. Jerry McNerney
Member of Congress

Rep. Michael Michaud
Member of Congress

Rep. James Moran
Member of Congress

Rep. Kristi Noem
Member of Congress

Rep. Bill Owens
Member of Congress

Rep. Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress

Rep. Laura Richardson
Member of Congress

Rep. Gregorio Sablan
Member of Congress

Rep. David Scott
Member of Congress

Rep. Terri A. Sewell
Member of Congress

Rep. Mike Thompson
Member of Congress

Rep. Peter Welch
Member of Congress

Rep. Emanuel Cleaver
Member of Congress

Cc: Chairman Frank Lucas
Ranking Member Collin Peterson