

June 9, 2026

The Honorable John Hoeven
Chairman
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural
Development, FDA, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural
Development, FDA, and Related Agencies
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Dear Chairman Hoeven and Ranking Member Shaheen:

On behalf of organizations representing the food and agriculture community, we thank you for your continued leadership and support for American agriculture. We appreciate the work of the Appropriations Committee to ensure USDA programs and services remain timely, accessible and effective for producers nationwide.

We write to support critical staffing needs at USDA within the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Farm Service Agency (FSA). For farmers, ranchers, and growers across the country, local NRCS and FSA offices serve as essential on-the-ground resources, providing direct assistance with conservation programs, disaster assistance, crop insurance coordination, farm loans, technical expertise, and program implementation. Reduced staffing levels and office consolidations have created significant barriers for producers attempting to access USDA services, particularly in rural and underserved agricultural communities where local field offices often represent the primary connection between producers and the federal government. Delays in technical assistance, conservation planning, program enrollment, and disaster response can have direct economic consequences for producers already operating under tight margins and increasing production challenges.

Programs administered through NRCS and FSA remain critically important to the long-term viability of U.S. agriculture. In addition to the work that FSA and NRCS handle on a regular basis, implementation of the Farmer Bridge Assistance Program and the Supplemental Disaster Relief Program are ongoing along with implementation of the farm safety net provisions of the One Big Beautiful Bill Act. Conservation programs such as EQIP and CSP continue to experience demand that far exceeds available funding, while programs like CRP help preserve environmentally sensitive land and provide economic stability for producers. Reduced staffing capacity threatens USDA's ability to effectively deliver these programs and support producer participation.

Both NRCS and FSA have experienced substantial staffing losses in recent years on top of already existing workforce shortages. According to USDA's December 2025 report, "U.S. Department of Agriculture Staffing Levels," more than 20,000 USDA employees departed between January 12 and June 14, 2025, including approximately 2,673 NRCS employees (22% of staff), 806 FSA employees (24% of staff), and 1,082 employees from FSA county offices (7% of staff).

Continued staffing reductions at local NRCS and FSA offices will inevitably result in longer processing times, delayed program delivery, reduced access to technical assistance, and fewer staff available to help producers navigate increasingly complex federal programs and disaster situations. For many American agriculture operations, timely access to USDA staff and resources can directly impact whether an operation remains financially viable during periods of economic stress or weather-related losses.

These concerns come at a time when producers continue facing elevated input costs, market volatility, labor challenges, and severe weather events. USDA conservation, disaster, and farm support programs remain critical tools that help producers manage risk, maintain productive working lands, and support a stable domestic food supply. Preserving adequate staffing and local office capacity is essential to ensure these programs remain accessible and effective for farmers and ranchers nationwide.

We respectfully urge the subcommittee to support adequate funding levels for NRCS and FSA staffing and include language in the FY27 agriculture appropriations bill to prevent office closures and forced consolidations that would reduce staffing at NRCS and FSA facilities even more. The following language was included in the House Appropriations Committee's FY27 Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act: That none of the funds available in this or any other Act, including prior year Acts, shall be used to permanently relocate county based employees that would result in an office with two or fewer employees without prior notification and approval of the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress.

The state of the farm economy is challenging for all farmers, regardless of the commodity they are growing or raising. A robust farm safety net ensures access to domestically grown crops and domestically raised livestock and strengthens our national security. We thank you for your leadership and for your continued commitment to the farmers, ranchers, and growers who produce our nation's food, fuel, and fiber.

Sincerely,

African American Farmers of California
Agricultural Retailers Association
Alabama Farmers Federation
Alaska Farm Bureau
American Farm Bureau Federation
American Farmland Trust
American Mushroom Institute
American Rivers Action Fund
American Society of Agronomy
American Soybean Association
AmericanHort
Arizona Farm Bureau
Arkansas Farm Bureau
Arkansas Soybean Association

Biological Products Industry Alliance
California Citrus Mutual
California Cotton Ginners and Growers Association
California Farm Bureau
California Fresh Fruit Association
Center for Rural Affairs
Colorado Farm Bureau
Crop Science Society of America
Corn Growers Association of North Carolina
Environmental Defense Fund
Florida Composting Council
Florida Farm Bureau Federation
Food and Agriculture Climate Alliance
Georgia Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association
Idaho Farm Bureau Federation
Illinois Corn Growers Association
Illinois Farm Bureau
Illinois Soybean Growers
Indiana Farm Bureau
International Fresh Produce Association
Iowa Corn Growers Association
Iowa Farm Bureau Federation
Kansas Farm Bureau
Kansas Soybean Association
Kentucky Corn Growers Association
Kentucky Soybean Association
Louisiana Farm Bureau Federation
Michigan Corn Growers Association
Michigan Farm Bureau
Minnesota Corn Growers Association
Minnesota Farm Bureau Federation
Minnesota Soybean Growers Association
Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation
Missouri Corn Growers Association
Missouri Farm Bureau Federation
Missouri Soybean Association
Montana Farm Bureau Federation
National Association of University Forest Resources Programs
National Association of Wheat Growers
National Corn Growers Association
National Cotton Council
National Farmers Union
National Milk Producers Federation
National Sorghum Producers
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition
Nebraska Corn Growers Association

Nebraska Farm Bureau Federation
Nebraska Soybean Association
New Hampshire Farm Bureau
New Jersey Farm Bureau
New Mexico Farm & Livestock Bureau
New York Corn & Soybean Growers Association
New York Farm Bureau
Nisei Farmers League
North American Blueberry Council
North Carolina Farm Bureau
North Carolina Soybean Producers Association
North Dakota Corn Growers Association
North Dakota Soybean Growers Association
Ohio Corn & Wheat Growers Association
Ohio Farm Bureau
Oklahoma Farm Bureau
Oregon Farm Bureau
Organic Trade Association
Pennsylvania Farm Bureau
Pheasants Forever
Quail Forever
Rhode Island Farm Bureau Federation
Soil Science Society of America
South Dakota Corn Growers Association
Tennessee Farm Bureau Federation
Texas Citrus Mutual
Texas Corn Producers Association
Texas International Produce Association
Texas Soybean Association
Texas Vegetable Association
The Nature Conservancy
U.S. Apple Association
US Composting Council
Utah Farm Bureau Federation
Virginia Farm Bureau Federation
Virginia Grain Producers Association
Washington Farm Bureau
Western Tree Nut Association
Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation
Wisconsin Soybean Association
Young Farmers