

May 14, 2012

The Honorable Harry Reid
United States Senate
S-221 Capitol Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John Boehner
House of Representatives
H-232 Capitol Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
United States Senate
S-230 Capitol Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
House of Representatives
H-204 Capitol Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Majority Leader Reid, Minority Leader McConnell, Speaker Boehner, and Minority Leader Pelosi:

On May 15, 2012, the United States Department of Agriculture will celebrate its 150th anniversary. Established by President Lincoln and later coined “The People’s Department,” USDA has a vibrant history of improving the quality of life for people in rural and urban America. Additionally, many mission areas within USDA extend beyond domestic borders and share America’s bountiful harvests with those in need around the world. Such accomplishments deserve to be celebrated as we embark on the next century at USDA.

America’s agricultural producers are taking on new roles, and consumers rely on our farmers and ranchers to enrich their dinner tables and feed their families. As technology evolved over the last 150 years, farming and forestry operations did, too. Meeting demand, improving processes and minimizing environmental impacts are what make modern agriculture and forestry dynamic industries. As a nation, we must encourage a strong commitment to the availability of biotechnology to enhance the sustainability, productivity, and competitiveness of U.S. agriculture. Plant biotechnology provides numerous benefits to society including production gains that enhance domestic food and energy security and in turn our national security.

Beginning on May 15, we encourage you to demonstrate publically your commitment to ensuring a safe and abundant food, fuel and fiber supply for generations to come. We look forward to working with you and the members of your caucuses to commemorate USDA’s exciting history and the U.S. agricultural sector’s contributions to our nation.

Sincerely,

Agricultural Retailers Association
American Seed Trade Association
American Sugarbeet Growers Association
National Association of Wheat Growers
National Corn Growers Association
National Sunflower Association
USA Dry Pea & Lentil Council

American Farm Bureau Federation
American Soybean Association
Biotechnology Industry Organization
National Barley Growers Association
National Cotton Council
US Canola Association

cc: Sens. Debbie Stabenow, Pat Roberts, Herb Kohl and Roy Blunt
Reps. Frank Lucas, Collin Peterson, Jack Kingston and Sam Farr