

April 23, 2012

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
Chairwoman

Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry 328A Russell Senate Office Building Washington, DC
20510

The Honorable Pat Roberts
Ranking Member

Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry 328A Russell Senate Office Building Washington, DC
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Dear Chairwoman Stabenow and Senator Roberts:

We write to respectfully urge you to postpone Wednesday's scheduled markup until at least after the upcoming recess in order to provide Members and producers an opportunity to better understand the markup vehicle and its implications and to offer constructive suggestions for improvement.

We greatly appreciate your efforts to ensure a transparent process by making the legislative language available to the public. Given that the Farm Bill will greatly impact a very important economic sector, fully understanding the legislation is vitally important.

We first became privy to the substance of the mark on Friday afternoon when we understand Members of the Committee were also provided legislative language. We understand that Members have only had the weekend in which to digest the more than 900 page bill, consult with their producers, understand the mark's implications, craft any amendments, identify appropriate offsets, and obtain a score from the Congressional Budget Office. We are concerned that this timeframe simply has not allowed for a meaningful opportunity to understand the mark or to offer constructive improvements. We believe providing additional time for Committee Members and producers to consider the mark and offer suggestions for improvement would contribute to a more transparent process and hopefully result in the best possible product.

In regard to substance, our first blush impression is that the mark raises serious equity issues and grave concerns over planting distortions. We share in the Committee's strong desire to produce an equitable bill that avoids the scenario in which the farm bill is driving planting decisions. By providing additional time for Members and producers to fully analyze all the impacts of the proposal, the Committee can help avoid this result.

Again, we urge you to postpone the markup until at least after next week's recess to offer Members and producers and others a more transparent and meaningful process that can ultimately lead to the best bill possible.

Sincerely,

Southern Peanut Farmers Federation
Western Peanut Growers Association
National Cotton Council
National Sorghum Producers
US Rice Producers Association
USA Rice Federation
Oklahoma Wheat Growers Association

Oklahoma Farm Bureau
Mississippi Farm Bureau
Texas Corn Producers
Texas Wheat Producers
Texas Grain Sorghum Association
Oklahoma Sorghum Association
New Mexico Grain Sorghum Association
Minnesota Corn Growers Association
Colorado Corn Growers Association
Georgia Corn Growers Association
Texas Soybean Association
Missouri Rice Producers Group
Arkansas Rice Federation
Louisiana Rice Producers Group
Texas Rice Producers Legislative Group
South Carolina Peach Council
Georgia Peach Council
American Peanut Sheller's Association
Georgia Peanut Commission
Mississippi Peanut Growers Association
Florida Peanut Producers Association
Alabama Peanut Producers Association
New Mexico Peanut Growers Association
Oklahoma Peanut Commission
Panhandle Peanut Growers Association
Texas Peanut Producers Board
National Peanut Buying Points Association

Cc: Members of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry