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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 12, 2011

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
Senate Committee on Agriculture,
Nutrition, and Forestry
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Pat Roberts
Senate Committee on Agriculture,
Nutrition, and Forestry
Washington, D.C. 20510

COMMITTEES:
AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION AND
FORESTRY

BANKING, HOUSING AND
URBAN AFFAIRS

COMMERCE, SCIENCE AND
TRANSPORTATION

VETERANS' AFFAIRS

INDIAN AFFAIRS

Dear Senator Stabenow and Senator Roberts:

Congratulations on your anticipated selection as Chair and Ranking Member of the Senate Agriculture Committee. As a new Congress convenes and the deadline to reauthorize the farm bill draws closer, the work of the Agriculture Committee will be particularly important.

In addition to hearings about the farm bill reauthorization, I believe the Senate Agriculture Committee should be vigilant in its oversight responsibility over this Administration. With ever-increasing input costs, a struggling economy, and the uncertain nature of farming, it is imperative that government actions do not undercut the efforts of our farmers and ranchers. I write to request that you schedule Senate Agriculture Committee hearings to discuss several issues of great importance to our nation's agriculture producers. Those issues include but are not limited to the following:

- The effects of the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) endangerment finding on the competitiveness of U.S. agriculture;
- The impact of EPA regulation on U.S. agriculture, including Spill Prevention, Control, and Countermeasure regulations; air quality standards for dust; pesticide spray drift controls; and registration reviews for pesticides;
- An examination of the budget for the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), including an assessment of the efficacy of earmarks and an accounting of resources that have been diverted from production agriculture priorities and instead devoted to Administration pet projects, such as "Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food" and climate change initiatives;
- Oversight of the Administration's trade promotion efforts, including an analysis of the possible changes suggested by the Foreign Agricultural Service to the Market Access Program and Foreign Market Development Cooperator Program, as well as the adequacy of the Administration's actions to double exports and meet the objectives of their National Export Initiative;
- A review of activities of the Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration (GIPSA), including GIPSA's proposed rule regarding livestock marketing competition and GIPSA programs involving payment protection for livestock, bonding, and surveillance of custodial accounts; and

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- An evaluation of the Administration's ad hoc disaster assistance program announced on September 15, 2010, its effect on the debt and on Section 32 purchases of fruits and vegetables and other agricultural commodities, why our corn farmers are not eligible, and whether these assistance efforts circumvent Congress' disaster aid intentions as established by the Supplemental Revenue Assistance Payments (SURE) Program.

America's farmers and ranchers produce the highest quality food in the world, and play an important role in our nation's energy security as well. I look forward to continuing to work with you to ensure we as a Congress do all we can to enhance the productivity of American agriculture.

Very truly yours,



Mike Johanns
United States Senator