



June 4, 2009

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
Unite States Senate
331 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington DC 20510

Dear Senator Feinstein,

As representatives of some of California's leading agricultural, environmental and labor organizations, we are concerned about President Obama's proposed budget cuts to key conservation programs. We strongly urge you provide full funding for these vital conservation programs at the levels approved in the 2008 Farm Bill.

As members of the California Roundtable on Agriculture and the Environment, our organizations have come together in California over the past five years to address environmental challenges faced by the agricultural sector. Agriculture's success in meeting these challenges will provide important public benefits for our urban and rural residents through the protection of water resources, improved air quality, preserved open space and wildlife habitat, increased carbon sequestration and reduced green house gas emissions, improved community and worker health, and a safe and nutritious food supply.

Farm Bill conservation programs provide important tools and incentives to help California producers provide these benefits. They will also help make agriculture more resilient to higher temperatures, increasing drought and floods, and shrinking water sources, that are already creating significant stresses on California's agricultural systems. Unfortunately, these critical programs are at risk in President Obama's proposed budget.

The President's budget recommends decreasing overall conservation funding by nearly \$600 million at a time when we need these program benefits the most. Specifically, the budget proposes significant cuts to four programs that are of great

CRAE is a broad coalition of agriculture, environment, labor and public agency leaders working to promote an agriculture that is economically viable, environmentally sustainable and socially responsible.

importance to California.

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program takes one of the biggest hits, falling \$250 million short of the funding promised in the 2008 farm bill, 17 percent below Farm Bill levels and equivalent to the annual funding level it was supposed to reach in 2005. Of particular concern is the proposal to *permanently cut* the Wetlands Reserve Program by over 138,000 acres—equivalent to a \$266 million cut (according to the President's budget) in funding for restoring wetlands, prime concentrated reservoirs for sequestering carbon. In addition, the President's budget proposes to cut the Farmland and Ranchland Protection Program by 20 percent, or \$30 million; and the Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program is 51 percent, or \$42 million, from 2008 Farm Bill levels.

Unless we secure full funding for Farm Bill conservation programs, many of the California's biggest environmental challenges will not be met.

In addition to fully funding conservation programs at the 2008 Farm Bill levels, we urge you also to support full funding for the Consortium for Agricultural Soils Mitigation of Greenhouse Gases (CASMGs). The consortium, which is comprised of nine land grant universities and Pacific Northwest National Laboratories, was authorized for a \$15 million research grant in the 2008 Farm Bill. Further research, especially in California, is vitally needed in order to enable agriculture to play a bigger role in solving our nation's climate change challenges. Fully funding the Consortium at the levels authorized in the 2008 Farm Bill will make it possible to expand research efforts to include the University of California at Davis. This is crucial, as California has received a disproportionately small amount of overall Federal research dollars dedicated to agriculture and climate change than have other agricultural states.

In addition to assuring funds for CASMGs, it is critical that more federally funded research is dedicated to measuring, understanding and enhancing California agriculture's role in climate change given California's exceptional crop diversity, as well as our unique and varied soil and weather conditions.

A stable climate, and secure food and water supplies are as important as energy; and all three are required to ensure the health of the nation's people. Therefore, the cuts

proposed undermine the Administration's other primary goals. We thank you in advance for your leadership in ensuring the Administration reconsiders its current proposed cuts to Farm Bill programs.

We would also like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation for your leadership on the AgJOBS bill.

Respectfully,

American Farmland Trust
Agricultural Council of California
Corny Gallagher, Agribusiness Executive, Bank of America
California Association of Resource Conservation Districts
California Association of Winegrape Growers
California Certified Organic Farmers
California Farm Bureau Federation
California Federation of Certified Farmers' Markets
California Rural Legal Defense Foundation
Community Alliance with Family Farmers
Defenders of Wildlife
Environmental Defense Fund
Environmental Working Group
Marrone Bio Innovations, Inc.
Natural Resources Defense Council
The Nature Conservancy
Richard Rominger, Rominger Brothers Farms
Roots of Change
Sustainable Conservation
Western Growers
Western United Dairymen

Cc: The Honorable Barbara Boxer
The Honorable Tom Vilsack, Secretary of Agriculture
Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger