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## U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Agriculture

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July 10, 2002

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The Honorable C.W. "Bill" Young, Chairman  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

As you prepare for full Committee consideration of the Agriculture Appropriations Bill for FY 2003, we urge you to reject any amendment that weakens the safety net for America's farmers and ranchers provided by the new Farm Bill.

For example, we strongly oppose any changes to the payment limitations currently prescribed by law. As you know, payment limitations were fully debated during the Farm Bill, several votes were taken, and the result obtained is a carefully balanced policy that provides much-needed help to farm families, while making wealthy persons who principally make their living from non-agricultural occupations ineligible for help. To upset this balance now -- in the middle of the growing season -- would change the rules that thousands of farm families, their lenders, and rural communities relied on when making business decisions for this growing season. Moreover, any change in payment limitations now would be completely arbitrary, made in the absence of the findings and policy recommendations of the payment limitations commission required by law to be reported to Congress and the President early next year.

Whether it be payment limitations or any other issue affecting the safety net for America's farmers and ranchers, it is a matter of fundamental fairness that Congress not change a policy or rule on which thousands of hard working farm families have in good faith relied. Moreover, any change in policy should be made in full view of the facts to avoid harmful, unintended consequences. These concerns are what prompted 20 farm groups representing the vast majority of American farm families, along with two organizations representing major bank and farm credit lenders, to write you urging the Committee to reject any changes to the Farm Bill.

As President Bush has said, U.S. agriculture is important to national and economic security -- providing America with the safest, most abundant, and most affordable food supply in the world

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while generating 25 million jobs, \$3.5 trillion in output, and 15% of U.S. GDP. When the farmers and ranchers responsible for these blessings have been reeling for 5 years from economic uncertainty, Congress can provide at least some stability by keeping the farm safety net in tact.

Again, we strongly urge you to reject any amendments that would weaken the new safety net for America's farmers and ranchers. Thank you for your consideration of this very important matter.

Sincerely,



Larry Combest  
Chairman



Charlie Stenholm  
Ranking Member

cc: The Honorable David Obey, Ranking Member  
The Honorable Henry Bonilla, Subcommittee Chairman  
The Honorable Marcy Kaptur, Subcommittee Ranking Member  
Members of the Committee on Appropriations