

November, 2017

Chairman John Hoeven
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Chairman Robert Aderholt
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Ranking Member Jeff Merkley
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Ranking Member Sanford Bishop
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Senator Hoeven, Ranking Member Merkley, Chairman Aderholt, Ranking Member Bishop:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations we urge your continued support for valuable agriculture energy, manufacturing and sustainability programs in the fiscal year 2018 appropriations process, and specifically to reject proposed funding cuts to valuable energy title programs. Our groups all strongly support renewable energy, energy efficiency and “bioeconomy” investments in agriculture and rural America.

With the economic pain in rural America today and low prices for agriculture commodities, we need the innovative programs contained in the energy title of the 2014 Farm Bill. These farm energy programs grow jobs, promote manufacturing *and* markets, and enhance opportunities for struggling rural communities, all while improving sustainability for the nation.

The Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) program has been very successful in helping deploy the full range of ag-based farm and ranch energy including wind, solar, geothermal, small hydro, energy efficiency, bioenergy and anaerobic digestion. REAP serves all agricultural sectors and all 50 states benefit; the program remains substantially over-subscribed year after year. Farm families benefit from improved bottom lines and brighter prospects for younger generations.

The Biorefinery, Renewable Chemical and Biobased Manufacturing Assistance Program is critical to the development of cutting edge biorefineries in rural America. The program has aided multiple clean technology companies commercialize successfully to develop new uses for agricultural products. It stands poised to do much more if funding stabilizes, sending proper signals to the market. Improvements to the program can also be made in the upcoming farm bill re-authorization.

The Biomass Crop Assistance Program (BCAP) supports cutting-edge uses for sustainable biomass energy development. BCAP is unique and impactful; with time and funding it will succeed in providing diverse biomass energy solutions for the nation with collateral benefits for land conservation and rural economic development. We’d urge you to reverse course, re-invest and allow innovation to ensue.

The Biobased Markets Program, “BioPreferred,” is a successful program that uses the Federal government’s purchasing power to drive the private market for U.S.-based industrial materials derived from renewable raw materials, most often in rural areas. It also helps bioproduct identity and consumer choice by labeling non-food industrial bioproducts that meet the program’s biobased and innovation criteria. State and foreign governments alike have emulated the program.

Other valuable programs include the Advanced Biofuels Payment program, and Biomass Research and Development Initiative, a joint research endeavor led by USDA and the U.S. Department of Energy. Each has contributed to the successful development of the “bioeconomy” and new opportunities for rural businesses.

Stable Federal investment is essential to job growth and economic development in rural America from renewable energy, energy efficiency, renewable chemicals and biomaterials development. You can see the value proposition in the state of the art advanced biofuels and renewable chemicals plants dotting the landscape, to countless wind turbines on farms and ranches, solar arrays, biogas and biomass power, and more. However this is just the proverbial tip of the iceberg. The potential for many thousands of new jobs and economic growth, as well as a cleaner environment, is truly massive, derived from very modest public expenditures.

We urge you to stay the course and maintain funding of these smart Federal programs enhancing America's rural energy, biobased and clean technology deployment.

We greatly appreciate your consideration and look forward to working with you to build a brighter future for rural America.

Sincerely,

Agriculture Energy Coalition
ETC

cc: Chairman Cochran, Ranking Member Leahy, Chairman Frelinghuysen, Ranking Member Lowey