Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 15, 2012

Honorable Frank Lucas
Chair
Committee on Agriculture
1301 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Honorable Collin Peterson
Ranking Member
Committee on Agriculture
1305 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Lucas and Ranking Member Peterson,

As representatives of California's urban, suburban, rural and agricultural communities, we write in support of an economically responsible 2012 Farm Bill that maintains and strengthens our state's economy, public health, and environment while providing stability for our farmers and ranchers.

California is the most productive agricultural region in the world, and therefore has a major stake in the outcome of the 2012 Farm Bill. California's annual $39 billion agriculture sector consists of approximately 80,000 farms and ranches, and supports more than 1 million related jobs. California farmers and ranchers produce more than 400 different agricultural commodities including fruits, vegetables, grains, cotton, tree nuts, horticulture, meats and livestock, and many of the world's finest wines. California is also the nation's leading dairy state, housing 1.75 million cattle that produce milk products worth $5.9 billion.

Despite these numbers, a startling 19 percent of California households reported struggling with food hardship in 2011. In 2010, nearly 1 in every 4 California children lived in poverty, the majority from families where one or more parents worked full-time. A lack of access to the affordable, nutritious food grown throughout the state makes our citizens vulnerable to a lifetime of health issues and systemic poverty.

A sound Farm Bill will help California farmers, ranchers and citizens find new ways to remain economically viable, strengthen connections between rural and urban communities and markets, protect crops from pests and diseases, improve water and air quality, enhance opportunities for farmers, and provide healthy food for a growing population. Additionally, as traditional commodity supports are revamped, the Farm Bill should take into account the unique, high value nature of California's commodity crops such as rice and cotton, and should strengthen support programs that reward farmers for providing important ecological services.

In recent years, Congress has recognized the importance of California's agricultural production to the U.S. health and economy, and made significant strides to strengthen programs that are vital to our state. We respectfully urge you to support the following programs as you write the 2012 Farm Bill:

PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER

Specialty Crops
California's specialty crop industry accounts for about half of all domestic farmgate crop value but has received relatively little funding in Farm Bill programs. The 2008 Farm Bill included new funding for Specialty Crop Block Grants, the Specialty Crop Research Initiative, assistance for organic production, local food marketing and promotion, beginning and disadvantaged farmers, and other key programs that help to strengthen this sector. We request that support for these programs be maintained, and that funding be increased to reflect their effectiveness in creating new jobs, stimulating local economies, improving public health, and increasing access to healthy foods for children, seniors, and low-income citizens.

Research
The next Farm Bill should support a strong research title by preserving mandatory research programs, particularly the Specialty Crop Research Initiative, and ensuring that more research is directed to enhancing the consumption of fruits and vegetables, mixed crop and livestock agriculture, and local and sustainable farming systems. The Farm Bill should also ensure that Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) funding is available to a wide array of entities, including non-profit research organizations and schools and universities, such as the University of California and California State University. These partnerships bring agricultural and natural resource science from the laboratory into the field, and work with industry to enhance agricultural markets, address environmental concerns, protect plant heath, and enhance food safety.

Pest Detection
California is particularly vulnerable to diseases and pests due to its size and numerous points-of-entry. Strong support for all pest detection programs, including the Animal Plant and Health Inspection Service Plant Pest and Disease Program (Sec. 10201), should be maintained and funding should be increased. These types of programs maintain the highest level of detection and eradication of pests and diseases and can achieve significant cost savings through rapid response and eradication.

Nutrition
With nearly four million participants, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) provides critical support to low-income Californians. The economy grows by $1.73 for every $1.00 invested in SNAP. The 2012 Farm Bill must provide full funding for SNAP, and maintain SNAP's current structure, eligibility requirements, and benefit levels. In addition, the Farm Bill should also support the Hunger-Free Communities Program that will provide incentives for SNAP beneficiaries to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables at farmers markets. The next Farm Bill should also provide full funding for the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP), the Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP), the Community Food Projects Grant Program, SNAP education and Nutrition Research, education, and extension programs.

Conservation Programs
Conservation programs, including the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP), Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (AWEP), Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP), Farm and Ranch

Lands Protection Program (FRPP), Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP), and Grasslands Reserve Program (GRP), have been critical to helping farmers, ranchers, and landowners improve agricultural production, while enhancing air and water quality, conserving soil and water resources, and maintaining wildlife habitat and land conservation as compatible goals. Each year, 66 percent, or more than 4,000 farmers applying for conservation cost-share are turned away due to lack of funding. Therefore, we ask that any reorganization or consolidation of these programs maintain and improve the availability of resources to all stakeholders and that they be targeted to states like California that face pressing environmental challenges.

We look forward to working with you to pass a fiscally responsible Farm Bill that supports specialty crops, organic, local and regional food systems, agricultural research, pest detection programs, nutrition programs and conservation. Maintaining these objectives will encourage economic growth, create jobs, benefit consumers, and ensure that California's agriculture industry remains a pillar of the U.S. economy.

Sincerely,

LOIS CAPPS
Member of Congress

JOHN GARAMENDI
Member of Congress

JERRY MCNERNEY
Member of Congress

JACKIE SPEIER
Member of Congress

SAM FARR
Member of Congress

JOE BACA
Member of Congress

DENNIS A. CARDOZA
Member of Congress

JIM COSTA
Member of Congress

LUCILLE ROYBAL-ALLARD
Member of Congress

LAURA RICHARDSON
Member of Congress

ZOE LOFGREN
Member of Congress

JANICE HAHN
Member of Congress

MAXINE WATERS
Member of Congress

GEORGE MILLER
Member of Congress

MIKE THOMPSON
Member of Congress

GRACE F. NAPOLITANO
Member of Congress

ANNA G. ESHOO
Member of Congress

HOWARD L. BERMAN
Member of Congress

JUDY CHU
Member of Congress

MICHAEL M. HONDA
Member of Congress

SUSAN A. DAVIS
Member of Congress

LYNN C. WOOLSEY
Member of Congress

BOB FILNER
Member of Congress

PETE STARK
Member of Congress

ADAM B. SCHIFF
Member of Congress

DORIS O. MATSUI
Member of Congress

BARBARA LEE
Member of Congress

LINDA T. SÁNCHEZ
Member of Congress

KAREN BASS
Member of Congress

LORETTA SANCHEZ
Member of Congress

HENRY A. WAXMAN
Member of Congress

BRAD SHERMAN
Member of Congress