

TOM EMMER
6TH DISTRICT, MINNESOTA

COMMITTEES
FINANCIAL SERVICES
SUBCOMMITTEES
INVESTOR PROTECTION,
ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND
CAPITAL MARKETS

NATIONAL SECURITY, INTERNATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT AND MONETARY POLICY

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-2306

May 28, 2020

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HOUSE REPUBLICAN STEERING

REPUBLICAN WHIP TEAM

DEPUTY WHIP TEAM

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Chairman
Senate Committee on Appropriations
S-128 The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Appropriations
H-128 The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Chairman
House Committee on Appropriations
H-307 The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kay Granger
Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations
1036 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Shelby, Ranking Member Leahy, Chairwoman Lowey, and Ranking Member Granger:

Thank you for your leadership in providing \$10 million in appropriations for the Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network (FRSAN) in the Fiscal Year 2020 (FY20) appropriations package. With negotiations for the FY21 appropriations legislation taking into account measures to combat the COVID-19 pandemic, I write to ask that you provide full funding (\$10 million) for FRSAN given the added stress in farm country as a result of the virus.

Farming is a high-stress occupation for a variety of reasons, and there is always a degree of financial risk uniquely inherent to the industry. Just as producers began to see improved economic conditions for the first time in more than five years, the pandemic spread throughout the country and devastated the economy. Many farmers already faced challenging circumstances. Flooding throughout the planting and growing season as well as early frost during harvest provided a variety of challenges to recovering from the recent depression in the farm economy. Now farmers face markets effected by a global pandemic, with commodity prices dropping across the board. In addition, widespread euthanization of animals and disposal of product have taken hold as a result.

It is widely reported how the pandemic has fundamentally strained the food supply chain, but as we observe Mental Health Awareness Month, particular attention needs to be placed on the mental and emotional strain the virus has placed on our farmers. It is no secret that decreases in the financial health of the farming community likely corresponds with increased stress levels. However, the effects of the virus introduce uniquely stressful situations for farmers throughout the country. For example, market-ready hogs are being euthanized throughout the Midwest to an unprecedented degree. Dairy producers in some areas of the country are dumping their milk due

to supply chain disruption. Devastating situations like these are widespread and take a toll on the mental and emotional state of the individuals who feed and fuel us.

It is with this context that I urge you to continue your commitment to fully funding farm stress assistance efforts throughout the country. Last Congress, the 2018 Farm Bill reauthorized a provision to provide grants to extension services, state departments of agriculture, nonprofit organizations, and other entities to provide stress assistance programs to farmers, ranchers, farmworkers, and other agriculture-related occupations. Eligible programs include farm helplines and websites, training programs and workshops, outreach services, and home delivery of assistance. The National Institute of Food and Agriculture announced awards for the \$2 million provided in FY19 for a pilot of the program and have issued a request for applications for the \$10 million provided with your leadership in FY20.

This year, I led a bipartisan group of 45 members to request that you provide the full authorization amount for the Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network in FY21. This funding will be critically important in meeting the needs of farmers and ranchers as they endure increasing financial and mental stress. As we raise awareness for Mental Health Awareness Month and work to combat the COVID-19 pandemic, I again urge you recognize the challenges of our agriculture community and continue to fully fund this important effort.

Sincerely,



Tom Emmer
Member of Congress