

Congress of the United States

Washington, D.C. 20515

April 28, 2021

The Honorable Sanford Bishop
Chairman
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural
Development, Food and Drug
Administration, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
2362-A Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Jeff Fortenberry
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural
Development, Food and Drug
Administration, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
1036 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Bishop and Ranking Member Fortenberry:

Thank you for your leadership in providing \$28 million to support farm stress programs in the fiscal year 2021 appropriations package. We urge you to continue this important work by fully funding the Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network (FRSAN) for fiscal year 2022.

Farming is a high-stress occupation. Financial risk, volatile markets, unpredictable weather, and heavy workloads can all place a significant strain on farmers', ranchers', and farmworkers' mental and emotional wellbeing. A recent study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention indicates that farmers have a much higher rate of suicide than the general population. This is exacerbated by the fact that 60 percent of rural residents live in areas that suffer from a shortage of mental health professionals.

The COVID-19 pandemic not only triggered a new type of crisis for the farming sector, it also came at a tough time for U.S. farmers. For the past few years, global commodity production has outpaced demand in most years and prices have been falling. Due to the prolonged downturn in the farm economy, many farmers are coping with even greater stress. While current projections indicate a slight improvement in 2021, farmers are facing years of low farm incomes and increasing debt levels, straining balance sheets and adding to the stress farmers face every day.

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.

As the Subcommittee develops the FY 2022 appropriations bill, we urge you to continue to provide robust funding for FRSAN in 2022. This funding will be critically important in meeting the needs of farmers and ranchers as they endure increasing financial and mental stress

Sincerely,

Tom Emmer
Member of Congress

/s/

Vicente Gonzalez
Member of Congress

/s/

Juan Vargas
Member of Congress

/s/

Elise Stefanik
Member of Congress

/s/

Jimmy Panetta
Member of Congress

/s/

Tom O'Halleran
Member of Congress

/s/

Pete Stauber
Member of Congress

/s/

John Katko
Member of Congress

/s/

Mike Gallagher
Member of Congress

/s/

Michelle Fischbach
Member of Congress

/s/

Chris Jacobs
Member of Congress

/s/

Ann McLane Kuster
Member of Congress

/s/

Dusty Johnson
Member of Congress

/s/

Steve Stivers
Member of Congress

Antonio Delgado
Member of Congress

/s/

Rodney Davis
Member of Congress

/s/

Ron Kind
Member of Congress

/s/

Jim Costa
Member of Congress

/s/

Angie Craig
Member of Congress

/s/

Stacey E. Plaskett
Member of Congress

/s/

Vicky Hartzler
Member of Congress

/s/

Peter Welch
Member of Congress

/s/

John Joyce
Member of Congress

/s/

Elissa Slotkin
Member of Congress

/s/

James P. McGovern
Member of Congress

/s/

David Scott
Member of Congress

/s/

Rick Larsen
Member of Congress

/s/

Cindy Axne
Member of Congress

/s/

A. Donald McEachin
Member of Congress