

May 24, 2017

The Honorable John Cornyn
Majority Whip
United States Senate
517 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

RE: President's FY2018 Agriculture Budget

Dear Senator Cornyn:

Thank you for your leadership and friendship on behalf of Texas farmers and ranchers.

We write to express grave concern and strong opposition to the President's FY2018 agriculture budget.

Farmers and ranchers are the backbone of this country and they work hard every day to meet the most basic needs of all Americans and billions around the world. Yet, despite the vital role they play, farmers and ranchers understand having to do more with less because they operate on very thin margins and are always working to achieve greater efficiencies and to build reserves in order to weather the next natural disaster or collapse in the market.

Farmers and ranchers have approached U.S. farm policy in much the same manner. Over and over again, U.S. agriculture has been asked to tighten its belt to help reduce our nation's deficit and debt and time and again U.S. agriculture has done far more than its fair share.

In FY 2016 alone, agriculture contributed more than 30 percent of the total savings achieved through sequestration despite its comprising only a quarter of one percent of the total federal budget.

And, while the 2014 Farm Bill was expected to save \$23 billion over 10 years, the most recent Congressional Budget Office projections show that the legislation is on target to save \$104 billion — more than four times what was originally anticipated — even while farmers and ranchers reel under the hardships of a 50 percent drop in net farm income.

In view of this, we are hard-pressed to understand why the President's budget would now seek a staggering \$52 billion in additional cuts to agriculture and the farm safety net. These jaw-dropping cuts would doom any chance of delivering on the President's promise of a strong new Farm Bill passed on time.

Beyond the direct hit on farm and ranch families, this budget proposal would gut trade promotion, research, and diplomatic food aide, and it would impose a new suite of user fees — essentially new taxes — on American agriculture.

As you know, America's farmers and ranchers absolutely depend on federal crop insurance to help secure credit and weather whatever Mother Nature unleashes. Moreover, the Farm Bill's safety net is equally essential in mitigating the impacts of the predatory trade practices of foreign countries around the world that employ high and rising foreign subsidies, tariffs, and non-tariff trade barriers to the severe detriment of American producers.

Crippling U.S. farm policy, which is already struggling in cases to meet the need of America's producers, is, quite frankly, reckless. We strongly urge you to reject the President's proposed FY2018 agriculture budget and to ensure that the budget adopted by Congress enables the Agriculture Committees to meet the President's pledge of a strong new Farm Bill passed on time.

Sincerely,

Plains Cotton Growers, Inc.
Corn Producers Association of Texas
Texas Soybean Association
Texas Agricultural Cooperative Council
Texas Grain Sorghum Producers Association
Texas Wheat Producers Association
Texas Cotton Producers, Inc.
Texas Grain & Feed Association
Texas Rice Producers Legislative Group
Western Peanut Growers Association
Panhandle Peanut Growers Association
Texas Sheep and Goat Raisers Association
Texas Poultry Federation