

March 9, 2020

The Honorable Sanford Bishop  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Agriculture  
House Committee on Appropriations  
2632-A Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jeff Fortenberry  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Agriculture  
House Committee on Appropriations  
1514 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Hoeven  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Agriculture  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
338 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jeff Merkley  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Agriculture  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
313 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairmen Bishop and Hoeven and Ranking Members Fortenberry and Merkley,

We, the undersigned agriculture, rural, and mental health professional organizations representing millions of members across the country, thank you for your leadership in providing \$10 million for the Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network (FRSAN) in the FY 2020 appropriations package. We urge you to continue this important work by fully funding FRSAN for FY 2021.

After inclusion of the FRSAN pilot program in FY 2019, agriculture and rural organizations utilized the funding to create four regional centers that are working to map rural stress needs, identify new partners, and scale training and services needed. The request for applications for the \$10 million provided in FY 2020 opens on March 31<sup>st</sup>, and we anticipate a wide range of interest to help scale this program and achieve full implementation.

While optimism is increasing regarding the farm economy, financial risk, volatile markets, and unpredictable weather continue to strain farmers', ranchers', and farmworkers' mental and emotional well-being. While 48% of rural residents reported experiencing more mental health challenges compared with one year ago, only 31% had sought assistance. Farmers, farmworkers and rural residents in general ranked cost, embarrassment and stigma as main barriers to seeking help. This is exacerbated by the fact that 60% of rural residents live in areas with mental health professional shortages.

The 2018 Farm Bill reauthorized the FRSAN, which provides grants for extension services, state departments of agriculture, nonprofit organizations and other entities to provide stress assistance programs to 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 2021 agriculture appropriations bill, we urge you to fully fund the FRSAN at \$10 million. This funding will be critically important in meeting the needs of farmers and ranchers as they endure increasing financial and mental stress.

Sincerely,

Agricultural Retailers Association  
AgriSafe  
American Agri-Women  
American Farm Bureau Federation  
American Psychological Association  
American Seed Trade Association  
American Soybean Association  
Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities  
Farm Aid  
Farmer Veteran Coalition  
National Association of Counties  
National Association of State Departments of Agriculture  
National Association of Wheat Growers  
National Center for Appropriate Technology  
National Corn Growers Association  
National Cotton Council  
National Council of Farmer Cooperatives  
National Family Farm Coalition  
National Farmers Union  
National Grange  
National Latino Farmers & Ranchers Trade Association  
National Milk Producers Federation  
National Pork Producers Council  
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition  
National Young Farmers Coalition  
Organic Trade Association  
Rural & Agriculture Council of America  
Rural Advancement Foundation International - USA  
Rural Coalition  
Sustainable Food Policy Alliance  
United States Cattlemen's Association  
USA Rice

