

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-1402

November 30, 2017

The Honorable K. Michael Conaway
Chairman
House Committee on Agriculture
1301 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Conaway,

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to let you know the priorities for Indiana's 2nd District as you begin your work on the 2018 Farm Bill. It was an honor to serve with you on the Agriculture Committee in the 114th Congress, and your effort to reach out to Members is yet another demonstration of your commitment to a fair, open, and thorough process.

The 2nd District has a very diverse agricultural makeup that includes corn, soybeans, beef, dairy, poultry, eggs, tomatoes, lumber, spearmint, and much more. The following priorities, listed in no particular order, are based on feedback I received from farmers in my district on the vast array of issues they face and their priorities for the 2018 Farm Bill.

1. **Protect Crop Insurance:** This crucial backstop for farmers and ranchers should not suffer any further cuts.
2. **Reduce and Eliminate Regulatory Hurdles:** Agencies should rely on the best available science in their decisions and be more intentional about consulting with farmers and ranchers on the impact of proposed and existing rules. The runaway regulatory regime of the Obama administration put great burdens on farmers and ranchers – unnecessary and duplicative rules should be eliminated to the greatest extent possible.
3. **Promote U.S. Agriculture Exports:** The U.S. trade surplus in agriculture is due in part to programs like the Market Access Program (MAP) and Foreign Market Development (FMD) program, which help farmers and ranchers access new foreign markets. Exports are as important as ever at a time of low commodity prices and falling farm incomes.
4. **Support Voluntary Conservation Efforts:** My home state of Indiana is a national leader in voluntary conservation programs, and any additional funding flexibility will allow the Hoosier state to continue to innovate and lead with tailored solutions to local issues.
5. **Prepare for Disease Outbreaks:** The 2014-2015 outbreak of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) ravaged the poultry and egg industries and served as a reminder of the devastating consequences a disease outbreak, but HPAI isn't the only threat – a foot and mouth disease (FMD) outbreak could be similarly devastating. We must continue to invest in and improve research, preparedness, mitigation, detection, and response to HPAI, FMD, and other diseases.

6. **Fix the Margin Protection Program (MPP) and ARC-PLC:** Farmers in my district have voiced strong concerns that the Margin Protection Program (MPP), Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) program, and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) program are not working as intended. While the reasons for the failures and solutions vary, a strong and reliable safety net is needed, and these programs must be more effective.
7. **Ensure a Strong Research Title:** USDA research is vital to growing crops more efficiently and effectively, protecting animals and crops against diseases, improving environmental stewardship, discovering new production practices, and studying the way Americans consume our agricultural products.
8. **Invest in Rural Broadband:** Our lives are becoming increasingly digital, and farm operations are no different. Unfortunately, internet speeds in rural America greatly lag behind urban and suburban areas. Further investment in rural broadband initiatives can help bridge this gap.

Finally, I want to make a special note on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). As you know well, we worked together very closely to comprehensively examine this program in the 114th Congress when I chaired the Nutrition Subcommittee. Dozens of hearings have shown that SNAP is a crucial part of the safety net, that the program works, and that there are improvements that can be made. First and foremost, the Nutrition Title must remain a part of the Farm Bill so that we can make these improvements based on the thorough hearing process. When it comes to SNAP, I also hope that the Farm Bill will:

1. Allow more innovation and local solutions with strong and impartial follow-up studies;
2. Facilitate sharing of best practices among states;
3. Tighten program integrity to increase confidence in state error rate measurements;
4. Help recipients bridge out of the safety net and into a job; and
5. Encourage recipient access to healthy food using incentives rather than harsh limitations.

Thank you again, Mr. Chairman, for your leadership and for giving me the opportunity to share what the hardworking Hoosier farmers in my district view as priorities in the 2018 Farm Bill. Should additional issues arise, I will make sure to reach out to you to make you aware. In the meantime, I wish you the best of luck as this process begins.

Sincerely,


JACKIE WALORSKI
Member of Congress