

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 5, 2007

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DIVERSE GROUPS COME TOGETHER TO KICK OFF SENATE FARM BILL FLOOR DEBATE WITH URGENT CALL FOR REAL REFORM

Washington, DC— On the eve of the 2007 Farm Bill floor debate by the U.S. Senate, fiscal conservatives, environmentalists, faith groups, health professionals, international development experts, social justice advocates, and others held a joint news conference, urging the Senate to fix broken commodity program policies by adopting floor amendments that would lead to real reform.

Among the needed reforms highlighted by speakers were amendments that would: replace trade-distorting, price-based commodity payments with a revenue-insurance-based farmer safety net that covers all farms and phases out direct payments; close commodity payment limitation loopholes and set lower commodity payment limits; reduce the amount of adjusted gross income allowed to be eligible for payments; and reduce commodity program direct payments and redirect the savings to federal nutrition programs, deficit reduction, and other more-important funding priorities.

Participating groups included, in alphabetical order: Bread for the World; Council for Citizens Against Government Waste; Environmental Defense; Environmental Working Group; Grocery Manufacturers Association/Food Products Association, Initiative for Global Development; National Taxpayers Union; Natural Resources Defense Council; Oxfam America; Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine; Progressive National Baptist Convention; and Taxpayers for Common Sense.

"It takes courage in Washington today to dare to speak of farm reform, but it really shouldn't given the sorry state of our farm programs and public support for change. This is the moment for Senators to deliver the deep reform that is called for, reform that will better help family farmers, improve conservation, aid rural America, and ultimately do away with the destructive policies that stop farmers in developing countries from sustaining themselves and their families." *Jim Lyons, vice president, Oxfam America*

"Under current farm policy, 7 states collect over half of all farm spending," said Sara Hopper, an attorney for Environmental Defense. "By reforming subsidy programs and increasing funding for conservation programs, senators can ensure farm spending is distributed more equitably among states while also helping many more farmers who offer to help the environment." *Sara Hopper, attorney, Environmental Defense*

"The FRESH Amendment is the most forward-thinking farm bill proposal to date, and the only one that approaches equity. It will make our nation's farm policy work for farmers and help people who struggle to feed their families." *David Beckmann, president, Bread for the World*

"It simply comes down to a question of needs and priorities. With the farm economy firing on all cylinders from production, to prices, to income, should the government continue funneling billions in taxpayer dollars to large farms and wealthy absentee landlords? Surely we can find meaningful areas to

divert funds to like conservation, nutrition, and taxpayer relief while maintaining a real safety net for our hard working family farmers.” *Ken Cook, president, Environmental Working Group*

“Over the last 10 years, there has been an obscene amount of money spent on farm subsidy programs that overwhelmingly benefit the wealthiest farmers. Now, when farm income and net worth are at record highs and commodity prices are soaring, there could not be a better time for real reform that finally gives taxpayers the break they deserve.” *Tom Schatz, president, Council for Citizens Against Government Waste*

“Seldom do legislative issues become as clear cut a choice as greed vs. need, the privileged few vs. the modest majority; but real reform of the Farm bill is just such an issue. The Progressive National Baptist Convention urges the Senate to take the bold moral steps to insure that the Farm Bill of 2007 is a reflection of true American values of fairness, hope and opportunity for all.” *Dr. Earl D. Trent Jr., Progressive National Baptist Congress*

“There has never been a better time to craft a farm safety net that is as modern and entrepreneurial as our farmers. Strong foreign and domestic demand for basic commodities has driven farm income and land values to record levels. America’s farmers have not only joined the middle class, they have joined the investor class. Now is the time for the Senate to enact a modern farm safety net that helps farmers weather the ups and down of agriculture without violating our trade commitments or raising our taxes.” *Scott Faber, vice president, Grocery Manufacturers Assoc./Food Products Assoc.*

America's taxpayers are tired of seeing their hard-earned cash harvested to pay for backward farm policies. Our 362,000 members expect the Senate to weed out wasteful subsidies and direct the savings toward reducing the national debt.” *Kristina Rasmussen, director of government affairs, National Taxpayers Union*

"For the first time, more people die from diet-related disease than from tobacco. Because of diets high in fat and cholesterol, the next generation will live fewer years than their parents. An inequitable Farm Bill has helped to surround people with unhealthy food choices. Federal food production policy is crippling our healthcare system, our economy, and our livelihoods. The FRESH Amendment is an opportunity for the government to change America's food environment." *Neal Barnard, president, Physicians Committee for Social Responsible Medicine*

With increasing threats to clean air and water, we can't afford to be turning away the majority of our farmers who seek conservation assistance. The Senate can find more conservation program funding and adopt the program reforms needed to make every dollar yield more environmental benefits.” *Jonathan Kaplan, sustainable agriculture project director, NRDC*

“When the full Senate deliberates over the farm bill it is critical that they take a global perspective – one that acknowledges that our future prosperity and the prosperity of others are inextricably linked. Reforming our subsidy system so that U.S. farmers are protected when they need help, but don't get annual payments from the U.S. government when they don't, will improve the prospects for a global trade round and for farmers in the developing world who are struggling to make ends meet in the face of U.S. farm supports.” *Jennifer Potter, president and CEO, Initiative for Global Development*

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