



September 12, 2018

The Honorable Pat Roberts
Chairman
Senate Committee Agriculture,
Nutrition, & Forestry
328A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Agriculture,
Nutrition, & Forestry
328A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

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

The Honorable Collin C. Peterson
Ranking Member
House Committee on Agriculture
1305 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Roberts, Chairman Conaway, Ranking Member Stabenow, and Ranking Member Peterson:

Thank you for your leadership in advancing a new farm bill that supports all sectors of agriculture, including the growing organic industry. Both the House and Senate farm bills include strong provisions that will increase oversight of the global organic supply chain to preserve the integrity of the USDA Organic seal, fully fund organic market and data collection, and increase funding for organic research. As you work out the differences between the two bills in conference negotiations, we ask that you include baseline funding of \$50 million per year for the Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative (OREI) in the final farm bill.

The U.S. organic industry has expanded significantly over the past decade and is one of the fastest-growing segments in food and agriculture, with a growth rate of 6.4% in 2017. The U.S. remains the largest market in the world for organic products, and is now home to over 26,000 certified operations across all 50 states. The increased premiums and profitability organic agriculture offers has improved the livelihoods of U.S. farmers and businesses alike and created more options for consumers.

Federal funding and investment in organic agriculture research and extension remain among the top challenges for the organic industry today. All of U.S. agriculture faces similar large-scale challenges and goals. Today's farmers are tasked with managing agronomic challenges--soil health, weed, pest and pathogen management--and agro-economic challenges--yield constraints, crop failure and supply chain shortages. Furthermore, they are expected to do so in a manner that reduces resource consumption and preserves productivity.

Organic producers must utilize whole-system approaches in the management of their farms, and rely on complex biological processes to build soil health and combat pests. The agronomic tools in the organic farmer's toolbox are extremely limited.

In recognition of this, Congress established the OREI program in the 2002 Farm Bill to help organic farmers meet the unique challenges they face. A lack of organic compliant solutions for some of the most common on-farm challenges is one of the primary barriers preventing farmers from transitioning to organic production and from ensuring that existing organic farmers continue to be viable.

The last significant increase in funding for OREI occurred in the 2008 Farm Bill. At the time, the organic market had grown from \$8.6 billion in 2002 to \$23.2 billion in 2008. Since 2008, federal organic research funding has essentially remained flat while the industry has reached sales of nearly \$50 billion. We have collectively invested millions of dollars to fund research that benefits organic, but it is not enough to meet the significant and growing needs of our industry, and does not come even close to closing the gap that the lack of federal funding has created.

Allocating permanent, mandatory baseline funding for OREI in the 2018 farm bill will ensure that the program has long-term stability. In 2014, when the Farm Bill expired and entered into an extension, organic programs without mandatory baseline funding, such as OREI, lost a full year of funding. Should another lapse in funding occur for organic research, it will be extremely disruptive.

We appreciate that Congress has recognized the need for OREI to assist U.S. farmers and create a stable, reliable domestic supply of organic for U.S. companies to meet the growing market demand. We look forward to working with you as you finalize a farm bill that recognizes the strong growth and opportunities organic agriculture presents by making a permanent and long-term investment in organic research.

Sincerely,

67 Organics
Albert Lea Seed
Amy's Kitchen
Annie's
Applegate
Aurora Organic Dairy
Baugher Ranch Organics
Bhakti, Inc.
Cal-Organic
Campbell Soup Company
Cascadian Farm
CCOF (California Certified Organic Farmers)
Clarkson Grain Co., Inc.
Clarkson Soy Products LLC
Clif Bar & Company
Coconut Bliss
Cold Springs Organics
Danone North America
Dean Foods Company
Direct Advantage LLC
Dole Fresh Fruit Company

Double W Farms, Inc
Earthbound Farm
Eastern Carolina Organics, LLC
Ecocert ICO
Equal Exchange Inc.
Excel Trade LLC
Fig Food Company, LLC
Florida Certified Organic Growers & Consumers, Inc. (FOG)
Garnetts Red Prairie Farm
Good Earth Natural Foods
Grimmway Enterprises, Inc.
Happy Family Organics
Honest Tea
I Was Thinking LLC.
Irish Organic Fertilizer
Jacobs Farm / Del Cabo, Inc.
James Wedel Farms
Jeffco Fibres Inc
JW Organics
Kamut International
Kashi Company
Koochikoo
LaRocca Vineyards
Lehigh Valley Organic Growers
Lundberg Family Farms
Maine Coast Sea Vegetables
Maple Hill Creamery
Marrone Bio Innovations, Inc.
MegaFood
Mercaris
MOM's Organic Market
Monadubh
Montana Organic Producers Coop
Mossy Falls Farm
Muir Glen
National Co+op Grocers
Natracare LLC
Nestlé USA
NP Nutra
Oregon Tilth
Organic Insights, Inc.
Organic Valley | CROPP Cooperative
Organically Grown Company
Oyster Bay Farm
Pennsylvania Certified Organic (PCO)
Pete and Gerry's Organics, LLC
Pete and Gerry's Organic Eggs
Prairie Ventures, LLC

Prairiesun Organics LLC
Pura Naturals Pet
Pure Life Organic Foods Inc
PURIS
Quality Assurance International (QAI)
Quality Certification Services (QCS)
Quinn Farm and Ranch
Raile Farms
Riega Foods, LLC
Rovey Seed Company, Inc.
Salba Corp
Source Organic
South Tex Organics, LLC
Stonyfield Organic
Texas Organic Cotton Marketing Coop
The J.M. Smucker Company
Timeless Seeds, Inc.
Traditional Medicinals, Inc.
True Organic Products, Inc.
Uncle Matt's Organic
VanMol Organics, LLC
Veritable Vegetable
Vidya Herbs Inc.
Vilicus Farms
Vital Farms, Inc.
Wholesum Berries
Wholesum Family Farms Inc.
Wholesum Harvest