

The Honorable George Miller
2205 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

June 30, 2010

Dear Chairman Miller,

We support your desire to provide \$8 billion in additional funding for school meal programs. We are writing to urge you to work with leadership and the Ways and Means Committee to find offsets for this funding increase that are outside of the Farm Bill.

We oppose the Senate Agriculture Committee's decision to cut the Environmental Quality Incentives Program by \$2.8 billion over 10 years in order to provide a smaller increase in funding for these important programs. In order to ensure broad support for a robust child nutrition reauthorization bill going forward, it is critical for Members of Congress to offset the bill's cost in a way that does not cripple programs that support farmers and forest landowners in their efforts to provide conservation benefits in addition to food, forest products, and fiber.

The levels of funding set in the 2008 Farm Bill represent a carefully negotiated compromise. Cuts to the conservation programs would undermine this agreement. The conservation funding cuts included in the Senate bill also would knock nearly \$3 billion from the Farm Bill baseline, setting up an even more difficult negotiation process for the 2012 Farm Bill and restricting the availability of conservation assistance to farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners now and into the future.

Applied conservation on the nation's farms, ranches, and private forestlands provides clean water, healthy, productive soils, wildlife habitat, and other important public benefits that should not be lost. Farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners are eager to share the cost of supplying these public benefits, but currently demand for conservation assistance far outstrips available funding. Cuts to the conservation programs would exacerbate that problem, and will undermine conservation practice adoption on-the-ground.

We urge you to work with leadership and with Ways and Means to craft a package of offsets that will provide the funding needed for a robust child nutrition reauthorization bill without undermining over the long term programs that provide the nation's farmers, ranchers and private forest landowners with the support they need to be effective partners in addressing local, state, and national conservation priorities now and in years to come. We would like to work with you and the committee to find an equitable solution to this pressing problem and help provide added resources to school feeding programs.

Sincerely,
American Farmland Trust
Defenders of Wildlife

Environmental Defense Fund
Environmental Working Group
Izaak Walton League of America
Land Trust Alliance
National Association of Conservation Districts
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition
National Wildlife Federation
Natural Resources Defense Council
Pollinator Partnership
Partners for Sustainable Pollination
Quail Unlimited
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership
Trout Unlimited
Union of Concerned Scientists
World Wildlife Fund

cc:

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
The Honorable Steny Hoyer
The Honorable James Clyburn
The Honorable Sander Levin
The Honorable Collin Peterson
The Honorable John Boehner
The Honorable Eric Cantor
The Honorable John Kline
The Honorable Dave Camp
The Honorable Frank Lucas