May 7, 2014

The Honorable Tom Vilsack  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Jamie L. Whitten Federal Building  
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

As you are aware, the 2014 Farm Bill provides $3 million in mandatory funding to support the development of web-based decision aids. These tools will be critical for producers in our organizations to make well-informed decisions given the complexity of choices in the commodity and crop insurance titles of the farm bill.

As you prepare to award funding for the development of websites and other tools which will assist producers in making various one-time decisions, we believe it is important that academic institutions representing different regional views on farm programs participate in this work. As a result, we urge you to select a lead institution possessing substantial experience with revenue-based risk management tools and representing a broad-based, national consortium of land-grant universities. In order to be effective, these web-based decision tools will need to come from institutions that have both the confidence of producers and a strong familiarity with the cropping practices and farm economics of the Midwest and northern Great Plains, which have the majority of acres subject to program decisions.

This is particularly important in view of the fact that producer options in the 2014 Farm Bill include two versions of the Agricultural Risk Coverage (ARC) program with varying degrees of complexity, which will require in-depth analysis and tailoring to specific regional differences. In contrast, the Price Loss Coverage (PLC) program is quite similar to the former Counter-Cyclical program, with which producers are already very familiar. Since PLC becomes the default program in the event producers do not sign up, the web-based decision tools need to present a detailed analysis of county and individual level ARC in a clear and balanced manner.

We recognize and agree that land grant universities in all regions of the country need to be represented in the development of web-based decision tools. If the various program choices are properly presented, we are confident that the final product will be supported by all concerned.

Sincerely yours,

American Farm Bureau Federation  
American Soybean Association  
National Association of Wheat Growers  
National Barley Growers Association  
National Corn Growers Association  
National Sunflower Association  
U.S. Canola Association