

**Statement Released at Farmer Forum
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Farm Aid '99 - Nissan Pavilion
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**FREEDOM TO FARM IS KILLING US
Remedies to FIX our Food System
(for farmers and everyone who eats!)**

Grain and livestock producers are being driven off the land because our nation's agriculture policy is serving big agribusiness interests at the expense of family farmers, taxpayers, and the environment.

The "Freedom to Farm Act" has **failed**. Congress must act now to replace it with short-term emergency measures, as well as long-term provisions that will restore economic stability to the nation's food producers and main street businesses.

Family farmers are suffering from both acts of God and acts of Congress. The recent drought has destroyed crops for thousands of farmers and requires an immediate response. But the long-term crisis in agriculture will continue until the government addresses the **fundamental problem of market prices set below farmers' cost of production.**

FARM POLICY REFORM

****Congress must replace Freedom to Farm with new legislation that will:**

- *Increase market prices to producers by setting a floor price or loan rate at farmers' cost of production for all food and fiber products.
- *Develop a mechanism that balances supply with demand resulting in a stable food system.
- *Extend commodity loans from nine to eighteen months.
- *Re-establish a farmer-owned grain reserve with storage payments at the commercial rate.

**** Retail labeling on meat and other foods imported into the U.S.,** to give consumers the right to know and choose the country of origin of their food.

**** Mandatory price reporting of livestock and grain sales**

****Establish the right of existing contract growers to negotiate for fair contracts through passage of the Family Farmer Cooperative Marketing Amendments to the 1967 Agricultural Fair Practices Act.**

HOLDING OUR GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABLE

****The Department of Justice and USDA must vigorously enforce anti-trust laws to reverse the concentration of ownership in meat packing and production, seed production and distribution, grain handling, food processing and retailing.**

**** USDA must immediately publish a national organic standard in response to 275,000 public comments received nearly two years ago.**

** USDA must implement the recommendations of their Civil Rights Action Team and the National Commission on Small Farms to reverse past discriminatory practices and to stem the loss of family farmers.

** USDA must immediately schedule the farmer referendum vote on the pork and beef checkoff programs

**Require inspection and certification of imported agricultural products to ensure that products meet standards at least equivalent to US standards for food safety, environmental, and worker protection.

IMMEDIATE LEGISLATIVE REMEDIES:

**Emergency payments to help recover some of the economic losses incurred due to rockbottom commodity and livestock prices and natural disasters. These payments must be quickly and equitably distributed to all who have suffered losses, not based on the arbitrary formula for "Freedom to Farm" payments.

** Implementation of the Conservation Farm Option (CFO) and increase short-term acreage enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) or similar programs are necessary.

**Enact legislation authorizing regional dairy compacts to be established.

***Declare a moratorium on farm foreclosures and administrative offsets* due to current backlog of FSA servicing of delinquent borrowers. Ensure continued use by USDA of 1951-T deferral authority for natural and economic disasters.

**Enact legislation, before expiration date on October 1, 1999 to make Chapter 12 bankruptcy protection permanent law.

**The current law that denies access to FSA loans to those farmers who have received a debt write-down since April 4, 1996 and the arbitrary "graduation" from FSA loans to commercial credit must be repealed. While additional credit is not the solution, all family farmers should be eligible for low-interest FSA emergency loans and FSA direct loans for all programs due to the natural disasters and record low farm commodity and livestock prices.

World Trade Organization negotiations, November 1999 in Seattle, WA must:

* * Protect the right of all countries to adopt policies to (a) protect domestic food security by allowing the establishment of a domestic and international grain reserve and (b) ban imports that do not meet a country's production and processing standards.

"Allow fair access for all farmers in all countries to open and competitive markets through negotiated multi-lateral export shares, and other inventory management methods to minimize price depressing supplies.

** Promote enactment and enforcement of anti-trust laws to reverse the concentration of ownership and control of the world's food system.

**Enable all countries to control genetic experimentation, patenting, and the sale of genetically engineered seeds and foods within their borders.

The undersigned organizations endorse this statement in support of family farmers and the remedies outlined to fix our food system:

National Organizations:

American Corn Growers Association
American Raw Milk Producers Pricing Association
Cattlemen's Legal Fund
Churches' Center for Land and People
Community Food Security Coalition
Genetic ID
Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy
Mothers & Others for a Livable Planet
National Campaign for Sustainable Agriculture
National Catholic Rural Life Conference
National Contract Poultry Growers Association
National Family Farm Coalition
National Farmers Organization
National Farmers Union
Organic Farming Research Foundation
Organization for Competitive Markets
Rural Advancement Foundation International-USA
United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society

Regional and State Organizations

AFGE (American Federation of Governmental Employees) Local 3354
Citizens Action Coalition of Indiana
Commodity Growers Cooperative (KY)
Community Harvest (DC)
Concerned Citizens of Central Ohio (CCCCO)
Dakota Resource Council
Dakota Rural Action
Delmarva Poultry Justice Alliance
Empire State Family Farm Alliance
Family Farm Defenders
The Farm Connection
Federation of Southern Cooperatives
Idaho Rural Council
Illinois Stewardship Alliance
Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement
Just Food, Inc.
Kansas Ecumenical Ministries/Rural Concerns Committee
Kentucky Minority Farmers Association
Land Loss Prevention Project
Land Stewardship Project
Missouri Rural Crisis Center
New Mexico Farmers Marketing Association
Northern Plains Resource Council (MT)
Minnesota JOBS NOW Coalition
New York Sustainable Agriculture Working Group

North Carolina Contract Poultry Growers Association (NC-CPGA)
Ohio Environmental Council
Ohio Family Farm Coalition
Palouse-Clearwater Environmental Institute
Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture (PASA)
Progressive Agriculture Organization (PA)
Rural Vermont
Sustainable Cotton Project (CA)
West Virginia Chapter of the National Contract Poultry Growers Association
Western Organization of Resource Councils
Wisconsin Farmland Conservancy
Women, Food and Agriculture Network