

Organizational Sign-on Letter for Support of Core Energy Title Programs

March 29, 2012

Dear Representative Walz:

We urge you to champion the energy programs in the 2012 Farm Bill. At this time of increasing energy costs, we need more, not less investment in our farms, forests and rural communities to help them reduce energy waste and produce more renewable energy here in Minnesota. As the 2012 Farm Bill negotiations get underway, we urge you to protect and extend these critical programs for helping meet our national energy challenge.

Minnesota farmers and agriculture-based renewable energy producers have contributed to Minnesota's economy and created jobs. They've also led the way in increasing energy efficiency. The best opportunity we have to expand biofuels to include cellulosic crops needed for the Renewable Fuel Standard is in the Biomass Crop Assistance Program (BCAP) and the Biorefinery Assistance Program. Other core Farm Bill energy programs, such as the Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) and the Biobased Markets Program (BioPreferred), are key to continued progress for wind, biogas and other farm-based renewable energy technologies, yet all these programs are under threat of elimination in the next Farm Bill, if not renewed or if renewed without mandatory funding.

REAP, which provides support for energy efficiency and diverse renewable energy development on farms and rural small businesses is one of the most sought after Farm Bill programs. BCAP provides direct support to landowners willing to grow the new biomass crops needed to feed the emerging cellulosic biofuel, bioenergy and biomaterials sectors. The Biorefinery Assistance Program is helping rural biofuel plants increase their production and energy efficiency. And the BioPreferred Program provides market access and purchasing support for the new, renewable products being produced from agricultural and forest materials. Together, these programs provide critical support for emerging industries we need to sustain Minnesota's rural economies into the future.

Minnesota farmers and businesses made investments in clean energy and bio-based products with the expectation that Congress would share our long-term commitment to farm energy development. Right now that support is at risk. Extending these programs will demonstrate our country's commitment to a clean energy future, with a strong role by our farmers and ranchers and will help ensure continued investments by Minnesota private enterprises in clean energy and efficiency projects, investments that create economic growth. The benefits of Energy Title initiatives far outweigh the relatively modest cost of these programs, which account for a mere 0.7 percent of overall spending in the Farm Bill.

We urge you to be out front in the effort to protect funding for the BCAP, REAP, Biorefinery Assistance and BioPreferred programs. We thank you for your leadership on these important agricultural energy issues.

Sincerely,

American Ag Energy of MN, LLC
BioBusiness Alliance of Minnesota
Bushmills Ethanol Inc.
CHS, Inc.
European Energy Connections
Friends of the Mississippi River
Koda Energy, LLC
Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy
League of Rural Voters
LifeScience Alley
Minnesota Farmers Union
The Minnesota Project
POET
Rural Advantage

Alexandria, MN
St. Louis Park, MN
Atwater, MN
Inver Grove Heights, MN
Bird Island, MN
St. Paul, MN
Shakopee, MN
Minneapolis, MN
Minneapolis, MN
St. Louis Park, MN
St. Paul, MN
St. Paul, MN
Albert Lea, MN/Sioux Falls, SD
Fairmont, MN