



United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

3211 FOURTH STREET NE • WASHINGTON DC 20017-1194 • 202-541-3000

WEBSITE: WWW.USCCB.ORG/JPHD • FAX 202-541-3339

October 20, 2011

The Honorable Daniel K. Inouye, Chairman
Senate Appropriations Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Harold Rogers, Chairman
House Appropriations Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Thad Cochran, Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Norm Dicks, Ranking Member
House Appropriations Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Inouye, Chairman Rogers, and Ranking Members Cochran and Dicks:

On behalf of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, we wish to express our deep concern regarding potential cuts to both domestic and international food aid as well as conservation and rural development programs in the FY 2012 Agriculture Appropriations bill. A just framework for agriculture policy must protect and adequately fund programs that feed the hungry, help the most vulnerable farmers conserve and care for our environment and strengthen rural communities.

In *For I Was Hungry and You Gave Me Food: Catholic Reflections on Food, Farmers and Farmworkers*, the U.S. Catholic bishops wrote, “The primary goals of agricultural policies should be providing food for all people and reducing poverty among farmers and farm workers in this country and abroad.” Adequate nutrition is a fundamental human right. This is why we urge you to support just and adequate funding levels for agriculture policies that serve the hungry, poor and vulnerable while promoting good stewardship of our land and natural resources.

Hungry people have a special claim on our consciences and national priorities, especially during times of increasing hunger, poverty and persistent unemployment. Domestic nutrition assistance programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (**WIC**) and The Emergency Food Assistance Program (**TEFAP**), efficiently and effectively help people in need overcome food insecurity. Inadequate funding of these programs will leave our nation unable to respond to increasing demand resulting from economic conditions, high unemployment, and natural disasters.

International food aid programs are also essential to promote human life and dignity, advance solidarity with poor and hungry people and further global security. Adequate funding of **PL-480 Title II** is imperative particularly at a time of severe famine in the Horn of Africa. The on-the-ground experiences of Catholic Relief Services indicate that further cuts in Title II resources will actually result in the loss of lives.

There may be a temptation to sacrifice conservation and rural development programs during the appropriations process. However, programs such as the **Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)**, the **Value Added Producer** grants (VAPG) and, the **Rural Micro-Entrepreneur** program are examples of needed tools to help farmers promote stewardship of God’s creation and further the development, sustainability and well-being of our rural communities. Cuts to these programs will have negative effects on both the environment and the ability of small to medium sized farmers to prosper.

Given high food and commodity prices and federal budget constraints, we urge reduction and targeting of corn and cotton subsidies which largely benefit wealthy farmers and hurt subsistence farmers in

Letter to Senate and House Appropriations
Committee Chairs and Ranking Members
October 20, 2011
Page 2

developing countries. Likewise, we call for reconsideration of the economics and ethics of subsidizing food to be used to produce fuel. These steps will help redirect U.S. efforts to protect the basic right to nutritious food, especially for poor people in the United States and the developing world.

Our daily experience serving people in our parishes, schools, hospitals, shelters and soup kitchens compels us to continue to raise the moral and human dimensions of how budgets and policies touch poor and vulnerable people in need both at home and abroad. Our nation faces budgetary constraints and legitimate concerns for our long-term economic stability, but how these problems are addressed requires a clear priority for the “the least of these” in our midst. Therefore, we encourage you to craft a final FY 2012 Agriculture Appropriations bill that supports and adequately funds programs that feed the hungry, help the most vulnerable farmers, and strengthen rural communities in our critical role as stewards of God’s creation.

Pope Benedict stated in his World Food Day 2011 message that today’s scandal of hunger exhibits a “profound division between those who lack daily sustenance and those who have vast resources at their disposal.” We join Pope Benedict in raising the moral implications of increased hunger both at home and abroad.

Sincerely yours,



Most Reverend Stephen E. Blaire
Bishop of Stockton
Chairman, Committee on Domestic Justice
and Human Development



Most Reverend Howard J. Hubbard
Bishop of Albany
Chairman, Committee on International
Justice and Peace