

April 19, 2022

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin
Chair, Subcommittee on Agriculture
Senate Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable John Hoeven
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Agriculture
Senate Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Sanford Bishop
Chair, Subcommittee on Agriculture
House Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Andy Harris
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Agriculture
House Committee on Appropriations

Dear Chair Baldwin and Chairman Bishop, and Ranking Members Hoeven and Harris,

We, the undersigned agriculture, rural, and mental health professional organizations representing millions of members across the country, thank you for your leadership in providing strong funding for the Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network (FRSAN) in recent appropriations packages. **We urge you to continue this important work by fully funding FRSAN for FY 2023.**

The purpose of FRSAN is to establish and fund a service provider network that connects individuals and their families engaged in farming, ranching, and other agriculture-related occupations to stress assistance programs. Four regional centers were established with FRSAN funding and are coordinating efforts to serve the unique needs of their respective populations. These centers evaluate the needs in their regions, and then develop and implement training and services to address farm stress issues.

A strong need remains for FRSAN funding and programming. A Morning Consult poll conducted in December 2021¹ found that during that calendar year, most farmers and farm workers (61%) and rural adults (52%) reported experiencing more stress and mental health challenges compared to the prior year. The same poll also found that while stigma around seeking help or treatment for mental health has decreased, it remains a factor, especially in agriculture. Over the past year, the majority of rural adults and farmers and farm workers say there is at least some stigma around stress and mental health in their communities. Stigma can create barriers to seeking help, and programs like FRSAN are working hard to reduce stigma and increase access to assistance and services.

There are many reasons for ongoing farm stress and mental health challenges for farmers and farm workers, including volatility in the farm economy, the financial risk involved in agriculture, weather unpredictability, and a changing climate.² Moreover, 60 percent³ of rural residents live in areas with mental health professional shortages. Continued funding is essential as the FRSAN regional centers continue to develop

¹ "Farmer and Rural Perceptions of Mental Health," December 2021.
https://www.fb.org/files/Farmer_and_Rural_Mental_Health_AFBF.pdf

² Ibid.

³ Morales, Barksdale, and Beckel-Mitchener, "A call to action to address rural mental health disparities," *Journal of Clinical and Translational Science*, October 2020. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7681156/#r13>

their networks and programming to serve populations where the need is great, and resources are often limited.

As the Subcommittees develop the FY 2023 agriculture appropriations bill, we urge you to fully fund FR SAN at \$10 million. This funding will be critically important in meeting the mental health needs of farmers, ranchers, and their families.

Sincerely,

American Farm Bureau Federation
American Psychological Association
American Seed Trade Association
American Soybean Association
APLU Board on Agriculture Assembly
Farm Aid
Farm Credit Council
Farmer Veteran Coalition
National Association for Rural Mental Health
National Association of Counties
National Association of State Departments of Agriculture
National Association of Wheat Growers
National Center for Appropriate Technology
National Cooperative Business Association CLUSA
National Corn Growers Association
National Cotton Council
National Council of Farmer Cooperatives
National Family Farm Coalition
National Farmers Union
National Grange
National Milk Producers Federation
National Pork Producers Council
National Rural Health Association
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition
National Young Farmers Coalition
Organic Trade Association
Rural & Agriculture Council of America
Rural Advancement Foundation International-USA
Sustainable Food Policy Alliance
United States Cattlemen's Association
USA Rice