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February 12, 2008

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman
U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Saxby Chambliss
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Harkin and Ranking Member Chambliss,

In order to reach an agreement that produces a Farm Bill that can be signed by the President, the conference is going to have to explore new approaches to the bill. The House Agriculture Committee has developed an outline for spending that we believe can be achieved and become law.

In developing this outline, we have included programmatic changes that illustrate how the outline could be applied. It is very clear that program ideas are purely illustrative. Programmatic details will be the product of full conference consideration, as they always have been.

We respectfully suggest that this outline can move us all in the direction of adopting a common framework from which to continue the work of the conference. We have had both the House and Senate bills in our hands for three months with very little progress toward resolving differences. It is our belief that if we can begin with a common framework, the work of finalizing the bill can proceed more quickly. We welcome your thoughts or suggested changes to this approach.

We know that you share our sense of urgency and hope that you can respond expeditiously so that we can come to an agreement on a framework by this Friday. We believe that it is essential to do so if we are to resolve conference differences and move the bill to a Presidential signature prior to the expiration of the extended Farm Bill authorization on March 15.

Sincerely,

Collin C. Peterson
Chairman

Bob Goodlatte
Ranking Member