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The Honorable Mike Johanns
U.S. Secretary of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-3355

Dear Mr. Secretary,
Below are comments from the Louisiana Farm Bureau Federation we would like to present as part of the Nashville Farm Forum listening session.
Thank you.

Ronnie Anderson
President
Louisiana Farm Bureau Federation

1. How should farm policy be designed to maximize U.S. competitiveness and our country's ability to effectively compete in global markets?

U.S. farm policy should encourage and allow U.S. agriculture to realize its competitive advantage. Our programs must be able to address such issues as foreign subsidies and currency devaluations while securing our domestic food supply by providing producers and related infrastructure economic stability.

2. How should farm policy address any unintended consequences and ensure that such consequences do not discourage new farmers and the next generation of farmers from entering production agriculture?

Farm policy should have built-in flexibilities designed to address unforeseen or unintended consequences. Current policies do not discourage new farmers from entering production agriculture. The capital intensiveness, low returns, and high risk are the barriers that have discouraged more entrance into production agriculture. Our farm policy must permit new farmers to service long-term debt needed to become established into farming. Additionally, it should be noted that conservation programs should not be confused with farm policy and do not provide sufficient support to sustain agricultural production in the U.S.

3. How should farm policy be designed to effectively and fairly distribute assistance to producers?

Current farm policy has established an excellent template that has proven successful in maintaining sustainable domestic agricultural production. Additional farm policy options should be provided to a variety of enterprises not currently addressed.

4. How can farm policy best achieve conservation and environmental goals?

Through voluntary, incentive-based programs; furthermore, it does no good to develop and promote achievable, sound conservation and environmental programs, then not fund these programs, target program benefits, or even worse, cut funding of these programs to meet budgetary constraints.

5. How can Federal rural and farm programs provide effective assistance in rural areas?

These programs should provide adequate incentives designed to promote and stimulate ag production and enhance value-added processing in rural America. Other rural programs should also be utilized to assist programs that will help diversify the rural economy.

6. How should agricultural product development, marketing and research-related issues be addressed in the next farm bill?

We need to expand formula funding for research at our land grant institutions.