

# Talking Points

May 5, 2007

Congress is beginning deliberations over a new farm and rural policy bill slated for this year. You have a unique opportunity to make a difference.

You can take action by writing to House Agriculture Committee Chairman Peterson and Senate Agriculture Committee Chairman Tom Harkin. This year **Congress will decide whether to invest in proven strategies to revitalize rural America - strategies that strengthen rural communities, family farms and small businesses.**

Closing loopholes and enforcing the payment limits that already exist in farm commodity programs would allow us to invest in proven strategies to strengthen rural communities. If we don't speak out now, Congress will likely continue the failed approach of subsidizing mega farms to drive smaller operations out of business while under investing in our future.

Your letter to your representative or to the House Agriculture Chairman will influence the outcome and help shape the future of rural America. Early letters matter most because they help shape the debate before positions are hardened. **Here are some talking points you might want to include in your letter:**

**The new farm bill should invest in rural small business, entrepreneurship and micro enterprise development.** Most new jobs in rural towns are created by small businesses. Locally owned small businesses keep profits at home and control of the rural economy in the hands of people with a stake in their communities' future.

- **The new farm bill should increase grants for farmers to pursue value added agricultural markets,** with a focus on small, moderate size and beginning farmers. The best family farm opportunities are in value added agriculture - new high value markets for special products such as organic crops and natural livestock.
- Describe your community -the struggles it has faced or the successes it has achieved. **Tell how new support for small business and rural development can strengthen your community.** This makes your letter unique and demonstrates you are a truly concerned citizen with opinions that deserve to be heard. Good letters don't have to be long - one page is more than enough. Typed or hand written is fine. In email, it is essential to include your name and address so they know you are a constituent.

Tell your Senator or Representative that we need a farm bill with meaningful payment limitations, investments in entrepreneurship and small businesses, and enhanced conservation, research, and beginning farmer programs.

**Good letters don't have to be long.** Farm bill discussions are already underway, so **please send your letter now.** This farm bill should be about the people of rural America. By writing, you are taking responsibility for shaping our future. We cannot expect others to help us, if we don't act ourselves. The future of rural America is in our hands.