

April 13, 2023

The Honorable Martin Heinrich  
Chair, Subcommittee on Agriculture  
Senate Committee on Appropriations

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

The Honorable Andy Harris  
Chair, Subcommittee on Agriculture  
House Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Sanford Bishop  
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Agriculture  
House Committee on Appropriations

Dear Chairmen Heinrich and Harris, and Ranking Members Hoeven and Bishop,

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 funding FRSAN at no less than the fully authorized level of \$10 million.**

FRSAN is a program that supports a service provider network that connects individuals and their families engaged in farming, ranching, and other agriculture-related occupations to stress assistance programs and resources. Four regional centers established through FRSAN are increasing access to farm stress services across the United States and its territories by coordinating efforts to serve the unique needs of the populations in each region. Services provided or coordinated through FRSAN include telephone helplines and websites, training programs and workshops, support groups, and outreach 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. Moreover, 60 percent of rural residents live in areas with mental health professional shortages.<sup>1</sup> FRSAN is essential for serving populations where the need is great and resources are limited.

To ensure FRSAN's ongoing success and further development, ongoing support is needed. A Morning Consult poll found that during 2021, most farmers and farm workers (61%) and rural adults (52%) reported experiencing more stress and mental health challenges compared to the prior year.<sup>2</sup> 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. The majority of rural adults, 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 assistance, and programs like FRSAN help reduce stigma and increase access to services.

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<sup>1</sup> 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>

<sup>2</sup> "Farmer and Rural Perceptions of Mental Health," December 2021. [https://www.fb.org/files/Farmer\\_and\\_Rural\\_Mental\\_Health\\_AFBF.pdf](https://www.fb.org/files/Farmer_and_Rural_Mental_Health_AFBF.pdf)

**As the Subcommittees develop the FY 2024 agriculture appropriations bill, we urge you to continue funding FRISAN at no less than \$10 million.** This funding will be critically important in improving the wellbeing of farmers, ranchers, and their families.

Sincerely,

Agricultural Retailers Association  
American Farm Bureau Federation  
American Psychological Association  
American Seed Trade Association  
American Soybean Association  
Farm Aid  
Farm Credit Council  
Farmer Veteran Coalition  
National Association for Rural Mental Health  
National Association of Counties  
National Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Directors  
National Association of State Departments of Agriculture  
National Association of Wheat Growers  
National Center for Appropriate Technology  
National Cooperative Business Association (NCBA CLUSA)  
National Corn Growers Association  
National Cotton Council  
National Council of Farmer Cooperatives  
National Family Farm Coalition  
National Farmers Union  
National Milk Producers Federation  
National Organic Coalition  
National Pork Producers Council  
National Rural Health Association  
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition  
National Young Farmers Coalition  
Organic Farmers Association  
Organic Trade Association  
RAFI-USA (Rural Advancement Foundation International-USA)  
Rural & Agriculture Council of America  
Sustainable Food Policy Alliance  
The National Grange  
United States Cattlemen's Association  
USA Rice