

June 15, 2018

The Honorable Sonny Perdue
United States Secretary of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave. SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue:

On behalf of farm families across the heartland, we write to offer our support and encouragement in your battle to protect homegrown biofuels and expand economic opportunities for U.S. agriculture. Now more than ever, it is vital that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) serve as a champion for rural communities and defeat regulatory schemes designed to restrict competition from energy produced on America's farms.

As you know, farm families have followed a long and proud tradition of harvesting America's vast renewable resources to feed, clothe, and fuel the world. Today, that tradition is under threat, as are jobs at more than 200 biofuel manufacturing centers across the heartland. In 2018, farm expenses are forecast to surge by \$3.5 billion. Interest payments on farm debt are expected to rise by 13.8 percent. Meanwhile, U.S. farm income has been cut by more than half, plunging from \$123.8 billion in 2013 to an expected \$59.5 billion in 2018.

The multi-year plunge in commodity values means that our farms cannot invest as much in machinery, fertilizer, and other materials that drive a wide segment of the American economy, placing jobs at risk in rural communities and urban centers alike. At the same time, foreign nations are imposing destructive limits on U.S. exports, eliminating vital markets for U.S. agriculture.

Given the current crisis, rural America cannot afford for bureaucrats at the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to drag their feet on implementing the president's call to action on ethanol. On May 8, President Trump ordered EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt to collaborate with the USDA on immediate plans to lift outdated regulations on the sale of E15, a fuel blended with 15 percent ethanol.

For far too long, the EPA has failed to update regulations on Reid Vapor Pressure (RVP), which hold E15 to tougher standards than traditional gasoline during the summer. There's no reason for the restriction, which prohibits many retailers from offering cleaner, more-affordable options to their customers. Lifting these needless restrictions would provide a vital outlet for America's 3.9 billion bushels of surplus grain, boost rural growth, and promote American energy dominance.

Unfortunately, a long-awaited fix has consistently been moved to the back burner by regulators at the EPA, despite the president's directive. At the same time, the agency continues to examine a raft of regulatory gimmicks proposed by biofuel critics in the oil industry to limit – rather than expand – market opportunities for homegrown biofuels.

That is why we are counting on you, as our voice in the president's cabinet, to demand immediate action by the EPA to lift seasonal restrictions on E15 and put a stop to misguided proposals that would restrict competition at the fuel pump. We know that protecting farm families is a daily battle in Washington. Please know that you have our support, and we look forward to working hand-in-hand with the USDA to ensure that this administration is successful in revitalizing economic opportunities across the heartland.



Sincerely,

Liz Baker - Farmer in St. Joseph, Michigan
Bruce Bostelman - Farmer in Brainard, Nebraska
Steve Bristol - Farmer in Ravenna, Nebraska
Kelly Brunkhorst - Executive Director, Nebraska Corn Growers Association
William J. Claybaugh - Farmer in Wayne, Nebraska
Quentin Connealy - Farmer in Tekamah, Nebraska
George Engelbach - Farmer in Jefferson, Missouri
Deb Gangwish - Farmer in Shelton, Nebraska
Lavon Heidemann - Board Member, Nebraska Cattlemen's Beef Association and Farmer in Elk Creek, Nebraska
Donny Hein - Farmer in Andover, South Dakota
Nancy Hein - Farmer in Andover, South Dakota
James Hultman - Farmer in Sutton, Nebraska
Ralph Kampmeier - Farmer in Chokio, Minnesota
Tim Kampmeier - Farmer in Chokio, Minnesota
Tera Kleespie - Agriculture Insurance Specialist, Insurance Partners, Inc. in Morris, Minnesota
Craig Larson - General Manager, Rural Radio Network in Lexington, Nebraska
Lisa Lunz - Farmer in Wakefield, Nebraska
Tim Marshall - Chief Operating Officer, Rural Radio Network in Lexington, Nebraska
Dave Merrell - Farmer in St. Edward, Nebraska
Michigan Corn Growers Association
Bonnie Mielke - Farmer in Conde, Nebraska
Rees Mielke - Farmer in Conde, Nebraska
Minnesota AgriGrowth Council
Minnesota Farmers Union
Lee Nerison - Farmer in Westby, Nebraska
Ohio Corn & Wheat Growers Association
Ohio Farm Bureau Federation
Ohio State Grange
Craig Reisner - Farmer in Rolla, Missouri
Curtis Rohich - Farmer in Wood River, Nebraska
Steve Sinning - Farmer in Lennox, South Dakota
Brenda Taffe - Farmer in Aberdeen, South Dakota
Gary Tauchen - Farmer in Bonduel, Wisconsin
Alan Tiemann - Farmer in Seward, Nebraska
Travis Tranel - Farmer in Cuba City, Wisconsin
Nathan White - Farmer in Norborne, Missouri
Dave Williams - President, Michigan Soybean Association

cc: President Trump, Administrator Pruitt

