

March 24, 2009

The President  
The White House  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

As leaders of the grain industry from Oregon, Washington, and Idaho, we are writing to express our grave concern with your fiscal year 2010 (FY10) agriculture budget proposal.

The Pacific Northwest grain industry represents over \$2 billion in economic activity to the tri-state region while providing an affordable, abundant, and safe food supply to the nation and the world. In our region agriculture - and specifically grain production - serves as a major economic driver and stable foundation to our numerous rural communities and the people that rely on the land to support their families.

Production agriculture is a volatile business and a workable farm safety net is vital to the security of our industry. Your FY10 budget proposal makes policy changes detrimental to the carefully fashioned and Farm Bill passed by Congress with strong bipartisan support. Our organizations worked diligently to craft this vital piece of legislation which contains a strong safety net for farmers while making significant changes to payment limits and program eligibility requirements.

The purpose of a five-year Farm Bill is to provide stability to producers, agricultural operations and our nation's food system. We believe it unwise and unacceptable to dismantle this critical piece of legislation before it has even had a chance to be fully implemented.


It is important for the American consumer and for our political leaders to understand the costs associated with producing a safe and abundant food supply. A family-owned and operated grain farm in our region may very easily exceed gross sales of \$500,000 in a given year. However the costs we incur in producing our farm products ultimately provides little to no profit margin to the producer. For that reason, we do not believe that it is appropriate to measure profitability, or determine eligibility to participate in farm programs, based on gross sales.

As an industry that exports approximately 50 percent of its product, the grain industry recognizes the important role that trade tools like the Market Access Program (MAP) play in promoting U.S. agricultural products – including wheat and barley – overseas. Cutting this program would injure the one segment of the economy that is effectively working to decrease the U.S. trade deficit.

Our industry thanks you for your previous support for the Farm Bill while a member of Congress; however your budget proposal would undermine the farm safety net which you previously supported.

The grain industry looks forward to working with your Administration to ensure farm program monies are spent wisely, while also ensuring that the strongest possible safety net is available to those willing to undertake the task of feeding the U.S. and the world.

Sincerely,



Eric Hasselstrom, President  
Idaho Grain Producers Assoc.



Jeff Newton, President  
Oregon Wheat Growers League



Brit Ausman, President  
Washington Assoc. of Wheat Growers