



IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**U.S. FAMILY FARMERS, RANCHERS AND CONSUMERS CRITICIZE
NATIONAL ANIMAL IDENTIFICATION SYSTEM AS THREAT TO FARMER
LIVELIHOODS AND LOCAL FOOD SYSTEMS**

***Congressional Hearing Ignores NAIS Failure to Address Animal Disease and Food
Safety Concerns***

Washington D.C.(March 12, 2009) – The House Agriculture Subcommittee on Livestock, Dairy and Poultry yesterday held a hearing looking at implementation of USDA’s highly flawed and problematic National Animal Identification System (NAIS). Members of Congress repeatedly cited urgent need for the program due to animal disease, food safety and export concerns. However, a wide coalition of family farmers, independent ranchers and consumer groups believe NAIS is a fundamentally flawed program whose costs pose a real threat to farmer livelihoods and will produce no benefits for consumers or food safety.

Judith McGeary, a Texas livestock farmer and president of the Farm and Ranch Freedom Alliance, said, “The Subcommittee failed to even acknowledge that four states (Arizona, Kentucky, Missouri, and Nebraska) have already adopted laws barring a mandatory NAIS program, and three more states (Texas, Montana, and Utah) currently have bills filed to do the same thing. The state legislators are listening to what their constituents are saying: NAIS will not improve food safety or animal health, but it will impose significant costs on family farmers, who are the people who provide a secure, local food system. Perhaps the next time Congress holds a hearing to explore why so many farmers refuse to sign up for NAIS, they should ask why states keep passing laws protecting their constituents from a mandatory NAIS program.”

NAIS supporters highlighted Foot-and-Mouth Disease, tuberculosis and other animal disease outbreaks as to why a 48-hour traceback system was necessary. Bill Bullard, Chief Executive Officer of Ranchers-Cattlemen Action Legal Fund, United Stockgrowers of America (R-CALF USA), one of the groups testifying at the hearing, said, “USDA’s insistence on a 48-hour traceback is not a science-based determination. Nor have they produced evidence that existing disease programs that have been successful for Bovine TB and brucellosis need to be replaced by a radical, new and unproven NAIS in order to control animal disease.”

USDA admitted that despite over \$130 million spent on NAIS, barely one-third of producers have chosen to register in the past five years. Paul Rozwadowski, a Wisconsin

dairy farmer and chair of the National Family Farm Coalition's Dairy Subcommittee, cited the severe cost burden for family farmers versus the loopholes for industrial livestock operations. "While I would have to separately tag every single one of my 60 cows, factory farm poultry and hog operations are allowed one group ID. This gives them an unfair competitive advantage, so it's no wonder their lobbyists support it. NFFC also strenuously objects to National Milk Producers Federation once again falsely speaking on behalf of dairy farmers. NFFC's Dairy Subcommittee, comprised of dairy farmers from across the country, adamantly opposes NAIS, particularly as our dairy prices have collapsed and we struggle for our survival."

Consumer groups concerned about food safety and animal disease also rejected NAIS. Alexis Baden-Mayer, Political Director of Organic Consumers Association, said, "Consumers are taking a heightened interest in food safety after living through e.coli spinach outbreaks and peanut butter salmonella scandals. We believe the best way to protect our food supply from terrorists and keep our food safe lie with sustainable, organic, local food and a decentralized food system comprised of diversified family farms. NAIS, by favoring industrial agriculture practices that are responsible for the majority of food safety and animal disease problems, is a giant step backwards."

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