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President Barack Obama
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama,

As Congress continues work on the final stages of the 2013 Farm Bill, we the undersigned write to seek your support for restoring full funding of \$20 million annually for the Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers and Veteran Farmers and Ranchers Program contained in the Miscellaneous Title of both the House and Senate bill

The Outreach and Assistance to Socially Disadvantaged and Veteran Farmers and Ranchers (OASDFR) Program helps our nation's historically underserved producers gain access to the United States Department of Agriculture's credit, commodity, conservation and other programs and services. The program supports technical assistance to producers through community-based organizations, tribes and educational institutions best prepared to reach and serve them.

In the **current versions of the House and Senate and House Farm Bill (Senate Sec. 12001 and House Sec. 12201)** the committees have expanded the Outreach and Assistance Program for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers to include Veteran Farmers and Ranchers, but with a 50 percent reduction from previous funding levels to provide only \$10 million annually.

- Established in Section 2501 of the 1990 Farm Bill, OASDFR provides technical assistance to reduce the trend among socially disadvantaged producers of engaging in fewer farm program payments, fewer and lower-valued loans, and less outreach and training than other producers.
- The OASDFR Program has served more than 100,000 rural constituents and is an invaluable resource for the more than 400 counties in more than 35 states where it has been implemented serving a wide range of socially disadvantaged recipients living in persistent poverty areas of the country.
- In recent years, work under the program is bringing producers back to USDA or in the door for the first time with greatly increased participation by diverse producers in the NRCS High-tunnel program and in the FSA microloan program. OASDFR programs are also fundamental to the goals and work of Secretary Vilsack's **Strikeforce Initiative**.
- With adequate resources, the OASDFR Program can also provide critical support for veteran farmers and ranchers. The 2010 Census identified 21.9 million veterans in 2009, including 156,000 American Indian Veterans, 2.4 million African American Veterans, 1.2 Million Hispanic Veterans, and 265,000 Asian Veterans. Many Veterans are from rural areas.

- The lack of funding for the program in FY 2013 has meant that groups receiving support across the country have already or are laying off hundreds of experienced staff as the final year of their contracts have expired creating a service gap to thousands of producers who need their assistance to access USDA program.

We strongly support this important program and urge the Farm Bill Conference to add **an additional \$10 million annually to restore total funding to \$20 million annually to accommodate both the traditional and new constituencies of the program, and ensure that Veteran Farmers and Ranchers are able to fully benefit from the program.**

Full, mandatory funding for the OASDFR Program will increase farm livelihoods and cooperatives in rural communities, advance intergenerational land tenure and promote familial and community wealth for socially disadvantaged and veteran producers.

Sincerely,

Rural Coalition/Coalición Rural, *Washington, DC*
 Federation of Southern Cooperatives, *East Point, GA*
 National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, *Washington, DC*
 National Latino Farmers and Ranchers Trade Association, *Washington, DC*
 National Family Farm Coalition, *Washington, DC*
 National Farmers Union, *Washington, DC*
 Community Food and Justice Coalition, *Oakland, CA*
 Intertribal Agriculture Council, *Billings, MT*

21st Century Youth Leadership Movement, *Eutaw, AL*
 American Federation of Government Employees, AFL-CIO, *Washington, C*
 Alabama State Association of Cooperatives, *Forkland, AL*
Alcorn State University Small Farm Outreach Training and Technical Assistance Project,
MS
 American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) Local 3354, *St. Louis, MO*
 Arkansas Land and Farm Development Corporation, *Brinkley, AR*
 Ashtabula Geauga Lake Counties Farmers Union (Ohio)
 Attala County Self Help Cooperative, *Attala, MS*
 Beat 4 Farms Cooperative A.A.L, *Macon, MS*
 BioRegional Strategies, *Albuquerque, NM*
 Bogue Chitto / Lincoln County Community Center, *Brookhaven, MS*
 CASA del Llano, *Hereford, TX*
 Center for Social Inclusion, *New York, NY*
 Colorado Latino Farmers and Ranchers, *Alamosa, CO*
 ColorOfChange, *Oakland, CA*
 Community Farm Alliance, *Frankfurt, KY*
 Community Alliance for Global Justice, *Seattle, WA*
 Farm to Table New Mexico, *Santa Fe, NM*
 Farmer-Veteran Coalition, *Davis, CA*
 Family Farmers Cooperative, *Waterford, MS*
 Farmworker Association of Florida, *Apopka, FL*

Federation of Southern Cooperatives Rural Training and Research Center, *Epes, AL*
First Nations Development Institute, *Longmont, CA*
Food and Water Watch, *Washington, DC*
Food Revolution Network
Greene County Democrat (weekly newspaper), *Eutaw, AL*
Growing Power, Inc., *Milwaukee, WI and Chicago, IL*
Hmong National Development, Inc., *Washington, DC*
Hunger Action Network of New York State, *New York, NY*
Indian Country Agriculture and Resource Development Corporation, *Anadarko, OK*
Indian Nations Conservation Alliance, *Twin Bridges, MT*
Indian Springs Farmers Association, *Petal, MS*
Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, *Minneapolis, MN*
Just Food, *New York, NY*
KC Food Justice, *Kansas City, KS*
Lideres Campesinas, *Oxnard, CA*
Live Real
Local to Global Advocates for Justice, *Kansas City, KS*
Michael Fields Agriculture Institute, *East Troy, WI*
Michigan Food and Farming Systems, *East Lansing, MI*
Mid-South Progressive Agricultural Group, *Holly Springs, MS*
Mississippi Association of Cooperatives, *Jackson, MS*
Missouri Rural Crisis Center, *Columbia, MO*
National Hmong American Farmers, Inc., *Fresno, CA*
National Young Farmers Coalition
National Women In Ag. Association, *Oklahoma City, OK*
Nebraska Sustainable Agriculture Society. *Ceresco, NE*
New Community Cooperatives, *Bassfield, MS*
New Mexico Acequia Association, *Santa Fe, NM*
New Mexico Food and Agriculture Policy Council
North Carolina Association of Black Lawyers Land Loss Prevention Project, *Durham, NC*
Northern New Mexico Stockmans Association, *Espanola, NM*
Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Working Group
Northwest Atlantic Marine Alliance, *Gloucester, MA*
Northwest Forest Worker Center, *Albany, CA*
Oklahoma Black Historical Research Project, *Oklahoma City, OK*
Operation Spring Plant, *Oxford, NC*
Pesticide Action Network, *Oakland, CA*
PLBA Housing Development Corporation, *Gainesville, AL*
Rooted in Community, *Oakland, CA*
Roots of Change, *Oakland, CA*
Rural Advancement Fund, *Orangeburg, SC*
School Food FOCUS National Office, *New York, NY*
Shuqualak Community Action Group, *Macon, MS*
Slow Food Nebraska. *Lincoln, NE*
South Rankin County Farmers Association, *Florence, MS*
Southwest Workers Union. *San Antonio, TX*
Taos County Economic Development Corporation, *Taos, NM*
Texas Mexico Border Coalition CBO, *San Isidro, TX*

Union of Concerned Scientists, *Washington, DC*
Western Sustainable Agriculture Working Group
WhyHunger, *New York, NY*
World Farmers, *Lancaster, MA*

Additional Background on Current Reach of the OASDFR Program

- In FY 2012, with OASDFR Program funding level at \$19 million approximately 200 applications were received from Community-Based Organizations (CBO's) and Higher Education Institutions (HEI's) totaling over \$89 million. 70 competitive grants were funded (35 new and 35 supplemental).
- Of these, 41 went to CBO's and 29 went to HEI's. In FY 2010 and 2011, the OASDFR Program awarded a total of \$38 million in competitive grants (61 awards in FY 2010 and 33 new awards in 2011). Of the 164 total project awards 2010-12, 94 went to Community Based Organizations and 70 to Higher Education Institutions.