

OVER 90 FARM, CONSUMER AND OTHER GROUPS REQUEST ZERO FUNDING FOR ANIMAL ID PROGRAM

Asks Ag Appropriations Conferees to Follow House Language

(September 22, 2009) – Over 90 organizations representing conventional farmers and ranchers, organic farmers, property rights activists, and consumers have sent a letter to Senate and House conferees for the Agriculture Appropriations bill urging them to zero out funding for the National Animal Identification System for 2010. (The letter is attached and can also be found at nffc.net.) While the Senate version of the bill cuts funding for NAIS to \$7 million, the House version had zeroed out funding. Congress has already wasted over \$140 million on the flawed NAIS program with little to show for it. NAIS will place undue burdens on America's farmers and ranchers while doing nothing to address food safety and animal disease concerns. Opposition to NAIS cuts across political parties and has united rural and urban citizens across the country.

Judith McGeary, a Texas livestock farmer and president of Farm and Ranch Freedom Alliance said, "Livestock owners and consumers across the country issued a clear call to halt the program during USDA's listening sessions and comment periods. Five states (Arizona, Kentucky, Missouri, Nebraska, and Utah) have already adopted laws barring a mandatory NAIS program, and many other states have adopted resolutions or introduced bills to reject the program. It's time for Congress to listen to what the people on the ground are saying, and stop this unnecessary, burdensome, and intrusive program."

Family farmers pointed out that NAIS gives all the advantages to confinement operations. Rhonda Perry, a Missouri livestock farmer and member of the National Family Farm Coalition pointed out, "The USDA listening sessions over these past few months showed 80-90% of producers adamantly opposed to NAIS. While family farmers like myself are required to tag every one of our animals, factory farms are allowed one group ID. No wonder that the only people for this program are the corporate ag groups like the National Pork Producers Council, National Milk Producers Federation and the National Chicken Council. The folks most responsible for breeding animal disease are now trying to shift responsibility from corporate meatpackers and factory farms onto the backs of America's independent family farmers through NAIS."

Organic farmers expressed deep concern that NAIS would hinder the blossoming movement towards local foods. Jack Kittredge, a certified organic hog and poultry farmer and public policy coordinator for the Northeast Organic Farming Association/Massachusetts, said, "As an organic producer, I already have to keep stringent traceability records for the government. At a time when the local food movement has brought new customers and renewed hope to family farms, it would be a tragedy for NAIS to make it impossible for those farms to continue to raise livestock and poultry."

Consumer groups also said NAIS would do nothing to address the severe flaws with our food safety system. Patty Lovera of Food and Water Watch said, "Once again this summer we have seen recalls of meat due to e.coli and salmonella contamination. We do not need to waste more money on programs like NAIS that do nothing to protect consumers. USDA needs to instead test more beef for e.coli, trace meat back to the plant where it got contaminated and have better information sharing with consumers about where recalled products are sold."

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National Family Farm Coalition (NFFC), founded in 1986, unites and strengthens the voices and actions of its diverse grassroots members to demand viable livelihoods for family farmers, safe and healthy food for everyone, and economically and environmentally sound rural communities.

National Family Farm Coalition
110 Maryland Ave. N.E., Suite 307
Washington, DC 20002

nffc@nffc.net