

September 12, 2005

Dear Secretary Johanns:

Thank you for giving us this opportunity to share our concerns relative to future farm policy and the welfare of rural communities.

I am speaking today as a life-long fourth generation resident of Reno County. I am also an elder in the Center Amish Mennonite Church. My community places a high value on rural livelihoods whether or not they are directly involved in agriculture. Rural America provides a setting where our values can be nurtured and passed on to our children. I am concerned that some aspects of the present farm program may have the "unintended consequence" of decreasing opportunities for our posterity in rural America.

A second issue involves my membership on the board of Mennonite Central Committee which was founded in 1920. Their mission is to be a Christian witness and to address social and economic issues both domestically and in 55 foreign countries.

Personnel from the foreign fields consider the U.S. method of subsidizing and marketing surplus commodities as unfriendly to private enterprise in developing countries.

As we come to the next Farm Bill, I would like to make three broad suggestions.

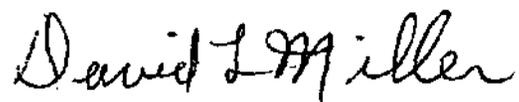
First, we should limit the amount of money single farms receive in subsidies and close the provisions that allow abuse in these programs. The largest operations can take these payments and place many of our smaller farms at a disadvantage.

Secondly, we need to strengthen the investment that USDA makes in rural development and entrepreneurship. These are the areas that can provide real opportunities for stabilizing rural communities and new job growth.

Finally, I hope the next farm bill will reflect an awareness of the benefits of community-friendly marketing. As a manager of the local farmers' market in Hutchinson during the garden produce season, I see first-hand the benefits of this method to both producer and customer.

Again, thank you for this opportunity to speak before you today. Effective farm policy will require the contribution of all stakeholders whether urban or rural.

Sincerely,



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*Comments from
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