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October 31, 2005

Dear Secretary Johanns,

Thank you for your invitation to provide input on the 2007 Farm Bill. We run the Northeastern Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Center, which is based at both Cornell University and The Pennsylvania State University. The region we serve includes the twelve states from Maine to West Virginia. Our program works in partnership with agricultural stakeholders to minimize the environmental, human health, and economic risks of pest management.

We are pleased that a key issue for public comment focuses on how farm policy can best achieve conservation and environmental goals. The previous farm bill, with such programs within the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) as the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Conservation Security Program (CSP), has greatly expanded the opportunity for certain farmers to conserve natural resources. We hope that these programs continue, with some modifications.

Certain EQIP farm plans in the Northeast do not forge strong connections to existing IPM expertise, and we see this as a lost opportunity. For decades, Northeastern states have been developing an extensive IPM knowledge base, with programs whose experts understand how to implement Best Management Practices on farms. Their goal, like that of NRCS, is to preserve the quality of our soil, water, and air. Their methods for managing pests are strongly linked to soil and water conservation practices.

We recommend that the future Farm Bill provide stronger incentives for both NRCS and IPM programs to collaborate on soil/water conservation and integrated pest management simultaneously. One specific step might be to explicitly state within the Farm Bill the expectation that land-grant IPM programs and NRCS work together on IPM-related activities under EQIP and CSP. Many land grant universities already have the infrastructure of pest management experts through their extension programs, so partnering with NRCS would strengthen both programs. Depending on the extent of the role that land grants would play, there may be a need for additional funding, but it would be far less than running two separate programs.

In closing, we hope that the 2007 Farm Bill expands the emphasis on conservation and the environment so that we can continue to provide the nation with food as we protect our natural resources.

Best wishes,

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