Support for Rural Energy for America Program

April 29, 2021

The Honorable Sanford Bishop, Chairman
House Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin, Chair
Senate Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee

The Honorable Jeff Fortenbury, Ranking Member
House Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee

The Honorable John Hoeven, Ranking Member
Senate Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee

Dear Chair Bishop, Chair Baldwin, Ranking Member Fortenberry, and Ranking Member Hoeven:

We the undersigned organizations urge you to support the Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) with full mandatory funding as you consider agriculture appropriations legislation for fiscal year 2022. In addition, please appropriate $20 million in discretionary funding to support and strengthen the program. REAP is essential to rural climate policy and drives renewable energy and energy efficiency investments benefiting farmers, ranchers and rural small businesses in every state and across agricultural sectors.

The 2018 Farm Bill once again demonstrated that REAP enjoys strong bipartisan support. Since its inception, REAP has helped over 19,000 farmers, ranchers and rural small businesses to produce clean energy, cut energy costs, and boost rural economic development. Further, growing new opportunities with modern technologies helps to keep younger generations in rural areas and in farming. REAP is popular and widely supported, with requests historically exceeding available funds each year.

Importantly, REAP investments leverage high private investment in our rural communities. REAP increases rural economic development and grows new opportunities for rural small businesses and agricultural producers. Since the 2014 Farm Bill, REAP has leveraged more than $6 billion in private investment in rural economies.

REAP opens new opportunities to increase income for farmers and rural small businesses in every state and across agricultural sectors. REAP supports a wide range of renewable energy and energy efficiency technology choices, including wind and solar power, advanced biofuels, farm digesters and energy efficiency that cut farm input costs. REAP also creates new revenue streams, increasing farm income at a time when rural communities are struggling with a multiyear slump in the farm economy.

Maintaining mandatory REAP funding and providing full discretionary funding in FY 2022 will help bring the benefits of the program to more farmers, ranchers, and rural small businesses.
The 2018 Farm Bill included $50 million per year in mandatory funding and allows for $20 million in discretionary funding. This funding level will enable REAP to continue to serve interested farmers, ranchers and rural small businesses and encourage more rural investment.

We support the inclusion of report language from FY 2021 encouraging the Department of Agriculture to establish a reserve fund for under-utilized renewable technologies. We urge that this reserve fund be supported in FY 2022 with $10 million of discretionary funding to enhance the diversity of energy technologies deployed through the program.

REAP has a strong track record of success, and with full mandatory and discretionary funding REAP will benefit even more farmers, ranchers and rural small businesses across the country while helping to meet our nation’s pressing energy, environmental and rural economic development needs. And as Congress considers opportunities to address infrastructure and climate legislation, significantly increasing support for REAP to $300 million per year would ensure rural communities are part of the clean energy and energy efficiency economy.

Importantly, by reducing energy input costs, REAP provides relief to farmers struggling with low commodity prices while providing an effective way for rural America to be part of the climate solution.

Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

Advanced Biofuels Association  
Agriculture Energy Coalition  
American Biogas Council  
American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy  
American Council on Renewable Energy  
Business Council for Sustainable Energy  
Center for Rural Affairs  
Clean Energy Economy Minnesota  
Coalition for Renewable Natural Gas  
Distributed Wind Energy Association  
Environmental and Energy Study Institute  
Environmental Law & Policy Center  
Geothermal Alliance of Illinois  
Geothermal Exchange Organization  
Green State Solutions  
Hawaii Farmers Union United  
Integrated Power Contracting LLC  
Interfaith Power & Light  
Iowa Environmental Council  
Iowa Farmers Union  
Iowa Solar Energy Trade Association  
KY Poultry Federation  
League of Conservation Voters  
Live Oak Bank  
Michigan Farmers Union  
Minnesota Farmers Union  
Mississippi Poultry Assn Inc  
National Association of State Energy Officials  
National Center for Appropriate Technology  
National Farmers Union  
National Interfaith Power & Light  
National Rural Lenders Association  
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition  
National Wildlife Federation  
National Young Farmers Coalition  
New England Farmers Union  
Northwest Farmers Union  
South Carolina Poultry Federation  
Solar Energy Industries Association  
Solar United Neighbors  
Solutions from the Land  
Texas Poultry Federation  
The Poultry Federation  
Tennessee Poultry Association  
Union of Concerned Scientists  
Vote Solar  
WindSolar USA, Inc.  
Wisconsin Farmers Union