

October 14, 2024

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
Chairwoman
U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture,
Nutrition, and Forestry
328-A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Glenn “GT” Thompson
Chairman
U.S. House Committee on Agriculture
1301 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Boozman
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture,
Nutrition, and Forestry
328-A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable David Scott
Ranking Member
U.S. House Committee on Agriculture
1010 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Stabenow, Chairman Thompson, Ranking Member Boozman, and Ranking Member Scott,

In recent weeks, we have observed significant misunderstandings regarding tools farmers, ranchers, public health officials, land managers, and others need to produce our nation’s food, fuel, and fiber supplies; maintain public health initiatives; protect public lands; and preserve infrastructure, among other uses. These tools, including pesticides and genetic innovations, are safe, appropriately regulated, and essential for maintaining American competitiveness and national security. We strongly urge Congress and federal regulators to reject any efforts to undermine the existing risk- and science-based regulatory frameworks for these technologies, which would make the U.S. more reliant on foreign competitors for food and agricultural goods.

Safe, affordable, and abundant supplies of agricultural products are essential to the wellbeing of our country. For decades, millions of American farmers and ranchers have dutifully supplied these goods to U.S. consumers. However, without continued access to safe, appropriately regulated agricultural inputs, the ability to supply these vital agriculture products cannot be ensured. Weeds, insects, and fungus outbreaks can inflict significant crop yield losses. They can also infest grazing lands to the point they are unusable for livestock and contribute to wildfire fuel loads. Without continued access to pesticidal tools needed to protect against devastating pests, U.S. farm and ranch operations would quickly become economically unsustainable, jeopardizing our ability to provide affordable food and other agricultural products to consumers.

Genetic improvement technologies are likewise essential for continued U.S. agricultural productivity, sustainability, and competitiveness. For decades, these tools have helped U.S. farmers improve crop yields and protect against pests. Novel applications of these tools may help safeguard crops from drought and enhance their nutritional qualities, among other improvements. Preserving access to these technologies is essential for maintaining both a robust, quality supply of goods for U.S. consumers and competitiveness for U.S. agriculture globally.

As noted above, it is not only our nation’s agricultural producers that would be impacted by potential restrictions on these tools. Pesticides are essential for protecting public health and infrastructure from deadly or destructive pests such as mosquitoes, termites, rodents, bed bugs, and others. Without meaningful, continued use of these tools, the U.S. public could be exposed to billions of dollars in harm from rodent or insect-borne diseases, while public and private infrastructure could suffer immense losses from pest damage.

The United States has risk- and science-based statutory authorities in place that support the safe and proper use of these important tools. Products of biotechnology, for example, are thoroughly regulated by USDA, FDA, and EPA to ensure they do not pose environmental, food or feed safety risks. For pesticides, EPA rigorously ensures all uses do not pose unreasonable risks to human health or the environment. Under the Food Quality Protection Act (FQPA), Congress established a default 10x safety factor for any pesticide food

tolerances, meaning limits would need to be set 10-times lower than where they might ever be expected to pose human health risks. USDA's Pesticide Data Program, which tests pesticide residues on food products, consistently finds more than 99 percent of tested foods have residues well below these already conservative limits.¹ The science- and risk-based systems for biotechnology and pesticides used by the U.S., Canada, Australia, Japan, and many other nations are superior to hazard-based regulatory systems used by the EU and advocated for by some. These hazard-based systems greatly overstate risks and unnecessarily restrict essential tools needed by farmers, other users, and consumers.

To exemplify our concerns with losing uses of these tools, in April 2021, the Sri Lankan government imposed a nationwide ban on synthetic pesticides and fertilizers. The impact of this edict was harsh and swift. Crop yields crashed more than 50 percent across the country, with some farmers experiencing 95 percent yield loss.² Yield losses in rice, a major food staple in Sri Lanka, required the previously self-sufficient nation to import more than \$450 million in rice to meet its food needs. Significant reductions in tea yields (an important export crop for the country) caused huge drops in exports and government revenues.³ The policy, which inflicted economic turmoil and food insecurity, was reversed seven months later in November 2021.⁴ Lawmakers and regulators should carefully reflect on these potential food and national security impacts when considering any policy changes governing critical agricultural inputs.

Further, should these misunderstandings persist, we are concerned with the impact it would have on U.S. consumers' ability to access a safe, nutritious food supply. Despite these tools being safe and appropriately regulated, recent studies have indicated that when confronted with fear-based messaging regarding their use, consumers are more likely to avoid purchasing fruits and vegetables altogether.⁵ This continued misinformation is likely to discourage consumers from making food purchasing decisions that can improve health and nutrition outcomes for their families.

Farmers need tools to protect their crops and livestock, which is essential for our food and national security, providing affordable goods to consumers, and U.S. competitiveness in the global economy. Other vital uses of these tools, such as maintaining infrastructure, bolstering public health efforts, and managing lands, carry billions of dollars in benefits for the U.S. economy. We appreciate the opportunity to inform Congress how these tools are being used and the immense benefits they carry. Further, we strongly urge Congress and federal regulators to avoid any policy changes that would impose new burdens on these tools, undermine their use, or deviate from their existing risk- and science-based regulatory processes.

Sincerely,

African American Farmers of California
Agribusiness Association of Iowa
Agribusiness Council of Indiana
Agricultural Council of Arkansas
Agricultural Retailers Association
Alabama Farmers Federation
Alabama Soybean and Corn Growers Association
Alaska Farm Bureau
Almond Alliance

¹ U.S. Department of Agriculture. Agriculture Marketing Service. January 2024. *Pesticide Data Program Annual Summary: Calendar Year 2022*. <https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/2022PDPAnnualSummary.pdf>

² Kueh, Ai Cheng. Kynetec. N.D. *Sri Lanka: Impact Assessment Study of 2021 Ban on Conventional Pesticides and Fertilizers*. Accessed September 29, 2024. <https://www.eu-asean.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Sri-Lanka-Inputs-Ban-Research-Report-Oct-2022-Update-Photo.pdf>

³ Torrella, Kenny. July 15, 2022. "Sri Lanka's organic farming disaster, explained." *Vox*. <https://www.vox.com/future-perfect/2022/7/15/23218969/sri-lanka-organic-fertilizer-pesticide-agriculture-farming>

⁴ Nordhaus, Ted, and Saloni Shah. March 5, 2022. "In Sri Lanka, Organic Farming Went Catastrophically Wrong." *Foreign Policy*. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/03/05/sri-lanka-organic-farming-crisis/>

⁵ Huang, Yancui, Indika Edirisinghe, and Britt Burton-Freeman. September/October 2016. "Low-Income Shoppers and Fruit and Vegetables What Do They Think?" *Nutrition Today*. Vol. 51, Iss. 5. P. 242-250. <https://shorturl.at/9MOe3>

American Agri-Women
American Cotton Producers
American Dairy Coalition
American Farm Bureau Federation
American Horse Council
American Seed Trade Association
American Society of Agronomy
American Soybean Association
American Sugar Alliance
American Sugar Cane League
American Sugarbeet Growers Association
AmericanHort
Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration Foundation
Aquatic Plant Management Society
Arizona Cotton Growers Association
Arizona Crop Protection Association
Arizona Farm Bureau Federation
Arkansas Certified Crop Advisers
Arkansas Crop Protection Association
Arkansas Farm Bureau Federation
Arkansas Rice Federation
Arkansas Rice Growers Association
Arkansas Soybean Association
Associated Oregon Hazelnut Industries
Biotechnology Innovation Organization
Burley and Dark Tobacco Producer Association
California Alfalfa and Forage Association
California Apple Commission
California Association of Wheat Growers
California Blueberry Commission
California Cherry Growers and Industry Association
California Citrus Mutual
California Cotton Ginners and Growers Association
California Fresh Fruit Association
California Grain and Feed Association
California Pear Growers
California Seed Association
California Specialty Crops Council
California State Floral Association
California Sweetpotato Council
California Tomato Growers Association
California Warehouse Association
Cherry Marketing Institute
Colorado Association of Wheat Growers
Colorado Corn Growers Association
Colorado Farm Bureau
Colorado Fruit & Vegetable Growers Association
Colorado Livestock Association
Colorado Nursery and Greenhouse Association
Connecticut Farm Bureau Association
Council of Producers & Distributors of Agrotechnology
Crop Science Society of America
CropLife America
Delaware Farm Bureau

Far West Agribusiness Association
Florida Farm Bureau Federation
Florida Fertilizer & Agrichemical Association
Food Producers of Idaho
Georgia Agribusiness Council
Georgia Cotton Commission
Georgia Farm Bureau Federation
Georgia Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association
Georgia Green Industry Association, Inc.
Georgia Urban Ag Council
Georgia-Florida Soybean Association
Golf Course Superintendents Association of America
Grain and Feed Association of Illinois
Hawaii Crop Improvement Association
Hawaii Farm Bureau Federation
Idaho Alfalfa and Clover Seed Commission
Idaho Barley Commission
Idaho Dairymen's Association, Inc.
Idaho Eastern Oregon Seed Association
Idaho Farm Bureau Federation
Idaho Grain Producers Association
Idaho Hay and Forage Association
Idaho Hop Growers Association
Idaho Mint Growers Association
Idaho Noxious Weed Control Association
Idaho Oilseed Commission
Idaho Onion Growers Association
Idaho Potato Commission
Idaho-Oregon Fruit and Vegetable Association
Illinois Corn Growers Association
Illinois Farm Bureau
Illinois Fertilizer and Chemical Association
Illinois Seed Trade Association, Inc.
Illinois Soybean Association
Illinois Wheat Association
Independent Professional Seed Association
Indiana Corn Growers Association
Indiana Farm Bureau
Indiana Soybean Alliance
International Fresh Produce Association
Iowa Farm Bureau
Iowa Soybean Association
Kansas Agribusiness Retailers Association
Kansas Association of Wheat Growers
Kansas Cotton Association
Kansas Farm Bureau
Kansas Soybean Association
Kentucky Soybean Association
Louisiana Cotton & Grain Association
Louisiana Farm Bureau Federation
Louisiana Nursery and Landscape Association
Malheur County Onion Growers Association
Malheur County Potato Growers Association
Maryland Farm Bureau

Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation
Michigan Agri-Business Association
Michigan Asparagus Association
Michigan Bean Commission
Michigan Farm Bureau
Michigan Nursery & Landscape Association
Michigan Soybean Association
Michigan State Horticultural Society
Mid Atlantic Soybean Association
Midwest Council on Agriculture
Midwest Food Products Association
Minnesota AgriGrowth Council
Minnesota Association of Wheat Growers
Minnesota Crop Production Retailers
Minnesota Farm Bureau Federation
Minnesota Soybean Growers Association
Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation
Mississippi Soybean Association
Missouri Farm Bureau
Missouri Soybean Association
Montana Agricultural Business Association
Montana Grain Growers Association
National Agricultural Aviation Association
National Alfalfa & Forage Alliance
National Alliance of Independent Crop Consultants
National Association of Landscape Professionals
National Association of Wheat Growers
National Barley Growers Association
National Black Growers Council
National Cattlemen's Beef Association
National Christmas Tree Association
National Corn Growers Association
National Cotton Council
National Council of Farmer Cooperatives
National Milk Producers Federation
National Onion Association
National Pecan Federation
National Potato Council
National Sunflower Association
Nebraska Agri-Business Association
Nebraska Farm Bureau Federation
Nebraska Soybean Association
Nevada Farm Bureau Federation
New Jersey Farm Bureau
New Jersey Nursery & Landscape Association
New York Corn and Soybean Growers Association
New York State Agribusiness Association
Nezperce Prairie Grass Growers Association
Nisei Farmers League
North American Blueberry Council
North Carolina Christmas Tree Association
North Carolina Egg Association
North Carolina Farm Bureau Federation
North Carolina Grange

North Carolina Potato Association
North Carolina Soybean Producers Association
North Central Weed Science Society
North Dakota Agricultural Association
North Dakota Corn Growers Association
North Dakota Grain Growers Association
North Dakota Soybean Growers Association
Northharvest Bean Growers Association
Northeast Agribusiness & Feed Alliance
Northeast Dairy Producers Association
Northeastern Weed Science Society
Northern Pulse Growers Association
Northwest Agriculture Cooperative Council, Inc.
Ohio AgriBusiness Association
Ohio Farm Bureau
Oklahoma Agribusiness Retailers Association
Oklahoma Agricultural Aviation Association
Oklahoma Farm Bureau
Oklahoma Seed Trade Association
Oklahoma Soybean Association
Oklahoma Wheat Growers Association
Olive Growers Council of California
Oregon Association of Nurseries
Oregon Cattlemen's Association
Oregon Dairy Farmers Association
Oregon Farm Bureau
Oregon Seed Council
Oregon Women for Agriculture
Oregonians for Food & Shelter
Pacific Northwest Canola Association
Pacific Seed Association
PennAg Industries Association
Pennsylvania Farm Bureau
Plains Cotton Growers, Inc.
Potato Growers of Michigan, Inc.
Public Lands Council
Red River Valley Sugarbeet Growers Association
Rolling Plains Cotton Growers, Inc.
Snake River Sugarbeet Growers Association
Society for In Vitro Biology
Soil Science Society of America
Southern Kansas Cotton Association
South Carolina Corn and Soybean Association
South Dakota Agri-Business Association
South Dakota Association of Cooperatives
South Dakota Farm Bureau
South Dakota Soybean Association
South Dakota Wheat Growers Association
South Texas Cotton & Grain Association
Southern Crop Production Association
Southern Idaho Potato Cooperative Inc.
Southern Kansas Cotton Growers Coop
Southern Rolling Plains Cotton Growers Association
Southern Weed Science Society

Southwest Council of Agribusiness
Synergistic Hawaii Agriculture Council
Tennessee Farm Bureau Federation
Tennessee Nursery & Landscape Association, Inc.
Tennessee Soybean Association
Texas Farm Bureau
Texas International Produce Association
Texas Soybean Association
Texas Vegetable Association
Texas Wheat Producers Association
U.S. Beet Sugar Association
U.S. Canola Association
U.S. Durum Growers Association
U.S. Peanut Federation
US Dry Bean Council
USA Rice
Utah Farm Bureau Federation
Venture Dairy Cooperative
Vermont Dairy Producers Alliance
Virginia Agribusiness Council
Virginia Cattlemen's Association
Virginia Farm Bureau
Virginia Peanut Growers Association
Virginia Soybean Association
Washington Association of Wheat Growers
Washington Farm Bureau
Washington Friends of Farms and Forests
Washington Potato & Onion Association
Washington State Dairy Federation
Washington State Potato Commission
Weed Science Society of America
Western Agricultural Processors Association
Western Plant Health Association
Western Society of Weed Science
Wisconsin Agri-Business Association
Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation
Wisconsin Potato & Vegetable Growers Association
Wisconsin Soybean Association
Wyoming Ag Business Association
Wyoming Crop Improvement Association
Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation
Wyoming Wheat Growers Association