

The Honorable Congressman Glenn Thompson  
400 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow  
731 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510-2204

The Honorable Congressman David Scott  
468 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Boozman  
555 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2023

Dear Chairman Thompson, Chairwoman Stabenow, Ranking Members Scott and Boozman and members of the House and Senate Agriculture Committees

As a group of PFAS impacted farms, grassroots and non-profit organizations, we respectfully urge your committee to incorporate the language and programs detailed in the Relief for Farmers Hit With PFAS Act (S. 5070/H.R. 9186) into the 2023 Farm Bill. This bipartisan legislation is designed to create a federally funded safety net for farmers thrown into chaos by the impacts of ‘forever chemicals.’ Introduced by Senators Susan Collins and Angus King and Representatives Chellie Pingree and Jared Golden, the bill would offer grant funding to states who have identified unsafe levels of PFAS in agricultural soil and irrigation water. States could then help mitigate those impacts and protect farmers and the safety of the food supply.

There is broad scientific consensus that PFAS exposure presents a severe public health risk. This consensus is exemplified by the National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine’s PFAS Exposure Testing and Clinical Follow-up Report commissioned by the Centers for Disease Control<sup>i</sup>. PFAS linked health effects include immunotoxicity, kidney cancer, liver disease, auto immune and thyroid disorders. EPA’s recently published draft lifetime health advisory levels<sup>ii</sup> and proposed drinking water standards<sup>iii</sup> for several PFAS contaminants reinforce how concerned we should be about identifying and stopping ongoing exposure. These chemicals have unacceptable health impacts, even for people with very low-level exposure. And yet the example of our nine farms demonstrates clearly that commercial farms across the country have been subject to high level PFAS contamination. These chemicals have shown up in farm products, putting our customers at risk and undermining the viability of our businesses. Worse yet, farmers, our families and our employees have been subject to in some cases extremely high exposure.

Our farms have been impacted by historic municipal sludge spreading and the use of aqueous film forming foam (AFFF) on military bases - both pathways have impacted groundwater, soil, crops and human health. Given the ongoing national scope of agricultural sludge spreading programs and prevalence of PFAS contamination around military installations, we can be confident that there are numerous additional PFAS impacted farms across the country yet to be identified.

The Relief for Farmers Hit with PFAS Act would support impacted farmers through the short- and long-term economic impacts of discovering contamination including temporary income replacement for farmers thrown out of production, infrastructural investments to help farms pivot to safe production systems, medical monitoring for farmers, farmworkers & family members who have been directly exposed to PFAS and options for relocation for severely impacted farms. Providing robust and prompt assistance to farmers who have discovered contamination will reassure farmers across the country that they can investigate this issue without risking a devastating loss of business.

PFAS contamination is emerging as a pressing concern to the whole agricultural community and to the safety of our national food supply. Your committee can move powerfully to protect the health and financial security of farmers and farmer workers, and the health of consumers by including this vital program as part of the 2023 Farm Bill.

#### Statements of support by PFAS impacted farmers

“Farmers are literally on the frontlines of PFAS exposure. These chemicals have taken everything from us – our jobs and our businesses, our homes and our health, not to mention our future on the land. Farmers are the stewards of our country’s food supply. Nobody wants these chemicals showing up on their dinner plate, so it is in all of our interest to make sure farmers can investigate the possibility of contamination without losing our shirts in the process.” **Adam Nordell, Songbird Farm, Unity, ME.**

“PFAS has poisoned everything I’ve worked for and everything I care about. I can’t sell the milk. I can’t sell beef. I can’t sell the cows. I can’t sell crops or my property. As farmers we depend on our land and water and now it will be contaminated forever. We were forced to euthanize almost 4,000 of our cattle but the Air Force has done nothing to assist us in any way. We need a way to move on with our lives.” - **Art Schaap of Highland Farm, Clovis, NM.**

“As a dairy farm, our main assets are our cattle and our land, and right now those assets are valueless. The financial impact to a farm from PFAS is mind-blowing. We’ve been building towards our retirement for 40 years and now PFAS has put us upside down on our loans. We’re in a hell of a bind. We need a bill like this.” - **Fred and Laura Stone, Stoneridge Farm Inc, Arundel, ME.**

“As a beef producer and a row crop farmer dealing with PFAS contamination, we’ve been shut down and prevented from selling any of our agricultural products. But we still have to take care of a hundred and fifty head of cattle and pay a mortgage, Edison bill, taxes, insurance, and many other bills. We are not asking to make money off this legislation, we just want to keep bills paid while we figure out what to do.” - **Jason Grostic, Grostic Cattle Company, Brighton, MI.**

“We were devastated when we learned that both our drinking and irrigation water had been poisoned with PFAS chemicals from the nearby Air Force Base in 2016. No one could tell us with certainty that the produce, meat, and eggs we had been selling in the community for ten years was safe. The farm shut down. There were more questions than answers. We lost our income and more importantly, our health insurance, at a time when we were learning about all the potential health impacts of the exposure. The community also lost an important asset. It was very frustrating that there was no accountability and no compensation for all we lost. – **Susan Gordan, vegetable farmer and former manager of a 200-acre farm downstream of Peterson Air Force Base near Colorado Springs, CO.**

“As organic farmers, the core goal of our business is to invest in healthy air, water and soil. In return, we are able to make a living feeding our community healthy, vibrant food. The discovery of PFAS contamination in our farm's well water caused an immediate disruption to our business and our personal lives. After almost a year navigating this contamination, it is becoming increasingly clear that PFAS chemicals will have a lasting economic and emotional effect on our farm. The Relief for Farmers Impacted by PFAS Act could help farmers like us rebound from this environmental crisis and keep feeding our communities.” - **Jim and Hannah Buckle, the Buckle Farm, Unity, ME**

### **PFAS Impacted Farm Signatories:**

The Buckle Farm, Unity, Maine  
Grostic Cattle Company, Brighton, Michigan,  
Susan Gordan, impacted vegetable farmer in Colorado Springs, Colorado  
Highland Dairy Farm, Clovis, New Mexico,  
Ironwood Farm, Albion, Maine  
McCormick Family Farm, Jackson, Maine  
Misty Brook Farm, Albion, ME  
New Beat Farm, Knox, ME  
Songbird Farm, Unity, ME  
Stoneridge Farm Inc, Arundel, ME

### **Organizational Signatories:**

Defend Our Health	Alaska Community Action on Toxics
Maine Farmland Trust	Ecology Center
Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association	Slingshot
Northeast Organic Farming Association NH	Environmental Justice Task Force Tucson
Northeast Organic Farming Association of NY	Fountain Valley Clean Water Coalition
Northeast Organic Farming Association of MA	Testing for Pease
PASA Sustainable Agriculture	Merrimack Citizens for Clean Water
Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association	Buxmont Coalition for Safer Water
Illinois Stewardship Alliance	SC Idle No More, SC Indian Affairs Commission
Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance	Clean Cape Fear
Organic Farming Research Foundation	PfoaProject New York
The Cornucopia Institute	Buxmont Coalition for Safer Water
National Co+op Grocers	Great Lakes PFAS Action Network
Natural Grocers	Duxbury Safe Water Committee, Inc
Michael Fields Agricultural Institute	Fairfield Water Concerned Citizens
Food Animal Concerns Trust (FACT)	Fight for Zero, Inc
La Semilla Food Center	Need Our Water (NOW) - Oscoda, Michigan
Sierra Club	
Environmental Working Group	
National PFAS Contamination Coalition	
Friends of the Earth	
Earthjustice	
American Rivers	

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<sup>i</sup> Guidance on PFAS Exposure, Testing and Clinical Follow Up, *National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine*, Washington DC, National Academies Press, 2022, pg 1, <https://nap.nationalacademies.org/catalog/26156/guidance-on-pfas-exposure-testing-and-clinical-follow-up> (accessed 3/25/23)

<sup>ii</sup> Drinking Water Lifetime Health Advisory Levels for PFOAS and PFOS, *EPA*, Washington, DC. 2022. pg1 <https://www.epa.gov/sdwa/drinking-water-health-advisories-pfoa-and-pfos> (accessed 3/25/23)

<sup>iii</sup> Proposed PFAS National Primary Drinking Water Standard, *EPA*, Washington, DC. 2023. pg 1. <https://www.epa.gov/sdwa/and-polyfluoroalkyl-substances-pfas> (accessed 3/25/23)