May 16, 2006
Dear Senate/House Appropriations Committee Member:

On behalf of the below signed organizations, we are writing to urge you to support the agricultural disaster assistance provisions as included in the FY06 Emergency Supplemental Appropriations bill when it is considered in conference.

Virtually every state in the nation has been impacted by significant weather related and disaster losses. About 80 percent of U.S. counties were declared disaster or contiguous disaster counties last year due to devastating hurricanes, fires, floods, excessive moisture and severe drought. Besides heavy crop and livestock losses and increased production costs associated with rapidly escalating input costs, many producers also face contaminated fields and infrastructure losses that pose serious, long-term challenges to economic recovery.

We appreciate recent supplemental assistance offered to help some of the victims of the 2005 hurricane season. Unfortunately, this assistance is not available to all farmers and ranchers who suffered devastating losses due to hurricanes. Furthermore, none of the supplemental assistance is available to producers who suffered significant economic losses to crop and livestock operations as a result of fires, flooding, drought, excessive moisture and the record-high energy costs brought on by natural disasters.

Because of the urgent need for disaster assistance and the widespread losses which span the country, we believe the provisions in the supplemental appropriations measure are crafted in a manner that offers producers the combination of supplemental direct assistance and production loss assistance that is both timely and tailored to meet all disaster-related losses. Many producers need assistance within weeks to repay loans and secure new financing as they are planting a new crop, so prompt action on this measure is vitally important given that traditional production loss assistance can take up to six months.

Thank you for your consideration of our views.

Sincerely,
Agricultural Retailers Association
Alabama Peanut Producers Association
American Beekeeping Federation
American Farm Bureau Federation
American Sheep Industry Association
American Soybean Association
American Sugar Alliance
Farm Credit Council
Florida Peanut Producers Association
Georgia Peanut Commission
Ind. Community Bankers of America
Nat'l Assoc. of State Depts. of Agriculture
National Association of Wheat Growers
National Barley Growers Association
National Corn Growers Association
National Cotton Council
National Council of Farmer Cooperatives
National Farmers Union
National Sorghum Producers
National Sunflower Association
Northern Plains Potato Growers Association
Southern Peanut Farmers Federation
USA Dry Pea and Lentil Council
USA Rice Federation
US Canola Association
US Rice Producers Association
Western Peanut Growers