September 8, 2006

The Hon. Bill Frist
Majority Leader, U.S. Senate
509 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Hon. Dennis Hastert
Speaker, U.S. House of Representatives
235 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Hon. Harry Reid
Minority Leader, U.S. Senate
528 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Hon. Leader Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
2371 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressional Leaders:

As organizations representing rural Americans, including but not limited to farmers, ranchers and rural communities, we write to express our deep concerns about the failure of Congress to enact emergency agricultural disaster assistance. In this regard, we respectfully urge you to schedule time in the U.S. Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives as soon as possible -- but certainly before Congress recesses in October, to debate and vote upon emergency agricultural disaster legislation for Fiscal Years (FY) 2005 and 2006. Producers, creditors, rural businesses and families all need Congress to act soon in order to provide some certainty for financial planning.

The FY2006 Emergency Supplemental Appropriations bill provided well-deserved, but limited relief, to producers who suffered from hurricane-related production losses. Unfortunately those that suffered from other weather-related disasters were left out. Respectfully, a disaster is a disaster -- whether it is a hurricane, flood, drought, wildfire or other act of nature. Our broad coalition of organizations concerned about rural America stand united in our call for swift congressional action before the October recess.

While we are pleased that the Senate Appropriations Committee has taken some action by approving $3.9 billion as a part of its FY2007 agriculture appropriations bill, we want to ensure that legislation in this regard is actually voted upon as soon as possible.

Over 50 percent of all U.S. counties have been declared primary or contiguous disaster areas by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) this year. These designations are on top of the nearly 80 percent of counties declared disasters in 2005. The economic impact of these disasters has a resounding effect on our rural communities.

Again, we urge you to schedule a vote before the October recess on emergency agricultural disaster assistance legislation.

Sincerely,
Agricultural Retailers Association

American Agriculture Movement Inc.
American Beekeeping Federation
American Corn Growers Association
American Farm Bureau Federation
American Sheep Industry Association
American Soybean Association
American Sugar Alliance
Farm Credit Council
Northeast States Association for Agricultural Stewardship
National Association of Wheat Growers
National Barley Growers Association
National Farmers Organization
National Farmers Union
National Grange
National Potato Council
National Sunflower Association
National Women Involved in Farm Economics
Rice Belt Warehouses
USA Dry Pea & Lentil Council
US Canola Association
Western Peanut Growers Association