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March 25, 2009

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President,

I write today to first thank you for your leadership during this historic economic challenge. As we all know, the recession our nation is facing is truly an historic crisis which requires all of us to make many tough decisions. Those of us in Congress know the struggles that families in our districts endure every day to make ends meet; we are all working to strengthen the economic future of our Nation.

The Agriculture section of the FY 2010 budget recommends that Congress set a threshold of less than $500,000 in gross sales revenue for farms to be eligible for the federal-farm direct payment program. A farm which generates $500,000 in gross sales is not a large farm, but instead is more often a small family owned farm. Right now, small family farms are struggling to survive as the cost of their supplies continues to skyrocket. In fact, according to the USDA, agricultural input costs have increased 40% over the past five years, yet net farm income is estimated to drop 20% this year.

Additionally, we know that farms with gross sales of over $500,000 produce 74% of the total value of agricultural production in our country and quite literally provide the majority of our domestic food supply. Yet, these same farms receive only 47% of all government payments. Without access to this important farm bill program, many of these producers will almost certainly close their doors for good. This will not only hurt these families, it will compromise our national food security and further damage the national economy.

When you consider all of the financial challenges small family farms face just to produce their products, $500,000 in gross sales equates to almost no profit. The farmers of my district deserve the same attention that Wall Street bankers have received during this recession. I recommend that the farm subsidies income eligibility limits remain as enacted by the 110th Congress. This way, we can keep our small farmers working and keep our food supply safe, secure and grown in America.

I know that our farmers deserve the support of their government and I ask you to reconsider this budget proposal.

Sincerely,

Representative Eric Massa
New York's 29th Congressional District

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