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COMMITTEE ON
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EDUCATION AND LABOR

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

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October 22, 2019

The Honorable Kathy Castor
Chairwoman
House Select Committee on the
Climate Crisis
U.S. House of Representatives
H2 – 359 Ford Building
Washington, D.C. 20002

The Honorable Garret Graves
Chairman
House Select Committee on the
Climate Crisis
U.S. House of Representatives
H2 – 361 Ford Building
Washington, D.C. 20002

Dear Chairwoman Castor and Ranking Member Graves:

Thank you for your leadership in thoughtfully addressing climate change and our role as Members of Congress in combating this fundamental threat to our environment and economy. As you prepare your legislative recommendations to Congress in March 2020, I urge you to emphasize partnerships with our nation's farmers in developing climate solutions through both adaption and mitigation strategies.

Farmers across the country are on the frontlines of the devastating effects of climate change as wildfires, droughts, and floods become more frequent and severe. This is particularly concerning in my district – a rich agricultural region in the heart in California's Central Valley – which produces nearly one-half of all the fruits, nuts, and vegetables grown in the U.S. and is already feeling the effects of climate change. Our farmers, families, rural communities, and economy rely on the land we farm and a climate that supports it. Unfortunately, our farmers are often treated only as a part of the problem – rather than part of the solution. Many climate strategies are written with that paradigm in mind.

We cannot solve our climate crisis without including the voices of our agricultural community and acknowledging the realities they face. Our agricultural communities have much to add to the conversations, and I urge you include them as a partner as you develop your report and strategies.

When it comes to this issue, environmentalists and farmers share a common goal – to address climate change before it's too late. That is why I urge you to consider the following policy objectives as you develop your report:

Invest in Climate Resilient Technologies

- Investing in cost-effective climate-resilient technologies, such as technologies that reduce water consumption and carbon emissions, to help our farmers and rural communities adapt to climate change.
- Some of these common-sense technologies are already in use, however, it is in the public interest to speed up their adoption by providing incentives to farmers to replace existing machinery with cleaner ones. For example, farmers in the San Joaquin Valley will need to replace 12,000 tractors by 2024 to meet air quality standards. The replacement of these tractors will also help reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, but additional funding is necessary to meet that goal.
- Continuing to provide incentives to growers to invest in efficient irrigation systems will make a strong impact for the reduction of GHG emissions. For example, from 2012-2018, the State Water Efficiency and Enhancement Program is estimated to have saved over 28 billion gallons of water per year and reduced GHG emissions, the equivalent to taking 15,000 cars off the road.
- As an example, in my district, looking for opportunities to fund incentives for agriculture in the San Joaquin Basin will be a critical part of the strategy to reach attainment in the recently adopted PM2.5 plan that addresses federal health-based air quality standards.
- Agricultural producers, handlers, and processing facilities in my district are already looking at ways they can reduce their environmental impact while remaining productive. These opportunities help our agricultural communities work in tandem with air quality boards and take concrete steps to reduce their air pollution and improve air quality.
- California has committed nearly \$120 million to assist California's food processors in replacing high-energy-consuming equipment. Food processors have responded and submitted applications for funding to reduce their energy use. Just in the last few weeks, the California Energy Commission approved just over \$740,000 to Blue Diamond Growers to fund energy efficiency upgrades.
- Identifying practices and technologies that work on farms and in agricultural operations will assist our communities' transition to new technology that diminish agriculture emissions.

Incentivize Research and Development (R&D)

- The only way to produce cutting edge technologies that spur innovation needed to tackle climate change is by incentivizing R&D.
- Tax credits for wind, solar, and developing cleaner technologies help farmers and manufactures track emissions and take action to reduce their carbon footprints. By expanding R&D programs, including those in the Farm Bill, we can support agriculture in meeting the needs of a changing climate with the latest research.
- Continuing to reinforce publicly funded research, including agroecological research, will offer farmers tools and management approaches that help them build resilience to climate change and mitigate impacts of climate variability.

- Partnerships through the renowned University of California Cooperative Extension programs help address local concerns with science-based solutions, such as the UC Agriculture and Natural Resources program which helps Californians with focus areas ranging from pest management, to economic development, to 4-H.
- Finding creative ways to partner science, research, and agriculture is exemplified in my district through our National Ag Science Center. In partnering with Stanislaus County economic development leaders, our agricultural community, and our educational institutions, the National Ag Science Center helps prepare students in bringing innovative science and agriculture curriculum to future careers in agriculture or related fields.

Support Conservation Practices

- Support programs to encourage farmers to implement conservation management practices that increase the carbon in soil and reduce atmospheric greenhouse gases.
- In Fiscal Year 2018 the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) helped over 200 farmers in my district with conservation practices like dairy waste management, irrigation water management, fencing/grazing practices, livestock water improvements, and conservation crop rotation.
- Farmers and producers in my district are looking at how they can implement practices involving cover crops or plant residues to enrich their soil.
- It is vitally important to recognize supporting conservation practices requires ensuring that farmers have timely and effective technical assistance. In order to solidify successful conservation practices, we must also support technical assistance funding.
- In partnering with state and local governments, programs like California's Healthy Soils Program can work to promote the development of healthy soils, while providing financial assistance for farmers when it comes to the implementation of these types of conservation management practices.

Climate change is not tomorrow's problem. It's today's problem. Farming communities are on the frontlines of this challenge. We need solutions that include our agriculture communities' voices. I look forward to working with you to ensure we can all work together.

Sincerely,



Josh Harder

United States Representative (CA-10)