Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

January 25, 2010

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary of Agriculture
U.S. Department of Agriculture
14th Street and Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

As you develop your budget proposal for Fiscal Year 2011, we respectfully request that you maintain funding for the Market Access Program (MAP), which is critical to job-retention and creation in rural communities throughout the United States. By boosting access to overseas markets through consumer promotion, market research, and technical assistance, MAP benefits American farmers and the nation's economy, while improving our trade balance and creating jobs.

As you know, our nation's unemployment rate is at a 26-year high. We believe that full funding for MAP is essential to the agricultural-based economy of rural America. Agriculture-based communities are often the slowest to recover from economic downturns. Policies and programs that support our farmers and farm communities must be a part of getting our economy back on track.

MAP is directed at a wide variety of agriculture producers, and is especially important to those who do not receive subsidy payments. Not only must program participants generate significant nonfederal matching funds, but they must also provide detailed records of their expenses that are subject to audits. In addition, applications for MAP funds undergo a competitive review process and all program participants must demonstrate a high level of performance.

MAP is a proven and cost-effective program that is particularly important to the economy in rural communities and trade-dependent states. After numerous hearings in both the Agriculture and Foreign Affairs Committees, Congress authorized $200 million a year for MAP in the latest Farm Bill. We encourage you to maintain the full amount in your budget proposal to Congress and look forward to working with you to support this program for American farmers and farm communities.

Sincerely,

Doc Hastings
Member of Congress

Jim Costa
Member of Congress

PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER

Rick Larsen
Member of Congress

Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Member of Congress

Mike Simpson
Member of Congress

Eric J.J. Massa
Member of Congress

Frank Lucas
Member of Congress

Ileana Ros-Lehtinen
Member of Congress

Jay Inslee
Member of Congress

Sam Farr
Member of Congress

George Radanovich
Member of Congress

Thomas J. Rooney
Member of Congress

Bill Posey
Member of Congress

Todd R. Platts
Member of Congress

Christopher John Lee
Member of Congress

Adrian Smith
Member of Congress

David P. Roe
Member of Congress

Adam Putnam
Member of Congress

Walt Minnick
Member of Congress

Dennis Cardoza
Member of Congress

Jerry Moran
Member of Congress

Dennis Moore
Member of Congress

Sanford D. Bishop, Jr.
Member of Congress

Leonard L. Boswell
Member of Congress

Devin Nunes
Member of Congress

Kevin McCarthy
Member of Congress

Thaddeus G. McCotter
Member of Congress

Fred Upton
Member of Congress

Kathy Dahlkemper
Member of Congress

Lynn Jenkins
Member of Congress

Mario Diaz-Balart
Member of Congress

Daniel Maffei
Member of Congress

Tim Holden
Member of Congress

Sam Graves
Member of Congress

Joe Baca
Member of Congress

Mike Rogers
Member of Congress

Ron Kind
Member of Congress

Roy Blunt
Member of Congress

Blaine Luetkemeyer
Member of Congress

Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress

Bill Owens
Member of Congress

Bart Stupak
Member of Congress

Brian Higgins
Member of Congress

Peter Welch
Member of Congress

Greg Walden
Member of Congress

Michael A. Arcuri
Member of Congress

Marion Berry
Member of Congress

Mike McIntyre
Member of Congress

Lincoln Diaz-Balart
Member of Congress

Betsy Markey
Member of Congress

Steve Kagen
Member of Congress

Bobby Bright
Member of Congress

John T. Salazar
Member of Congress

Niki Tsongas
Member of Congress

Larry Kissell
Member of Congress

Vernon J. Ehlers
Member of Congress

Wally Herger
Member of Congress

Robert E. Latta
Member of Congress

Dave Reichert
Member of Congress

David Scott
Member of Congress

Bill Shuster
Member of Congress

Anh "Joseph" Cao
Member of Congress

Charles B. Rangel
Member of Congress

Scott Murphy
Member of Congress

Candice S. Miller
Member of Congress

Brad Sherman
Member of Congress