



ORGANIC FARMING RESEARCH FOUNDATION

January 15, 2009

RE: FY 09 Appropriations and Organic Research

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House Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, FDA, and Other
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United States of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen and Ranking Members:

We are writing to respectfully request that you preserve the \$18 million in mandatory funding provided for the Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative (OREI) in the Food, Conservation and Energy Act of 2008 (Section 7206, HR 6124) as you work to finalize the FY 09 agriculture appropriations bill.

As USDA's flagship competitive grants program specifically dedicated to organic research and extension, OREI plays a pivotal role in the development of the US organic sector. Organic producers, and those looking to transition to organic production rely upon the knowledge developed through OREI grants to succeed with a production system that is highly management-intensive.

The \$3 million annual funding that OREI has received in the past has been well spent, but it has been far short of what is needed to meet the burgeoning demand for increased organic production. Congress recognized the need for a serious increase in organic research and extension funding and provided this in FCEA (\$18 million in FY 09 and \$20 million for each of FY 2010-12). However, Congress also recognized that the mandatory funding was still short of providing a "fair share" of federal agricultural research dollars for organic agriculture. In effect, the mandatory funds are only a down payment towards that fair-share

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goal. Therefore, FCEA also included an additional annual authorization of appropriations for up to \$25 million to allow for continued strong growth of the program. Cutting the new OREI mandatory funding in its first year (FY 09) would undermine this deliberately planned investment.

We recognize the immense budget pressures you are faced with in fashioning the 2009 appropriations bill, but organic agriculture research funding should not be rescinded at any level. In a time of enormous economic and environmental crises, organic agriculture promises economic opportunity, stronger rural communities, and solutions to some of the most pressing environmental challenges. Including FCEA's full investment for organic research and extension in the FY 09 appropriations is a necessary step to realize these opportunities.

Sincerely,



Robert Scowcroft
Executive Director



Steve Ela, Ela Family Farms
Board President

CC:

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Senator Thad Cochran
Senator Tom Harkin
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