

April 26, 2024

The Honorable Martin Heinrich
Chair, Subcommittee on Agriculture
Senate Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable John Hoeven
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Agriculture
Senate Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Andy Harris
Chair, Subcommittee on Agriculture
House Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Sanford Bishop
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Agriculture
House Committee on Appropriations

Dear Chairmen Heinrich and Harris, and Ranking Members Hoeven and Bishop,

We, the undersigned agriculture, rural, and mental health professional organizations representing millions of members across the country, thank you for your leadership in providing strong funding for the Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network (FRSAN) in recent appropriations packages. **We urge you to continue funding FRSAN at no less than the fully authorized level of \$10 million.**

FRSAN is a program that supports a service provider network that connects individuals and their families engaged in farming, ranching, and other agriculture-related occupations to stress assistance programs and resources. Four regional centers established through FRSAN are increasing access to farm stress services across the United States and its territories by coordinating efforts to serve the unique needs of the populations in each region. Services provided or coordinated through FRSAN include telephone helplines and websites, training programs and workshops, support groups, and outreach services.

Since its inception, FRSAN has helped increase interest in and understanding of mental and behavior health among farmers, ranchers, and farmworkers, while helping decrease stigma associated with these topics among these populations. Mental and behavioral health practitioners say that farmers and farmworkers are increasingly seeking care from mental health professionals and have found it easier to talk to loved ones about mental health.¹

Nevertheless, there remains an urgent need for FRSAN. More than 60 percent of rural residents live in areas with mental health professional shortages.² Additionally, a study from 2023 found both stress and depression levels were higher among farmers and ranchers than people working in non-farm occupations.³

¹ Allee Mead, "Hopeful Forecasting: Farmers Showing Increased Interest in Mental Health Resources." Rural Health Information Hub, June 14, 2023. <https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/rural-monitor/farmer-mental-health>.

² Health Resources and Services Administration. "Designated Health Professional Shortage Areas Statistics." March 31, 2024. Bureau of Health Workforce. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

³ National Institute of Food and Agriculture. "Understanding and Addressing the Stress Faced by Nation's Farmers and Ranchers," May 2023. U.S. Department of Agriculture. <https://www.nifa.usda.gov/about-nifa/impacts/understanding-addressing-stress-faced-nations-farmers-ranchers>.

As the Subcommittees develop the FY 2025 agriculture appropriations bill, we urge you to continue funding FRISAN at no less than \$10 million. This funding will be critically important in improving the wellbeing of farmers, ranchers, and their families.

Sincerely,

Agricultural Retailers Association
American Farm Bureau Federation
American Psychological Association
American Seed Trade Association
American Soybean Association
Farm Aid
Farm Credit Council
National Association for Rural Mental Health
National Association of Counties
National Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Directors
National Association of State Departments of Agriculture
National Association of Wheat Growers
National Center for Appropriate Technology
National Cooperative Business Association CLUSA
National Corn Growers Association
National Cotton Council
National Council of Farmer Cooperatives
National Family Farm Coalition
National Farmers Union
National Grange
National Milk Producers Federation
National Organic Coalition
National Pork Producers Council
National Rural Health Association
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition
National Young Farmers Coalition
Organic Farmers Association
Organic Trade Association
Rural & Agriculture Council of America
Rural Advancement Foundation International
Rural Minds
The Farmer Veteran Coalition
United States Cattlemen's Association
USA Rice