

March 22, 2023

Hon. Debbie Stabenow, Chairwoman  
U.S. Senate Agriculture Committee

Hon. John Boozman, Ranking Member  
U.S. Senate Agriculture Committee

Hon. Glenn Thompson, Chairman  
U.S. House Agriculture Committee

Hon. David Scott, Ranking Member  
U.S. House Agriculture Committee

Dear Chairwoman Stabenow, Chairman Thompson, Ranking Member Boozman, and Ranking Member Scott,

As you begin the process of developing a new Farm Bill, the undersigned organizations are writing to urge you to include dedicated funding for one-to-one business technical assistance (BTA) for small and mid-sized farm and food businesses. These investments in farm viability are critical to achieving a more just, secure, and resilient food supply chain, growing our rural economies, and helping farmers and food businesses weather periods of uncertainty, high input costs, and market disruptions.

Recent years have provided stark illustrations of the need to better equip farmers and food entrepreneurs with the business skills and financial literacy necessary to access new markets and succeed long-term in a challenging industry. The coronavirus pandemic, for example, had a significant impact on the farm and food economy, causing dramatic upheavals in markets that many small and mid-sized businesses relied on, and causing surges in demand in others. More recently, inflationary pressures and supply chain disruptions have significantly increased farm input costs and farmland prices. In both cases, farm and food businesses require an increasing degree of savvy and flexibility in order to remain viable. These recent challenges illuminate the deep historic, systemic, and ongoing barriers facing farmers and food entrepreneurs of color, who have been structurally denied opportunities to access capital, land, technical support, USDA programs, and broader professional advancement for generations.

Business technical assistance (BTA) is critical to meeting such challenges. BTA covers a wide range of one-to-one services offered to farm and food businesses by nonprofit organizations, state agencies, private consultants, and extension services. Customized to meet the unique needs of individual businesses, these services include coaching, skill development, and planning related to financial and labor management, marketing and business strategies, farm transfer and succession, and access to land and capital. BTA has proven effective at creating jobs and supporting local economies. One state program found that two years of business planning support helped businesses generate a 62 percent increase in net income and add jobs at a rate three times that of the sector on average. Further, prioritizing socially disadvantaged producers – the business owners historically excluded from existing programs and resources – supports and uplifts those most vulnerable and marginalized, while meeting the needs of all farmers and food businesses.

Last year, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) further recognized the importance of funding BTA when it announced the establishment of both the Farm Service Agency's

Increasing Land, Capital, and Market Access Program and the Agricultural Marketing Service's Regional Food Business Centers, as well as through cooperative agreements with trusted organizations. Though funding is yet to be awarded for these programs, they include a strong emphasis on services such as financial coaching, business planning, market development, succession planning, land access, and USDA program access. Unfortunately, these initiatives are leveraging ad hoc, one-time funding. We urge you to ensure that the next Farm Bill builds on this important work by including dedicated funding for BTA, delivered in the form of multi-year grants to public and NGO agricultural service providers. We ask that these grants prioritize applicants with a track record of success with providing this type of assistance to socially disadvantaged and historically underserved producers.

Thank you for your consideration of our request. We are eager to work with your committees to further support farms, ranches, and food businesses in the 2023 Farm Bill.

Sincerely,

African Alliance of Rhode Island - Bami Farm  
Alaska Farmers Market Association  
Alaska Food Policy Council  
Alaska Village Initiatives  
American Farmland Trust  
American University  
Arcadia Center for Sustainable Food & Agriculture  
Berkshire Agricultural Ventures  
Black Family Land Trust  
Bluestem Food Systems Consulting LLC  
California FarmLink  
Carolina Farm Stewardship Association  
Chicago Food Policy Action Council  
City of Seattle  
Coastal Enterprises, Inc.  
Community FarmShare  
Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture (CISA)  
Connecticut Farmland Trust  
Conservation Law Foundation  
Cornell Cooperative Extension Capital Area Agricultural and Horticultural Program  
Corp for Com and Econ Dev United, Inc.  
Council of Churches of Greater Bridgeport's Center for Food Equity & Economic Development  
Dirt Capital Partners  
Division of Agriculture and Forestry, Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management  
Eat Drink Rhode Island  
Eat Local Southwestern Indiana / Urban Seeds  
Fair Food Network  
Farm and Food Growth Fund  
Farm Fresh Rhode Island  
Farm to Institution New England  
Florida Food Policy Council  
Food Solutions New England

Food Well Alliance  
Franklin County Community Development Corporation  
Frederick County Food Council  
Fundors For Regenerative Agriculture  
Glynwood Center for Regional Food and Farming  
Green Village Initiative  
Grow Food dba Viva Farms  
GROW North Texas  
GrowthWords  
Gund Institute for Environment  
Harris-Pero & Botelho, PLLC  
Heifer USA  
Helianth Partners  
Holistic Management International  
Hudson Valley AgriBusiness Development Corporation  
Illinois Division IWLA  
Illinois Stewardship Alliance  
Indiana Division Izaak Walton League of America  
Indiana University  
InHeritage Farms & Regenerative Ventures, LLC  
Intervale Center  
Iowa Valley RC&D  
Izaak Walton League of America Wisconsin Division  
Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future  
Jubilee Justice, Inc  
Kane County Board  
Kansas Rural Center  
Karmic Bounty Farms  
Kentucky Center for Agriculture & Rural Development  
Keystone Development Center, Inc  
Kitchen Sync Strategies  
Kitchen Table Consultants  
KTM Consulting LLC  
Land For Good  
Local Enterprise Assistance Fund (LEAF)  
Local First Arizona  
Lyon County Food and Farm Council  
Maine Farmland Trust  
Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association  
Marbleseed  
Market Wagon  
Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation  
Massachusetts Food System Collaborative  
McIntosh Sustainable Environment and Economic Development  
Michigan Health Improvement Alliance  
Minnesota Farmers' Market Association  
Minnesota Farmers Union  
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition  
National Young Farmers Coalition  
New CT Farmer Alliance

New Entry Sustainable Farming Project  
New Hampshire Community Loan Fund  
New Jersey Food Democracy Collaborative  
North East / Millerton Climate Smart Community Task Force  
Northeast Farmers of Color Land Trust  
Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont (NOFA-VT)  
Northeast Organic Farming Association, Mass. Chapter (NOFA/Mass)  
Northeast Organic Farming Association-Interstate Council  
Northwest Indiana Food Council  
Nutrition & Fitness Collaborative of the Central Coast  
Nutrition and Fitness Collaborative of the Central Coast  
NW Indiana Food Council  
O'ahu Resource Conservation and Development Council  
Organic Growers School  
Out of the Garden Project - Urban Teaching Farm  
Pasa Sustainable Agriculture  
PCO - Pennsylvania Certified Organic  
Piedmont Environmental Council  
Pittsburgh Food Policy Council  
Potlikker Capital  
PRAIRIE (Prairie Rose Agricultural Institute for Research Innovation & Education)  
Quivira Coalition  
Renewing the Countryside  
Rhode Island Food Policy Council  
Rhode Island Food Policy Council  
Rural Coalition  
Salt River GrowOp  
Self-Help Ventures Fund  
SLO Farmers' Cooperative  
Southeast Iowa Food Hub  
Springfield Food Policy Council  
SpringForward Ventures  
Sustainable Farming Association  
Texas Center for Local Food  
The Greater Cumberland Committee  
The Agricultural Viability Alliance  
The Carrot Project  
The Cooper Group  
The Garden International LLC  
The Good Acre  
The Kohala Center  
The Land Connection  
The Nashville Food Project  
The Office of Kat Taylor  
TRACTOR Food and Farms  
University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension  
Urban Health Partnerships  
Vermont Housing and Conservation Board  
Vermont Land Trust

Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund  
Virginia Community Capital  
Vital Communities  
Wallace Center at Winrock International  
Wayne Jones Imani Resource Service LLC  
West Michigan Food Processing Association  
World Farmers