



USET

SOVEREIGNTY PROTECTION FUND

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Transmitted via email

September 10, 2018

The Honorable Pat Roberts
Chairman
U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, &
Forestry
328A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC, 20510

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, &
Forestry
328A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC, 20510

The Honorable Michael Conaway
Chairman
U.S. House Committee on Agriculture
1301 Longworth Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Collin Peterson
Ranking Member
U.S. House Committee on Agriculture
1301 Longworth Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen Roberts & Conaway, and Ranking Members Stabenow & Peterson,

On behalf of the United South and Eastern Tribes Sovereignty Protection Fund (USET SPF), we write to convey our support for the record number of key Tribal provisions in both the Senate and House versions of the 2018 Farm Bill. These provisions will help to advance the health, well-being, and economic development of Tribal communities, while ensuring greater parity for Tribal governments within the bill's provisions. We urge the Conference Committee work together to ensure that the final 2018 Farm Bill include the Tribal priorities identified below.

USET SPF is an intertribal organization comprised of twenty-seven federally recognized Tribal Nations, ranging from Maine to Florida to Texas¹. USET SPF is dedicated to enhancing the development of federally recognized Tribal Nations, to improving the capabilities of Tribal governments, and assisting USET SPF Member Tribal Nations in dealing effectively with public policy issues and in serving the broad needs of Indian people.

In nearly every title of the 2018 House and Senate Farm Bills, there are changes of great importance to American Indians and Alaska Natives that would offer more equitable access to the titles of the bill. These changes would provide greater parity for Tribal governments in programs already available to state and local governments, as well as new or increased access to United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) programs for Tribal Nations and Tribal producers. With these provisions, the 2018 Farm Bill takes substantial steps forward to support Tribal sovereignty and Tribally-developed food systems, all while increasing economic and job opportunities throughout Indian Country.

¹ USET SPF member Tribal Nations include: Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas (TX), Aroostook Band of Micmac Indians (ME), Catawba Indian Nation (SC), Cayuga Nation (NY), Chitimacha Tribe of Louisiana (LA), Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana (LA), Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (NC), Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians (ME), Jena Band of Choctaw Indians (LA), Mashantucket Pequot Indian Tribe (CT), Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe (MA), Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida (FL), Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians (MS), Mohegan Tribe of Indians of Connecticut (CT), Narragansett Indian Tribe (RI), Oneida Indian Nation (NY), Pamunkey Indian Tribe (VA), Passamaquoddy Tribe at Indian Township (ME), Passamaquoddy Tribe at Pleasant Point (ME), Penobscot Indian Nation (ME), Poarch Band of Creek Indians (AL), Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe (NY), Seminole Tribe of Florida (FL), Seneca Nation of Indians (NY), Shinnecock Indian Nation (NY), Tunica-Biloxi Tribe of Louisiana (LA), and the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah) (MA).

Tribal Priorities for the 2018 Farm Bill

Attached is a full list of all the Tribal specific provisions in both the House and Senate Farm Bills which the Native Farm Bill Coalition (NFBC) has compiled. The NFBC is joint effort of more than 160 Tribal Nations and Tribal organizations to give Indian Country a strong, united voice to advance a common Farm Bill agenda to further the health, well-being, and economic prosperity of Native agricultural producers, consumers, and Tribal communities. USET SPF is in full support of these provisions, which we urge you to incorporate in the final bill at Conference. As you begin to conference the Farm Bill, we would like to highlight the following top priority provisions which would empower Tribal Nations, Tribal producers, and Tribal consumers:

- Conservation Title: All provisions requiring alternative funding arrangements and Tribal parity in eligibility for conservation program resources.
- Forestry Title: Tribal parity in Good Neighbor agreements and PL 93-638 Tribal self-determination in forestry management.
- Nutrition Title: All FDPIR program administration improvements including the PL 93-638 self-determination demonstration project for food procurement, match and carry-over funding authority, and local food inclusion in the food package.
- Research Title: All provisions that create improved access to FRTEP and to education by supporting Tribal Colleges and Universities and other educational institutions.
- Rural Development Title: All provisions that improve Tribal access to rural development business programs and infrastructure funding.
- Miscellaneous Title: Retain Office of Tribal Relations in the Office of the USDA Secretary and ensure that the beginning farmer and rancher and socially disadvantaged producer programs have permanent authority and funding, and guarantee Tribal involvement, on par with state governments, in the regulation and production of hemp.

The above priorities do not exhaust the list of the Farm Bill provisions which should be included in the final Conference bill. We stand with and support the advocacy of the NFBC and Tribal Nations across the country, as the conferencing of the bill proceeds.

Conclusion

It is critical the House and Senate work together to ensure that the final 2018 Conference Committee bill include Indian Country's priorities. USET SPF underscores the continued importance of the expansion of Tribal self-governance and self-determination within the final 2018 Farm Bill, which has been a priority of USET SPF and Indian Country. The final 2018 Farm Bill must include and incorporate perspectives from Indian Country to afford parity, opportunity, and consistency under the federal food and agriculture laws, funding policies, and programs. Though there have been great strides made for Indian Country in previous Farm Bills, there are still many steps needed to provide parity and access for Tribal Nations. Should you have any questions or require further information, please contact Ms. Liz Malerba, USET SPF Director of Policy and Legislative Affairs, at LMalerba@usetinc.org or 202-624-3550.

Sincerely,



Kirk Francis
President



Kitcki A. Carroll
Executive Director