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***URGE SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE MEMBERS TO SUPPORT
SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE PRIORITIES IN THE FARM BILL***

The Senate Finance Committee is expected to hold a tax title markup on September 19 to help pay for the upcoming farm bill. **The funding provided by the Finance Committee is the only additional resource for the farm bill other than the savings that can be achieved through cuts and reforms to the existing farm bill baseline.** As it stands, the Chairman of the Finance Committee, Max Baucus (D-MT) has stated he will include \$5 billion for a permanent disaster relief fund. He has made no definitive public commitment to fund other farm bill programs, though he and his panel have a variety of ideas under consideration.

Phone calls or faxed letters directed at Senate Finance Committee Members are needed **immediately**, urging them to fund conservation, new markets, rural development, research, organic, beginning farmer, and other core sustainable agriculture priorities in the next farm bill (in your message to Senators, discuss the two or three sustainable agriculture priorities that are most important to you and your organization). **Our chances of winning increased funding levels for sustainable agriculture programs will be determined in large part by the action of the Senate Finance Committee.**

Kansas Senator Pat Roberts is on both the Finance and Agriculture Committees.

The Senators that are members of both the Finance and Agriculture Committees hold particular weight. Other dual membership Senators are: Chairman Baucus (D-MT), Conrad (D-ND), Lincoln (D-AR), Stabenow (D-MI), Salazar (D-CO), Ranking Member Grassley (R-IA), and Crapo (R-ID).

PLEASE CONTACT SENATOR PAT ROBERTS!!

The message is simple. I am a constituent and I am calling to ask Senator Roberts to vote for a tax bill that funds sustainable agriculture priorities in the farm bill at no less than \$10 billion over the next five years. I believe we need to invest in conservation, sustainable and organic farming, rural value-added and entrepreneurial development, beginning farmers and ranchers, and local and regional food systems.

It's easy to call or write. Call Senator Roberts at 202-224-4774. Ask the receptionist for the legislative aide who covers agriculture (Mike Seyfert). If the aide is unavailable, leave

a message with your name, phone number and the message above on the aid's voice mail or with the receptionist.

If you prefer to write, fax a brief letter with the points above, along with your name and address and contact information to fax number: 202-224-3514

Background:

The Senate Finance Committee's vote on the tax title is a critical step before the Senate Agriculture Committee can take up the Farm Bill. With adequate funding provided by the Senate Finance Committee, we can make substantial progress in fostering new farming opportunities, expanding new markets, leveling the playing field for sustainable and organic farmers, increasing food access and improving health, reducing hunger, ensuring fair access for socially disadvantaged farmers, promoting rural entrepreneurship and community development, rewarding farmers to help meet the nation's most pressing environmental challenges, and investing in sustainable farm-based energy conservation and production systems.

It is Finance Chairman Baucus' intention to pass farm bill-related tax provisions in the Finance Committee, rather than supply tax offsets to the Agriculture Committee. This makes the situation much more complicated than it was when the House passed its farm bill earlier this summer. In the House, the tax committee supplied the offsets directly to the Agriculture Committee to help pay for the farm bill. In the Senate, they plan to use the tax offsets to pay for new tax expenditures that will serve the same or a similar purpose as programs in the farm bill.

Advocates for rural development, nutrition, agricultural research, conservation, renewable energy and other farm bill areas are generally pleased the Finance Committee is considering tax measures that might address those issues in a positive fashion. However, they are also quite concerned that addressing the tax bill in this fashion will not supply or free up enough funds in the farm bill to allow for robust conservation, nutrition, rural development, research, specialty crop, and energy titles. It is clear that the bare minimum needed – over and above the \$5 billion the Chairman is committed to spending on a permanent disaster program – is another \$10 billion over five years. Hence it is imperative that Finance offices hear from constituents about the need for at least this level of funding for these priorities. Please call or write today!

Please check out the Sustainable Agriculture Coalition's website at: www.sustainableagriculturecoalition.org for more information and timely updates on farm bill action.

For Further Information, or to sign up for KRC Action Alerts, contact:

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