



February 26, 2013

The Honorable John Boehner  
Speaker  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1011 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Harry Reid  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
522 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Minority Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
235 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Minority Leader  
United States Senate  
317 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Boehner, Minority Leader Pelosi, Majority Leader Reid and Minority Leader McConnell:

The undersigned groups, representing a broad cross section of American agriculture, encourage you to support immigration reform that addresses agriculture's unique workforce needs. Agriculture faces a critical lack of workers, a shortage that makes our farms and ranches less competitive and that threatens the abundant, safe and affordable food supply American consumers enjoy today. Securing a reliable agricultural workforce is essential not only for farmers but to the U.S. economy as a whole.

To address this issue, agriculture has united to form the Agriculture Workforce Coalition (AWC). The AWC has developed a new approach that meets the workforce requirements of all of agriculture—both those producers with seasonal labor needs, and those with year-round needs.

The AWC proposal has two components. A large majority of agriculture's current workforce is undocumented, regardless of farmers' good faith efforts to verify work authorization. In the short-term, granting work authorization for current experienced agricultural workers will preserve agriculture's workforce and maintain stability in the sector. For long-term stability, a new market-based agricultural worker visa program is needed that will provide access to a legal and reliable workforce into the future and the flexibility to meet the needs of all producers. To learn more and access the coalition's proposal, please visit the [www.agworkforcecoalition.org](http://www.agworkforcecoalition.org).

Action is needed because farmers and ranchers have limited options today when it comes to finding a skilled and dependable workforce. Many jobs in agriculture are physically demanding, conducted in all seasons and are often transitory. These factors make this line of work unappealing to most Americans, even though they offer wages competitive with similar, non-agricultural jobs. It is for this reason that farmers have grown to rely on foreign workers.

The only option for farmers and ranchers to legally achieve the workforce they need is through a broken guest worker program, known as H-2A. The H-2A program's basic framework is overly

restrictive and difficult for an employer to maneuver; however, in recent years it has become even more unworkable and costly to use. A national survey conducted by the National Council of Agricultural Employers of H-2A employers under the current rules showed that administrative delays have caused an economic loss of nearly \$320 million for farms. The program is used out of necessity only, which is why the uncapped program accounts for less than five percent of agriculture's total labor force.

American agriculture cannot continue as a bright spot in our economy without a legal, stable workforce. Reforms to the immigration system can ensure that our farmers and ranchers have access to the workers they need, both in the short- and long-term. These reforms require a legislative solution, such as the AWC proposal, that moves beyond past initiatives which are no longer viable to meet agriculture's needs.

We hope you will consider supporting the AWC proposal. Thank you for your attention to this vital issue for American agriculture.

Sincerely,

AgriBank  
Agricultural Council of California  
Agricultural Retailers Association  
Agriculture Coalition for Immigration Reform  
Agri-Mark, Inc.  
Agri-Placement Services, Inc.  
Alabama Farmers Cooperative  
American Agri-Women  
American Beekeeping Federation  
American Farm Bureau Federation  
American Horse Council  
American Mushroom Institute  
American Nursery & Landscape Association  
American Soybean Association  
American Sugar Cane League  
Apricot Producers of California  
California Association of Winegrape Growers  
California Avocado Commission  
California Canning Peach Association  
California Citrus Mutual  
California Giant Berry Farms  
California Grape and Tree Fruit League  
California Strawberry Commission  
California Women for Agriculture  
CoBank  
Colorado Wine Industry Development Board  
Cooperative Council of North Carolina  
Cooperative Network  
CountryMark  
Dairy Farmers of America  
Dairylea Cooperative, Inc.  
Equity Cooperative Livestock Sales Association  
Farm Credit Council  
Farm Credit East

Farm Credit West  
Florida Fruit & Vegetable Association  
Geneva Area Chamber of Commerce Agriculture Council  
Grand Valley Winery Association  
Greenstone FCS  
Grower-Shipper Association of Central California  
Idaho Dairymen's Association  
Idaho-Oregon Fruit and Vegetable Association  
Land O'Lakes, Inc.  
MBG Marketing/The Blueberry People  
Michigan Apple Association  
Michigan Farm Bureau  
Michigan Milk Producers Association  
Michigan Processing Apple Growers  
Monterey County Farm Bureau  
National Association of State Departments of Agriculture  
National Berry Crops Initiative  
National Christmas Tree Association  
National Cotton Council  
National Council of Agricultural Employers (NCAE)  
National Council of Farmer Cooperatives  
National Farmers Union  
National Grape Cooperative Association, Inc.  
National Milk Producers Federation  
National Onion Association  
National Peach Council  
National Potato Council  
New England Apple Council  
New York Apple Association, Inc  
New York Farm Bureau  
New York State Vegetable Growers  
Nisei Farmers League  
Northeast Ag and Feed Alliance  
Northeast Dairy Farmers Cooperatives  
Northeast Dairy Producers Association (NEDPA)  
Northeast States Association for Agricultural Stewardship  
Northwest Farm Credit Services  
Northwest Horticultural Council  
OFA – The Association of Horticulture Professionals  
Oregon Association of Nurseries  
Pacific Coast Producers  
PennAg Industries Association  
Pennsylvania Vegetable Growers Association  
Plains Cotton Cooperative Association  
Produce Marketing Association  
Red Gold, Inc.  
Snake River Farmers Association  
Society of American Florists  
South East Dairy Farmers Association  
Southern States Cooperative  
St. Albans Cooperative Creamery

State Agriculture and Rural Leaders  
Sunkist Growers  
Sunsweet Growers, Inc.  
Sweet Potato Council of California  
Teays River Investments  
Tennessee Farmers Cooperative  
Texas Agricultural Cooperative Council  
Texas International Produce Association  
The American Mushroom Institute  
The National Cotton Ginners Association  
The North American Blueberry Council  
U.S. Apple Association  
United Dairymen of Arizona  
United FCS  
United Fresh Produce Association  
United Fresh Produce Association  
United Potato Growers of America  
United Producers  
Upstate Niagara Cooperative, Inc.  
USA Farmers  
Utah Dairy Producers  
Washington Farm Bureau  
Washington Growers League  
Welch's Foods Inc., A Cooperative  
Western Growers Association  
Western United Dairymen  
Yankee Farm Credit

cc: U.S. House of Representatives  
United States Senate