

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

COMMITTEES:

ARMED SERVICES
BANKING, HOUSING, AND
URBAN AFFAIRS
ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS
SMALL BUSINESS AND
ENTREPRENEURSHIP
VETERANS' AFFAIRS

October 5, 2017

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

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

Chairman Roberts and Ranking Member Stabenow:

I write today regarding your ongoing work on the upcoming farm bill. I appreciate the bipartisan discussions you have been conducting with farmers and ranchers across the country as you work to determine necessary policy changes that will empower our agriculture sector to continue to lead the world in food and fuel production. With your leadership, over the next year we have a unique opportunity to improve existing farm programs and provide much-needed stability to farmers and ranchers across the country.

In close consultation with South Dakota farmers and ranchers, I have outlined a list of priorities for the upcoming farm bill:

1. Adequately support and maintain the federal crop insurance program. With 290 million acres insured nationwide, 17 million acres in South Dakota, crop insurance is the main tool for farmers to protect themselves and their livelihoods.
2. Allow a re-enrollment option for producers utilizing commodity programs under Title I, specifically Price-Loss Coverage (PLC) and Agricultural Risk Coverage (ARC).
3. Increase the cap for Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acres to at least 30 million, compared to 24 million by fiscal year 2018. During the time period covered by the proposed 2018 farm bill, South Dakota is expected to lose 57 percent of its existing CRP acres. By increasing the cap and targeting marginal production acres, we have the ability to lock in land for conservation for 10 years at 2018 land values while saving money for the federal crop insurance program by getting the more marginal acres out of production.
4. Establish a foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) vaccination bank to combat economic, food and national security concerns. According to a recent study by Iowa State University economists, an outbreak of FMD could cost potentially as much as \$197 billion over 10 years if producers were not able to combat the disease with vaccines.
5. Increase the individual cap for USDA's Farm Service Agency's (FSA) guaranteed farm ownership loans and farm operating loans. Update the authorization for FSA's direct loan

programs and increase total authorization for FSA's guaranteed loan programs. This would mirror legislation I introduced, the FSA Loan Guarantee Enhancement Act.

Again, I appreciate the hard work your committee is doing to assist our nation's farmers and ranchers. Thank you again for your unwavering commitment to our nation's farmers and ranchers. I look forward to continuing to work together on strengthening the agriculture industry.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "M. Michael Rounds". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "M" and "R".

M. Michael Rounds
U.S. Senator