

July 17, 2007

The Honorable Steve Kagen, MD
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Kagen:

The undersigned organizations are writing to relay our strong support for your Farm Bill amendment to express the Sense of Congress that organic research should be given a fair share of overall Agricultural Research Service dollars, at least commensurate with organic's market share.

Organic agriculture is the fastest growing sector of the agricultural economy. Organic sales, which currently represent about 3 percent of the total US food retail market, have been growing steadily at about 20% a year, for the last ten years. Despite these impressive trends, USDA research programs have not kept pace with the growth of organic agriculture. The share of USDA research dedicated to organic agriculture and marketing only represents about 0.7 percent annually (about \$15 million).

While the Agricultural Research Service is just one of several USDA research agencies, its role is very important. In the past couple of years, ARS staff has made a sincere effort to reach out to the organic community to solicit feedback from stakeholders about potential organic research projects that could be undertaken by ARS. As a result, the agency has developed excellent objectives for organic research and development. However, ARS funding for organic agriculture still lags far behind its market share and these objectives can not yet be pursued effectively.

Your amendment will send a strong signal that the challenges and promises of organic agriculture should be given much greater priority within the overall ARS budget.

Thank you for your good work on this amendment, and your continued support of organic agriculture.

Sincerely,

Beyond Pesticides
Center for Food Safety
Equal Exchange
Food and Water Watch
Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association
Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service
National Campaign for Sustainable Agriculture
National Cooperative Grocers Association
Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance
Northeast Organic Farming Association- Interstate Policy Council

Organic Farming Research Foundation
Organic Trade Association
Rural Advancement Foundation International
Sustainable Agriculture Coalition
Union of Concerned Scientists