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May 11, 2009

## An Open Letter to U.S. Media Outlets

Dear Journalists:

Over the past several years, America's farmers and ranchers have been on the receiving end of one of the well-funded, best-orchestrated communications and lobbying campaigns that we have witnessed. This active campaign leading up to and during the 2008 farm bill debate has been largely marked by misinformation that, while highly provocative and prejudicial, has distorted rather than enhanced public understanding of U.S. farm policy. The general public does not understand the work that farmers and ranchers do every day to put food on our tables, clothes on our backs, and, increasingly, to put fuel in our tanks.

Agriculture has always been and remains today a vital component of our nation's well-being. A strong agriculture sector favorably affects our national security, wealth, health, and environment. Therefore, the public is owed honest information on the subject, not highly sensationalized misinformation used with the deliberate purpose of pitting the general public against the very hand that feeds us.

Unbiased information is needed now more than ever because at no time in our history has the general population been less connected to the farm. Based on the recently published U.S. Census of Agriculture, just over 2 million people in our nation of approximately 300 million are classified as farmers, with far fewer still making a living off of the land and meeting the lion's share of the food and fiber needs of our country.

Most of the population must rely on the media to gain an understanding of agriculture production. Unfortunately, in the face of a well-financed misinformation campaign and with America's farm and ranch families lacking both the financial resources and organization necessary to effectively respond, what the public too frequently reads and hears about farm policy and agriculture today is manufactured and untrue.

We hope this will change soon.

With the 2008 farm bill now enacted as law, America's farm and ranch families wish to set the record straight about the important role that U.S. farm policy and producers play in this country. One such educational effort, dubbed "The Hand That Feeds US.," is kicking off today. Information in this packet will help begin this educational effort.

As Members of Congress representing millions of Americans – both producers and consumers – we respectfully urge you take the time to learn more about this effort, U.S. farm policy, and the farm and ranch families that keep America fed.

Food and clothing are basic human needs. The establishment of governmental policies, just as essential, if not a little more complicated, ensures that these needs are met. And, as with any issue, the easy answers are rarely the right ones.

We thank "The Hand That Feeds U.S." for working to scratch beneath the surface of a complex set of issues in order to provide journalists and, in turn, the general public with a greater understanding of American agriculture.

Sincerely,



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SAXBY CHAMBLISS  
United States Senator

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