

Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure U.S. House of Representatives

Bill Shuster Chairman Washington, **DC** 20515

Nick I. Rahall, II Ranking Member

October 25, 2013

Christopher P. Bertram, Staff Director

James H. Zoia, Democrat Staff Director

The Honorable Frank D. Lucas Chairman Committee on Agriculture United States House of Representatives Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Lucas:

During the conference on H.R. 2642, the *Federal Agriculture Reform and Risk Management Act of 2013* (FARRM Bill), we urge you to insist on the House-passed reauthorization of the Food for Peace Program (Title II of PL-480). Since 1954, the Food for Peace Program has provided the mechanism for U.S. agricultural products to be shared with those in need throughout the world. Since the commodities are shipped on U.S.-flagged vessels, it has also helped maintain a U.S. flagged fleet on which the Department of Defense can call in emergencies.

The Food for Peace Program has been the largest and most successful international food aid program in the world. It has fed more than 3 billion people in more than 150 countries. Commodities, carried in bags filled with food marked as gifts "From the American People", and bearing the American flag, have generated goodwill toward the United States from recipients in areas where such goodwill is greatly needed.

During floor consideration of the FARRM Bill in the House of Representatives, an amendment to modify the Food for Peace Program was defeated 203-220. The amendment would have allowed up to 45 percent of the Food for Peace Program funding to be sent overseas to be used as part of the local and regional purchase program, cash transfers, or vouchers. The use of financial assistance in lieu of U.S. commodities would weaken accountability, and U.S. taxpayers would have no guarantee that food was delivered or know to whom it was delivered. Under such a scheme, Americans' tax dollars would be used to pay foreign-based aid organizations to buy foreign commodities shipped on foreign ships rather than buying food grown by American farmers and shipped in U.S.-flagged vessels.

Less than 100 U.S.-flagged vessels remain in the international trade. These ships provide the United States military the capability to transport equipment and supplies throughout the world in times of crisis. The transportation of the Food for Peace Program commodities allows these vessels to remain active in commercial trade. In addition, the ongoing operation of these vessels

is crucial to maintaining an active group of U.S. mariners who can be called on in times of need. Without the cargo provided under this program the small number of U.S. flagged vessels in the international trade will further decline. This also means the available pool of active merchant mariners will be reduced. Without these ships and mariners, deployment of the U.S. military can be held hostage by foreign ship operators and mariners.

The House spoke clearly on this issue. The amendment should not be reconsidered in the FARRM Bill conference. The House-passed FARRM Bill provides a straight reauthorization of the Food for Peace Program. In addition to efficiently and effectively providing U.S. food aid to those in need throughout the world, the House-passed bill protects U.S. agriculture and mariner jobs. We urge you to insist on the House position in conference.

Bill Shuster

Chairman

Committee on Transportation and

Bill Short

Infrastructure

Duncan Hunter

Chairman

Subcommittee on Coast Guard and

Maritime Transportation

Sincerely,

Nick J. Rahall, II

Ranking Member

Committee on Transportation and

Infrastructure

John Garamendi

Ranking Member

Subcommittee on Coast Guard and

Maritime Transportation

Identical letters sent to: The Honorable Debbie Stabenow, The Honorable Thad Cochran, and The Honorable Collin C. Peterson.