

November 7, 2007

Honorable Chuck Conner  
Acting Secretary of Agriculture  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Conner:

We write to you to solicit your help in ensuring that the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) continues conducting and publishing Chemical Usage Surveys. NASS recently announced that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) plans to discontinue this critically important activity.

Chemical Usage Surveys are the only source of publicly available data on pesticide and fertilizer use. The surveys are relied upon by the USDA Office of Pest Management Policy and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to conduct risk assessments and establish pesticide policy decisions. Additionally, a broad array of agricultural commodity and producer organizations use these data to participate in rule making and respond to EPA inquiries regarding pesticide and fertilizer use.

While proprietary data on pesticide use are available, it is prohibitively expensive. If USDA discontinues the usage surveys, only subscribers to proprietary data services will have a privileged view of pesticide and fertilizer use. Most farmers, policy makers and the general public will be left to speculate on the amount of pesticide and fertilizer use or trends in use among chemicals.

We urge you to insist that NASS continue to represent the interests of agriculture by continuing to provide accurate, timely pesticide use information. Discontinuing the chemical usage surveys will dramatically handicap USDA and American farmers' ability to serve the interests of agriculture. The undersigned organizations urge you to help us maintain this essential program.

Sincerely yours,

American Farm Bureau Federation  
American Soybean Association  
California Citrus Quality Council  
California Fresh Fig Growers Association  
California Specialty Crops Council  
Cherry Marketing Institute  
CropLife America  
Del Monte Foods  
Empire State Potato Growers Inc.

Florida Fruit & Vegetable Association  
FMC Agricultural Products Group  
Michigan Blueberry Growers Association  
Michigan Vegetable Council  
Minor Crop Farmer Alliance  
National Agricultural Aviation Association  
National Association of Wheat Growers  
National Corn Growers Association  
National Cotton Council of America  
National Grape Cooperative, Inc.  
National Potato Council  
National Watermelon Association, Inc.  
North American Blueberry Council  
Northwest Horticultural Council  
Produce Marketing Association  
Society of American Florists  
Syngenta Crop Protection, Inc.  
The Fertilizer Institute  
USA Rice Federation  
U.S. Apple Association  
United Fresh Produce Association  
Valent U.S.A.  
Washington State Potato Commission