

December 15, 2020

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden Jr.
President-Elect of the United States
1401 Constitution Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Mr. President-Elect:

As farmers and former National Farmers Union presidents who share your dedication to combating the climate crisis, we offer our congratulations on your victory this November, and we look forward to working with you and your administration to revitalize rural America and advance U.S. climate leadership on the world stage.

We also write to express our sincere hope that your administration will blaze a new trail in harnessing the power of U.S. agriculture to protect our planet for future generations.

Over the past decade, few American industries have suffered more than the agricultural sector from the devastating consequences of climate change. Year after year, rural communities face droughts, floods, wildfires, and windstorms that devastate millions of acres of farm crops and destroy countless lives in the process.

Our agricultural challenges were compounded under the Trump administration, which destroyed demand for U.S. crops and blocked efforts to invest in the resilience of rural communities. Worse, the Trump administration actively undercut the Renewable Fuel Standard (RFS), abusing secretive exemptions for oil refiners and limiting markets for earth-friendly biofuels produced from energy-rich crops.

Today, you have the power to open a new chapter in the battle for a healthy climate. To do that, we urge you to embrace the opportunities offered by on-farm conservation practices, precision agriculture, and sustainable bioenergy to turbo-charge the green revolution in rural America.

As you know, ambitious plans released by both the House and Senate climate committees emphasize support for proven farming practices that sequester carbon in the soil. They also illustrate the growing role of biofuels in the global transition away from a fossil fuel-based economy. Under your leadership, bipartisan legislation like the Growing Climate Solutions Act could lay the foundation for a truly net-zero economy by creating market-based incentives that allow America's farmers to thrive, even as they invest in carbon sequestration. Even faster progress can be made through the RFS, a well-established statute that offers your administration a powerful and often overlooked climate tool to shift America's transportation sector toward renewable, low-carbon energy.

These actions would not only offer a new source of stability and security to the rural economy, they would systematically reduce the carbon footprint of America's food, fiber, and fuel.

For example, U.S. Department of Agriculture findings under both the Obama and Trump administrations show that U.S. ethanol – from farm to fuel tank – already slashes emissions by 43 percent or more. Under the Low Carbon Fuel Standard, more than two-thirds of all carbon cuts achieved by California so far have been credited to ethanol, biodiesel, and other biofuels. By crediting the adoption of on-farm conservation practices, farmers could reap the rewards for supplying America’s ethanol plants with even lower-carbon feedstocks. And with the adoption of higher ethanol blends, like E15, E30 and E85, those low-carbon fuels can help America raise the bar for nations all over the world struggling to stem transportation emissions.

Equally important, these efforts will help demonstrate that the benefits of a green economy are not limited to coastal communities and big cities. Contrary to the assumptions too often accepted as conventional wisdom among political elites, rural America is ready to lead the way. As farmers, we are stewards of earth, and we know what it takes to keep our soil, water, and air clean.

Please feel free to call on any of us if we can be helpful in any way. Thank you for your leadership on these important issues.

Sincerely,



Roger Johnson
NFU President 2009-2020



Tom Buis
NFU President 2006-2009



Dave Frederickson
NFU President 2002-2006



Leland Swenson
NFU President 1988-2002