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July 11, 2024

Hon. Debbie Stabenow  
Chairwoman  
Senate Committee on Agriculture,  
Nutrition, and Forestry  
328A Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Hon. Glenn “GT” Thompson  
Chairman  
House Committee on Agriculture  
1301 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Hon. John Boozman  
Ranking Member  
Senate Committee on Agriculture,  
Nutrition, and Forestry  
328A Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Hon. David Scott  
Ranking Member  
House Committee on Agriculture  
1301 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Stabenow, Ranking Member Boozman, Chairman Thompson, and Ranking Member Scott,

Consumers’ Research is an independent educational 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization whose mission is to educate consumers about the issues most important to their welfare and to amplify their voice in the marketplace.

Over the past two years, Consumers’ Research has educated consumers about the world’s largest money managers who have taken up the mantle of ESG (Environmental, Social, Governance) to weaponize capital for a political agenda. Using transnational cartels like Climate Action 100+ and the Net Zero Asset Managers Initiative, ESG activists primarily focused on the fossil fuel industry. However, Consumers’ Research is concerned that those same activists are expanding their focus to include America’s food producers, farmers, and ranchers.

At the most recent COP summit, Climate Czar John Kerry explicitly announced that the agricultural industry was in the ESG regime crosshairs. In January, Agricultural Commissioners from across the country wrote to money managers expressing concern about how their net zero commitments shaped their investments and the corporate policies they were voting for or championing.

DEFENDING CONSUMERS

While Congress has worked on drafting the Farm Bill over the last year-plus, news reports have been replete with climate activist groups calling for an expansion of the government’s climate intervention in the bill that largely governs America’s agricultural sector.<sup>1</sup> To get a better understanding of how insidious these groups are, lawmakers should read Consumers’ Research’s report on Ceres, an umbrella activist group actively pushing the ESG agenda.<sup>2</sup> By leveraging the Security and Exchange Commission and large asset managers, Ceres has worked to assert regulatory influence and organize shareholder activism to mandate climate disclosures that solely benefit the ESG investing industrial complex.

If these activist groups can assert their agenda in the Farm Bill, the impact of ESG on America’s agricultural sector will be substantial and adverse. A report from the Buckeye Institute found that net zero policies and ESG reporting would increase farmer’s costs by at least 25%.<sup>3</sup> That translates into spending an additional \$1,300 yearly on groceries for the average family of four on top of already staggering inflation driven by runaway government spending.

Consumers’ Research supports Congressional efforts to push back on the radical demands of climate activist groups and ESG’s acolytes in corporate America, and we hope that the House and Senate will continue to fight for the reallocation of funds appropriated in the partisan IRA to traditional, bipartisan conservation programs to hold down spending.

Specifically, when it comes to the Farm Bill, Congress should keep the “Farm” and toss the ESG.

To guard against the regulatory overreach that could instantiate ESG metrics into law, the next Farm Bill should explicitly reject mandates regarding fertilizers that promise to reduce crop yields and have proven catastrophic when enacted in other countries, or electrification directives that would impose crushing capital investment costs on farmers. Similarly, Congress should legislatively prohibit bureaucrats from extending CAFE standards to heavy trucks and farm equipment.

Even attractive programs meant to incentivize farmers to adopt costly and unproven technology and techniques should be avoided as they would add to inflationary pressures with uncertain results. The poor performance of recent EV programs should serve as a cautionary tale. Lawmakers should also look for ways to safeguard food producers from activist attorneys attempting to use lawfare to force companies into ESG commitments.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ewg.org/take-action/support-key-legislation/make-climate-priority-2024-farm-bill>

<https://www.climatealityproject.org/act/2024-farm-bill>

<sup>2</sup> <https://consumersresearch.org/documents/consumers-research-ceres-report/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.buckeyeinstitute.org/research/detail/new-buckeye-institute-report-finds-net-zero-climate-control-policies-fail-farmers-families>



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established 1929

Simply put, Americans cannot afford to allow the same ESG regime currently infecting corporate boardrooms to gain purchase on family farms. The interests of consumers and the health of American agriculture must be paramount as Congress determines how to revise the Farm Bill. In crafting the bill, Congress must ensure that ESG and onerous climate initiatives are kept far away.

Sincerely,

*Will Hild*

Will Hild  
Executive Director

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