



The Honorable Donald Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

April 12, 2017

Dear Mr. President:

National Farmers Union (NFU) has nearly 200,000 family farmer, rancher, and fishermen members nationwide and organized divisions in 33 states. We have supported family agriculture and rural communities since 1902 because the family farm is the keystone of a free, progressive, democratic national society, as well as a strong America, and is the basis of a safe, secure and stable food system. NFU can help you ensure that the Americans who produce our food and live in rural areas have economic opportunity and strong communities.

The Paris Agreement on climate and the existing pledge on emission reductions are critical to producers and rural communities. Many of the actions that would contribute to achieving our current target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 26-28 percent by 2025, relative to 2005 emissions, would create jobs and stimulate economic growth in rural communities. In particular, incentives to encourage farmers, ranchers and forest owners to sequester more carbon would benefit rural communities and could serve as an innovative part of addressing an emerging farm crisis before it reaches full maturity. Low commodity prices and rising input costs are pushing highly leveraged farms toward the brink of disaster. If a number of these farms fall to bankruptcy or foreclosure, rapid asset devaluation could undermine the entire agricultural economy. Ongoing uncertainty regarding biofuels and foreign markets exacerbate this uncertainty. But new revenue streams resulting from such incentives could help by creating new jobs and giving young people another reason to stay on the farm and in small towns.

While the rural benefits of incentivizing carbon sequestration through land management are clear, other means of achieving the U.S. Paris commitments could also help the countryside. Increasing emphasis on energy efficiency will lead to lower power costs for producers and rural businesses. Development pressure on productive farmland, which prevents many beginning farmers from securing land and market access, can be checked by community planning that reduces structural energy needs. Biofuels and increased biomass in the energy sector offer a growing market for agricultural products, creating a growth opportunity for the farm economy and dependent rural businesses. Forest expansion could lead to beneficial investment in rural communities if managed properly.

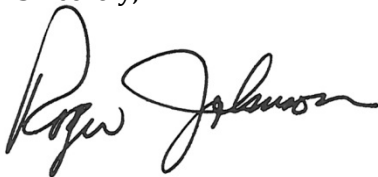
Admittedly, not every option for meeting the nation's Paris commitments is guaranteed to bolster rural communities. Efforts to decarbonize the electric power grid will be challenging for coal-powered rural power generation that is essential to many rural areas. Rural power providers will need additional support and time to realize their contributions to the Paris pledge. Achieving methane reductions from livestock production could also be contentious for farmers. Incentivizing methane capture and anaerobic digestion are worthwhile endeavors, but attempts to regulate agricultural methane would be ineffective to administer and counterproductive. However, NFU asserts the overall positive impact the Paris commitments would have on rural communities and American agriculture warrant digging in on and discussing the difficult issues. We should not dispose of the Paris commitments in their entirety for the purpose of avoiding confrontation on a few controversial issues, and NFU asserts the value of seeking agreeable paths forward on rural power generation and livestock methane.

Farmers are on the front lines of climate change. Producers have been experiencing costly disruption from climate change for some time, including more frequent and intense drought, flooding and wildfires. We anticipate that such disruptions will increase in frequency and severity over time. Many of the ways in which rural communities can achieve greenhouse gas emission reductions pursuant to the U.S. Paris commitments will also make farming and ranching operations and rural communities more resilient to the escalating negative consequences of climate change.

We ask that you maintain our existing commitments under the Paris agreement because of the magnitude of the threat climate change poses to rural communities, and because the contributions these same communities can make to greenhouse gas emission reductions will drive economic growth in the countryside. Such measures will benefit rural economies and make American agriculture more resilient to extreme weather.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Roger Johnson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Roger" and last name "Johnson" clearly distinguishable.

Roger Johnson
President