November 21, 2022

Senator Patrick Leahy, Chair
Senator Richard Shelby, Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations
R S-128 The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

Representative Rosa L. DeLauro, Chair
Representative Kay Granger, Ranking Member
U.S. House Committee on Appropriations
H-307 The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

Senator Debbie Stabenow, Chair
Senator John Boozman, Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry
328A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Representative David Scott, Chair
Representative Glenn Thompson, Ranking Member
U.S. House Agriculture Committee
1301 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: National Organic Disaster Relief Sign-on Letter

Dear Senate and House Appropriations and Agriculture Committee Leadership,

Organic livestock farmers are facing catastrophic economic challenges as the availability of organic feedstuffs has declined dramatically, resulting in costs climbing significantly over the past 18 months. A perfect storm of trade disruptions, international conflicts, and acute drought conditions have created a situation no farmer could have planned for or foreseen. Neither farm policy nor market mechanisms exist to help family farmers procure the necessary dietary requirements for their livestock or mitigate the unusual spikes in feed costs and the other inflationary pressures impacting organic farmers. We are seeing painful farm exits from organic livestock production and financial hardships at thousands of kitchen tables across our nation.

This economic disaster is afflicting organic farmers and we urge Senate and House Agriculture Committee leadership to work with USDA to craft an ad hoc disaster relief payment for organic livestock producers.

To sustain rural viability and food security, it is critical to maintain a base of skilled organic farmers in American agriculture by offering limited disaster aid that will allow farmers to reorganize farm production goals and plan for a new reality in organic feed production. The alternative is that many of them will leave organic livestock and never come back. This crisis also threatens land access to the next generation of farmers.

The stark reality is that domestic organic feed acres for corn and soybeans are insufficient, resulting in a vulnerability for domestic livestock farmers when global supply chains are endangered. Russia's invasion of Ukraine has dramatically hampered shipping of organic feedstuffs from Eastern Europe. The discontinuation of the National Organic Program recognition agreement with India has reduced grain supplies, and furthermore, countervailing duties related to an international anti-dumping case

on Indian soybeans have cut off access to this major source of organic feed. These international shocks to the system have been amplified by acute drought in the western U.S. and other places where substitute feedstuffs are increasingly in short supply and often cost-prohibitive due to transportation and freight shortfalls.

All of agriculture is facing supply chain and inflationary pressures, yet organic supply and trade is unique when assessing the factors that have caused abnormally high organic feed costs. For example, according to Mercaris market data,[1] prices for organic soybeans in the U.S. rose to $40.52 per bushel in May 2022, up nearly 110% from January 2021's $19.37 per bushel. Today organic soybean prices are still over $31 per bushel. During that same timeframe, conventional soybean prices ranged between $13 and $17 per bushel and as of this fall are around $14.50/bushel.[2]

While feed inputs have climbed for organic dairy, poultry, and hog farmers, the organic farm gate and retail marketplace for organic milk, eggs, chicken, turkey, and pork has also risen but not significantly or quickly enough to keep pace with these unbearable farm feed costs. Inflationary pressure is hitting organic food companies and their brands and, more fundamentally, the purchasing power of organic consumers who, by and large, will not endure additional organic food price increases.

While USDA should be commended for advancing an Organic Transition Initiative that could, in part, grow organic acres for feed crop production in the years to come, our nation is at serious risk of losing *today's* organic livestock farmers unless some urgently deployed disaster relief is provided.

Unprecedented shocks to global trade necessitate action.

As businesses and farm service providers which work with thousands of organic livestock producers, we implore the Committees to act.

Sincerely,

Aurora Organic Dairy
California Certified Organic Farmers (CCOF)
Clover Sonoma
Danone North America
Ecocert USA
Egg Innovations, LLC
Farmer Focus
Handsome Brook Farms
Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association
Marbleseed
Mercaris
MOSA Certified Organic
National Organic Coalition

[1] Koory, Ryan. "U.S. Organic Soybean Volatility Persists Following Global Disruptions." Institutional Investor. 1 Aug. 2022. https://www.institutionalinvestor.com/article/b1z2jh72c64v2l/us-organic-soybean-volatility-persists-following-global-disruptions

[2] Macrotrends. "Soybean Prices – 45 Year Historical Chart." Accessed 7 Nov. 2022. https://www.macrotrends.net/2531/soybean-prices-historical-chart-data

Nature's International Certification Services (NICS)
NestFresh Eggs
Neutral Foods
Northern Pride Inc
Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance
Northeast Organic Farming Association of New York
Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont
Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association
Organic Farmers Association
Organic Trade Association
Organic Valley
Pennsylvania Certified Organic
Straus Family Creamery
Stonyfield Farm
Stony Pond Farm
Westby Cooperative Creamery
Western Organic Dairy Producers Alliance