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April 17, 2009

Fax: (202) 720-4265

To:

ATTN: Secretary Vilsack
Financial Assistance Programs Division
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Room 5237S
Washington, DC 20250-2890

From:

Margaret Petersen
Alexandria, VA 22315
Email: Margaret@cox.net

**Reference: Docket Number NRCS- IFR-08005" Environmental Quality Incentives
Program (EQIP) Final Rules**

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Financial Assistance Programs Division
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Room 5237S
Washington, DC 20250-2890

Re: Docket Number NRCS- IFR-08005" Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Final Rules

Dear Secretary Vilsack,

I think its important that the USDA stop using taxpayer dollars to bailout factory farms and start supporting sustainable and organic farmers that protect the environment, build strong rural communities, and provide much healthier, nutritional food.

The EQIP rule needs to be clarified, in accordance with the 2008 Farm Bill, and EQIP assistance should be available to all family farmers and ranchers for comprehensive whole farm conservation planning.

The final EQIP rule must also require NRCS State Conservationists to rank and process applications for organic conversion assistance in a separate funding pool that makes clear that the limit of \$80,000 over a 4-year period applies only to organic conversion payments and not all EQIP payments made to organic farmers and ranchers.

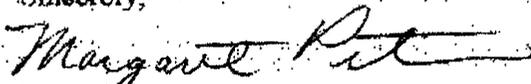
I recommend that the NRCS amend the EQIP rule to prohibit the use of EQIP funding for animal waste storage, treatment or transportation for new or expanding CAFOs and that the EQIP rule does not allow waivers to increase assistance to CAFOs above the \$300,000 payment limit.

Studies have conclusively proven that corporate CAFOs have negative impacts on water quality, decrease property values, and harbor antibiotic-resistant bacteria that threaten human health. They are bad for the land, the water and our children.

Organic farmers and ranchers should at least stand on an equal footing with conventional producers in funding amounts they receive from EQIP. This can easily be done if the USDA follows the rules of protecting the people and our collective resources over the interests of giant corporate agribusinesses.

Please do the right thing. Please stand up for independent family farmers and ranchers and enact these recommendations.

Sincerely,


Margaret Petersen