Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 6, 2012

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

We write to thank you for heeding the concerns of New York farmers and not including a ban on the wintertime application of manure in the recently-revised Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Code 590 Nutrient Management Standard. A nationwide, calendar-based ban on winter manure spreading would have proven cost-prohibitive for New York farms, the majority of which are family-owned and small- or medium-sized. Had the NRSC moved forward with the nutrient management mandate it proposed early last year, approximately 8,000 New York livestock operations would have been affected; for the average New York dairy farm, the construction of manure storage facilities needed to comply with this mandate would have cost $250,000 or more.

New York farmers have been hard-hit by this economy, and we appreciate your Department's decision to spare them from an additional, costly and unnecessary requirement. We share your commitment to protecting our nation's surface and groundwater, and ask that you continue to allow New York farmers the flexibility they need to reasonably fertilize their fields and dispose of nutrient waste. USDA guidelines must take into account the realities faced by farmers in New York and other cold-weather states, and we look forward to continuing to work with you to ensure this remains the case.

Sincerely,

Kathleen C. Hochul
Member of Congress

Richard Hanna
Member of Congress

Paul Tonko
Member of Congress

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