



# Environmental and Energy Study Institute

May 13, 2013

## **Re: Support Strong Farm Bill Energy Programs with Mandatory Funding**

Dear Senator:

Supporting a strong energy title in the *Agriculture Reform, Food, and Jobs Act of 2013*, with \$1.3 billion in mandatory funding, is key to creating strong, sustainable bio-based products and energy industries using America's cutting edge technologies and working farms and forests. It can be a win-win for creating jobs and economic development, improving local and national energy security, as well as reducing environmental pollution and harmful climate change.

Domestically-produced biofuels, biomass heat, and bio-based chemicals and products help American consumers and industries avoid the inevitable rise and volatility in prices for petroleum-based fuels and feedstocks. These new cutting edge domestic industries recycle hard-earned energy dollars within the U.S. economy, adding more jobs and investment, while reducing the nation's unsustainable trade deficit. They help put America back to work producing biomass, building advanced biorefineries and infrastructure, and advancing U.S. technological leadership in sustainable, renewable energy. Sustainably-produced biomass helps improve environmental quality and reduce pollution from agriculture. And critically, substituting renewable bio-based fuels, chemicals, and products for fossil petroleum helps slow the build-up of harmful greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.

The energy provisions in this bill can help accelerate the transition to sustainable bio-based products and energy over the next five years – if sufficient mandatory funding is assured. Sustainable biomass production systems still need to be developed and established on the ground. Each state and region of the country can benefit from developing its own unique biomass resources. Incentives are still needed to encourage investment in establishing new energy crops and equipment. The first dozen commercial scale advanced biorefineries still need help getting off the ground with loan guarantees so the viability of these new technologies can be demonstrated. Agricultural producers, rural schools, communities, and businesses that depend today on expensive oil, propane, or electricity for heating, urgently need assistance to shift to less expensive, locally-produced, sustainable bioenergy and other forms of renewable energy.

The 2008 Farm Bill, with more than \$1 billion in mandatory funding for energy programs over five years, made a good start in the right direction. But it was only a start. A continued, similar commitment is needed in the 2013 Farm Bill. The impact of this relatively small public investment with the first pioneers of this industry today will be magnified many fold in the years ahead as the commercial viability of new feedstock production systems and conversion technologies are validated. We encourage you to consider mandatory funding at the overall level of \$1.3 billion over five years, as reflected in the *Rural Energy Investment Act* (S. 860), introduced by Senators Franken and Harkin.

As you consider the Farm Bill in the days ahead, please support strong, mandatory funding for the energy title and oppose all weakening amendments. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Carol Werner, Executive Director