



# Environmental and Energy Study Institute

June 14, 2012

Re: Support Strong Farm Bill Energy Programs

Dear Senator Whitehouse:

Supporting a strong energy title in the *Agriculture Reform, Food, and Jobs Act of 2012* (S. 3240), with mandatory funding, is key to reducing the nation's dangerous dependence on petroleum fuels and feedstocks and building a strong and vital energy industry based upon America's farms and working lands. Continuing investment in the development of sustainable bioenergy is a win-win for addressing a number of pressing national challenges. Volatile fuel prices and mounting threats to global oil supplies, national energy security, continuing high unemployment, and environmental pollution and harmful climate change are but a few of the major challenges that would be addressed with a continuing, strong commitment for Farm Bill energy programs.

Domestically-produced biofuels, biomass heating, and bio-based chemicals and products will help American consumers and industries avoid future run-away costs for petroleum-based fuels and feedstocks. Domestic bioenergy and bio-products industries will recycle hard-earned energy dollars within the U.S. economy, adding more jobs and investment, while reducing the nation's unsustainable trade deficit. They will help put rural America back to work producing biomass feedstocks, building biorefineries and infrastructure, and establishing U.S. leadership in sustainable energy technologies.

The energy provisions in this bill can help accelerate this transition over the next five years – if sufficient mandatory funding is assured. The 2008 Farm Bill, with more than \$1 billion in mandatory funding for energy programs, made a good start in the right direction. But it was only a start. A continued commitment in this Farm Bill is needed. A similar, relatively small public investment in the first pioneers of this industry today will be magnified many fold in the years ahead by a surge in private investment as the commercial viability of the feedstocks and technologies are validated.

Biomass feedstock production systems still need to be developed and established on the ground – different kinds appropriate to different regions of the country. Incentives are still needed to encourage producers to invest in establishing new energy crops and equipment. The first dozen or so advanced biorefineries still need help getting off the ground with financing so the viability of these new technologies can be demonstrated at commercial scale. Rural schools, communities, and businesses that today depend on expensive oil heat, propane, or electricity, urgently need assistance to shift to less expensive, locally-produced, sustainable bioenergy and other forms of renewable energy.

As you consider the Farm Bill in the days ahead, please support the strong energy title as adopted and recommended by the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry and oppose all weakening amendments. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Carol Werner

Executive Director