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Cooperative Advocacy Toolkit

There are a number of ways in which your voice can be heard supporting cooperatives in Congress and funding for cooperative development by utilizing and following the checklist below and reviewing the key resources attached.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Following the guidelines from the U.S. House Appropriations Committee, and utilizing the information in the NCBA CLUSA RCDG fact sheet, write a constituent email request to your Member of Congress at: https://www.house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative Ask for a Member Appropriations Submission supporting RCDG <p>DEADLINE: March 16, 2018</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilizing the information in the NCBA CLUSA RCDG fact sheet, write a constituent email request supporting RCDG to your U.S. Senator. Mention whether or not you submitted outside witness testimony: https://www.senate.gov/senators/index.htm Following the below guidelines from the U.S. Senate Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee and utilizing the information in the NCBA CLUSA RCDG fact sheet, along with previous examples of testimony, submit Outside Witness Testimony supporting RCDG at: agri@appro.senate.gov with the subject line "FY19 AG OWT" <p>DEADLINE: March 30, 2018</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilizing the attached suggested letter template, write a constituent email request to your Member of Congress and ask that they join the bipartisan Congressional Cooperative Business Caucus: https://www.house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative
<input type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Write a constituent email request to your Member of Congress and ask that they cosponsor H.Res. 561, https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-resolution/561?q=%7B%22search%22%3A%5B%22hres561%22%5D%7D&r=1 <p>https://www.house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative</p>

Key Resources

- U.S. House Appropriations Committee FY19 member submission guidelines
- U.S. Senate Ag Appropriations FY19 outside witness testimony guidelines
- NCBA CLUSA RCDG fact sheet
- NCBA CLUSA Congressional Cooperative Business Caucus letter template
- CooperationWorks! FY18 testimony
- NCBA CLUSA FY18 testimony
- FY19 RCDG Budget Request
- RSC/Heritage FY17 Budget Blueprint
- NCBA CLUSA Farm Bill priorities letter
- U.S. House and Senate Ag Appropriations Contacts – *courtesy of Bloomberg*

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House of Representatives
Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515-6015

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NANCY FOX
CLERK AND STAFF DIRECTOR

TELEPHONE:
(202) 225-2771

Dear Colleague,

As Chairman of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies, I want to make you aware of the Subcommittee's procedures for receiving Members' programmatic and language submissions for consideration in the fiscal year 2019 Appropriations bill. Members must transmit submissions to the Subcommittee via electronic form, and in addition must upload a letter to the appropriations submissions system confirming those entries.

- The electronic submission system can be found at <https://AppropriationsSubmissions.house.gov>. The system will be available to accept submissions starting February 16th.
- The deadline for submissions for the Subcommittee on Agriculture is close of business on **March 16, 2018**.

The Appropriations Committee anticipates moving forward with drafting its bills expeditiously to assure their availability for consideration by the House.

I would like to emphasize that, at this time, under existing earmark policy, earmarks (as defined by clause 9(e) of Rule XXI of the Rules of the House) should not be included. Please also be aware that, should a Member request an earmark, such request invokes the Code of Official Conduct. Clause 17 of the Code prohibits Members from requesting a congressional earmark without disclosing certain information to the Chair of the Committee of jurisdiction. Members are advised to carefully consider their submissions to the Committee in light of this to avoid inadvertently triggering the earmark rules and requirements.

As you prepare your submissions, please note the following guidelines:

- All submissions must be made electronically at the <https://AppropriationsSubmissions.house.gov> web site. Only submissions received electronically will be considered. Hard-copy submissions are not required and will not be accepted.
- Submissions must include an uploaded letter signed by the Member supporting the Member's requests. Letters should simply list and describe each submission briefly. Letters may be either an individual letter for each request or a consolidated letter for

multiple requests made to this subcommittee. **Please note that the Member request website again allows consolidated letters to be uploaded only once, so that a letter with multiple requests does not need to be uploaded multiple times.**

- The electronic system will require Members to assign a priority rank order to all their submissions for this Subcommittee. The Subcommittee will review your priority rankings based on what you enter into the database.
- For requests with multiple Member cosponsors, each cosponsor must enter the same request into the online database. In addition, each cosponsor should either scan and upload a copy of the group request letter, or include the group request in a consolidated letter of all the Member's requests for the Subcommittee.
- For returning Members, the electronic system allows access to submissions made in previous years, so you may review those submissions if that is helpful.

Thank you for your interest in the programs and activities of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture. If you have any general questions or require further information, please contact the Subcommittee staff at (202) 225-2638. Technical questions related specifically to the operation of the system should be directed to the Committee's IT office at (202) 225-2718.

I look forward to working with you as the fiscal year 2019 appropriations process begins.

Sincerely,



Robert B. Aderholt
Chairman
Subcommittee on Agriculture,
Rural Development, Food and Drug
Administration, and Related Agencies

PS. Please call me on the House floor so that I can be sure to follow up with your request!

**Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration,
and Related Agencies**

**Outside Witness Testimony Instructions
Fiscal Year 2019 Appropriations**

Format:

- Testimony (including any supporting material) should be a **maximum** of four (4) pages, on 8 ½” x 11” paper, single sided, single spaced, and have a 1” margin.
- Do not include a cover page. At the top of the first page, list the name of the person or organization submitting testimony; that it is prepared for the Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies; and which Department and/or Agency the testimony is addressing.

Delivery:

- Delivery is by electronic submission only, as described below. Other forms of delivery, including fax and delivery through the U.S. mail, will not be accepted.
- Please e-mail testimony to agri@appro.senate.gov with the subject line “FY19 AG OWT.”
- To facilitate printing, we will only accept testimony in Microsoft Word or Word Perfect formats. **DO NOT SEND PDF FILES.**
- In the email, please include contact information (name, email, physical address and telephone).

Deadline:

All material must be received no later than close of business, **Friday, March 30, 2018**. This deadline will be strictly enforced.

Thank you.

Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration,
and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

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Rural Cooperative Development Grants The President's Budget and Congressional Appropriations Fact Sheet & Policy Issues

Requested Funding:

The National Cooperative Business Association CLUSA International (NCBA CLUSA) is requesting at least \$26,850,000 for the Rural Cooperative Development Grant (RCDG) program of the Rural Business – Cooperative Service account in the FY 2019 Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill.

Requested Bill Language:

RURAL COOPERATIVE DEVELOPMENT GRANTS

"For rural cooperative development grants authorized under section 310B(e) of the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act (7 U.S.C. 1932), \$26,850,000, of which \$300,000 shall be for a cooperative research agreement with a qualified academic institution to conduct research on the national economic impact of all types of cooperatives; and of which \$2,500,000 shall be for cooperative agreements for the appropriate technology transfer for rural areas program: Provided, That not to exceed \$3,000,000 shall be for grants for cooperative development centers, individual cooperatives, or groups of cooperatives that serve socially disadvantaged groups and a majority of the boards of directors or governing boards of which are comprised of individuals who are members of socially disadvantaged groups; of which \$15,000,000, to remain available until expended, shall be for value-added agricultural product market development grants, as authorized by section 231 of the Agricultural Risk Protection Act of 2000 (7 U.S.C. 1632a)."

Suggested Report Language:

"The Committee recognizes the important role that cooperatives play in the nation's rural economy and the continued need to fund the establishment and operation of centers for rural cooperative development with their primary purpose being the improvement of economic conditions in rural areas through the creation of new or improvement of cooperatives. The Committee recognizes a renewed need to conduct research on the national economic impact of all types of cooperatives. The Committee also recognizes the importance of continued coordination across federal agencies with jurisdiction over cooperative businesses and directs USDA to continue utilizing funding provided for in this bill to continue prioritizing work with federal agencies and key national and local cooperative stakeholder organizations through the interagency working group, authorized in the Agricultural Act of 2014, that seeks to identify and resolve barriers that inhibit cooperative development and growth."

2018 & 2019 Federal Budget:

As the leading voice for the nation's cooperative industry representing over 29,000 cooperative businesses across the country, the National Cooperative Business Association CLUSA International (NCBA CLUSA) expresses its strong support for the Rural Cooperative Development Grant (RCDG) program. We reject calls for the elimination of RCDG in the Rural Business – Cooperative Service account in the FY

2018 & 2019 budgets and encourage the committee to support it at levels no less than were provided in FY2017. These investments will continue to allow cooperative development centers to operate and further expand its reach into more rural communities to provide the types of technical assistance to cooperatives that allow for economic growth and job creation. While the budget request claims RCDG has not shown evidence of economic growth outcomes, the fact is since their inception almost 20 years ago, RCDG grants have been instrumental to the development of hundreds of businesses, the creation of thousands of jobs, and have provided a lifeline for rural towns. According to grant recipients surveyed by the association CooperationWorks!, from 2008-2014, RCDG has developed over 300 cooperative businesses and created or saved over 4,000 cooperative jobs and developed over 350 non-cooperative businesses and created or saved over 6,000 non-cooperative jobs



Program Overview:

The RCDG program is a competitive grants program, administered by USDA’s Rural Business-Cooperative Services Program. The primary objective of the RCDG program is to improve the economic condition of rural areas by assisting individuals or entities in the startup, expansion, or operational improvement of rural cooperatives and other business entities. Grants are awarded competitively on an annual basis to nonprofits or institutions of higher education that operate cooperative development centers who provide technical assistance to those seeking to form cooperatively owned businesses in rural areas. The maximum grant amount that USDA provides in a fiscal year is \$200,000. There is a 25 percent cost share requirement of the total project cost (5 percent cost share for 1994 Institutions). Cooperative development centers currently serve rural communities in about 30 states. They use the grants to fund critical technical assistance for economic development, such as legal and accounting assistance, feasibility studies, business planning, board education, and other services that help ensure the success of these businesses.

Program Cost and Recent Funding:

The RCDG program is currently authorized at \$40,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2014 to 2018 (7 U.S.C. 1932(e)(13)). The program has received annual appropriations since fiscal year 1993. Recent enacted levels and the current budget request are as follows:

	<u>FY 2015</u>	<u>FY 2016</u>	<u>FY 2017</u>	<u>*FY 2018</u>	<u>**FY 2018</u>	<u>***FY 2018</u>	<u>****FY 2019</u>
				<u>Budget</u>	<u>House</u>	<u>Senate</u>	<u>Budget</u>
Total	\$22,050,000	\$22,050,000	\$26,550,000	\$0	\$21,000,000	\$26,550,000	\$0
RCDG	\$8,800,000	\$8,800,000	\$8,800,000	\$0	\$8,500,000	\$8,800,000	\$0
ATTRA	\$2,500,000	\$2,500,000	\$2,750,000	\$0	\$2,500,000	\$2,750,000	\$0
VAPG	\$10,750,000	\$10,750,000	\$15,000,000	\$0	\$10,000,000	\$15,000,000	\$0

**Found on page 129 of the FY2018 Budget Appendix*

***Found on page 40 of H.R. 3268, the FY2018 House Agriculture Appropriations bill. Approved by House Appropriations Committee by voice vote on July 12, 2017*

****Found on page 45 of S. 1603, the FY2018 Senate Agriculture Appropriations bill. Approved by Senate Appropriations Committee on July 20, 2017*

*****Found on page 130 of the FY2019 Budget Appendix*

NOTE: Pursuant to P.L. 115-123, FY18 is operating under a continuing resolution based on FY17 levels through March 23, 2018.

ENERGY ASSISTANCE PAYMENTS—Continued

an expanding production of advanced biofuels. This program is authorized pursuant to section 9005 of the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002, as amended by the Agricultural Act of 2014.

The account also includes funding for Repowering Assistance payments. The purpose of this program is to encourage biorefineries to replace fossil fuel used to produce heat or power to operate the biorefineries. This program was authorized pursuant to section 9004 of the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002, as amended by the Agricultural Act of 2014.

The 2019 Budget does not include funding for these programs.

RURAL COOPERATIVE DEVELOPMENT GRANTS

Note.—A full-year 2018 appropriation for this account was not enacted at the time the budget was prepared; therefore, the budget assumes this account is operating under the Continuing Appropriations Act, 2018 (Division D of P.L. 115–56, as amended). The amounts included for 2018 reflect the annualized level provided by the continuing resolution.

Program and Financing (in millions of dollars)

Identification code 012–1900–0–1–452	2017 actual	2018 est.	2019 est.
Obligations by program activity:			
0001 Rural Cooperative Development Grants	9	9	.....
0011 Value Added Agricultural Producer Grants (discretionary)	4	29	.....
0012 Appropriate Technology Transfer for Rural Areas	3	3	.....
0013 Value Added Agricultural Product Marketing (mandatory)	2	8	.....
0900 Total new obligations (object class 41.0)	18	49	.....
Budgetary resources:			
Unobligated balance:			
1000 Unobligated balance brought forward, Oct 1	12	24	2
1001 Discretionary unobligated balance brought fwd, Oct 1	2	15	.....
1021 Recoveries of prior year unpaid obligations	3	1	1
1050 Unobligated balance (total)	15	25	3
Budget authority:			
Appropriations, discretionary:			
1100 Appropriation	27	26	.....
1900 Budget authority (total)	27	26	.....
1930 Total budgetary resources available	42	51	3
Memorandum (non-add) entries:			
1941 Unexpired unobligated balance, end of year	24	2	3
Change in obligated balance:			
Unpaid obligations:			
3000 Unpaid obligations, brought forward, Oct 1	94	68	69
3010 New obligations, unexpired accounts	18	49	.....
3020 Outlays (gross)	-41	-47	-37
3040 Recoveries of prior year unpaid obligations, unexpired	-3	-1	-1
3050 Unpaid obligations, end of year	68	69	31
Memorandum (non-add) entries:			
3100 Obligated balance, start of year	94	68	69
3200 Obligated balance, end of year	68	69	31
Budget authority and outlays, net:			
Discretionary:			
4000 Budget authority, gross	27	26	.....
Outlays, gross:			
4010 Outlays from new discretionary authority	2	2	.....
4011 Outlays from discretionary balances	23	27	27
4020 Outlays, gross (total)	25	29	27
Mandatory:			
Outlays, gross:			
4101 Outlays from mandatory balances	16	18	10
4180 Budget authority, net (total)	27	26	.....
4190 Outlays, net (total)	41	47	37

Grants for rural cooperative development were authorized under section 310B(e) of the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act by Public Law 104–127, April 4, 1996. These grants are made available to nonprofit corporations and institutions of higher education to fund the establishment and operation of centers for rural cooperative development. The Appropriate Technology Transfer to Rural Areas (ATTRA) program was first authorized by the Food Security Act of 1985. The program provides information and technical assistance to agricultural producers to adopt sustainable agricul-

tural practices that are environmentally friendly and lower production costs. These grants provide assistance to small minority producers through cooperatives and associations of cooperatives.

Additionally, USDA provides Value-Added Marketing Grants for producers of agricultural commodities. These grants can be used for planning activities and for working capital for marketing value-added agricultural products. The 2019 Budget eliminates these programs because they have not been able to show evidence of improved outcomes; such as economic growth and decreasing out-migration.

HEALTHY FOODS FINANCING INITIATIVE

Program and Financing (in millions of dollars)

Identification code 012–0015–0–1–451	2017 actual	2018 est.	2019 est.
Obligations by program activity:			
0011 Direct program activity .....	.....	2	.....
0900 Total new obligations, unexpired accounts (object class 41.0) .....	.....	2	.....
Budgetary resources:			
Unobligated balance:			
1000 Unobligated balance brought forward, Oct 1 .....	.....	1	.....
1001 Discretionary unobligated balance brought fwd, Oct 1 .....	.....	1	.....
Budget authority:			
Appropriations, discretionary:			
1100 Appropriation	1	1	.....
1930 Total budgetary resources available	1	2	.....
Memorandum (non-add) entries:			
1941 Unexpired unobligated balance, end of year	1	.....	.....
Change in obligated balance:			
Unpaid obligations:			
3000 Unpaid obligations, brought forward, Oct 1 .....	.....	.....	2
3010 New obligations, unexpired accounts .....	.....	2	.....
3020 Outlays (gross) .....	.....	.....	-1
3050 Unpaid obligations, end of year .....	.....	2	1
Memorandum (non-add) entries:			
3100 Obligated balance, start of year .....	.....	.....	2
3200 Obligated balance, end of year .....	.....	2	1
Budget authority and outlays, net:			
Discretionary:			
4000 Budget authority, gross	1	1	.....
Outlays, gross:			
4011 Outlays from discretionary balances .....	.....	.....	1
4180 Budget authority, net (total)	1	1	.....
4190 Outlays, net (total) .....	.....	.....	1

RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GRANTS

Program and Financing (in millions of dollars)

Identification code 012–3105–0–1–452	2017 actual	2018 est.	2019 est.
Obligations by program activity:			
0001 Rural economic development grants	9	9	.....
0002 Subsidy	6	5	.....
0900 Total new obligations (object class 41.0)	15	14	.....
Budgetary resources:			
Unobligated balance:			
1000 Unobligated balance brought forward, Oct 1	185	241	285
1021 Recoveries of prior year unpaid obligations	1	.....	.....
1050 Unobligated balance (total)	186	241	285
Budget authority:			
Appropriations, discretionary:			
1131 Unobligated balance of appropriations permanently reduced .....	.....	-132	-225
Appropriations, mandatory:			
1230 Appropriations and/or unobligated balance of appropriations permanently reduced	-132	.....	.....
Spending authority from offsetting collections, mandatory:			
1800 Collected	200	190	184
1801 Change in uncollected payments, Federal sources	2	.....	.....

prior consideration and was disappointingly maintained in the recent 2014 Farm Bill. The Food and Drug Administration is charged with inspecting all seafood and fish, but catfish is now inexplicably the responsibility of the USDA. GAO has made it clear that such an arrangement is nonsensical, issuing a report titled “Responsibility for Inspecting Catfish Should Not Be Assigned to USDA”.¹⁵²

ELIMINATE RURAL COOPERATIVE DEVELOPMENT GRANTS (RCDG)

The Rural Cooperative Development Grants (RCDG) program is meant to provide grants to subsidize rural cooperatives. Grantees are only subject to a 25-percent cost-sharing requirement and may use the funds for the operation, expansion, or startup of a cooperative. Living in rural areas comes with many advantages for those who choose to do so, but the general taxpayer should not be forced to subsidize providing costly conveniences for those who make that choice. The RCDG program should be eliminated in FY 2017, saving \$22 million per year.

ELIMINATE RURAL RENEWABLE ENERGY SUBSIDIES

The Renewable Energy Subsidies program should be eliminated beginning in FY 2017, saving the taxpayers \$500,000 in discretionary funding per year. This program subsidizes the development of renewable energy programs for small rural businesses and agriculture producers. The federal government should not be in the business of subsidizing source-specific types of energy that would be better produced by the private market. According to GAO, this is just one of 679 different economically unsound initiatives meant to promote greenenergy.

PROHIBIT FUNDING FOR NATIONAL SCHOOL LUNCH STANDARDS

The Obama Administration has undertaken a high-profile effort to force local school districts to serve “healthy” lunches. These efforts have proved costly for schools and unpopular with students. Recent appropriations bills have allowed some schools the opportunity to opt out of the standards. Beginning in FY 2017, funding for the National School Lunch Program standards should be prohibited, returning control of students’ diets to their parents.

PROHIBIT FUNDING FOR AGRICULTURE MARKETING ORDERS

The federal government currently operates 28 marketing orders for different fruits, vegetables, and specialty crops. These agreements, which date back to the market intrusions of the New Deal, allow the government to collude with segments of certain industries to restrict the supply of food to consumers. The cartels created by the agreement

¹⁵² Government Accountability Office, “Seafood Safety: Responsibility for Inspecting Catfish Should Not Be Assigned to USDA”, June 8, 2012. <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-12-411>

From: Alex Stone, Executive Director, CooperationWorks, alex@cooperationworks.coop
From: Tom Pierson, Advocacy Chair, CooperationWorks, tom@mcef.coop

**Before the Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture
on Rural Cooperative Development Programs**

Chairman Frelinghuysen, Vice Chair Valadao and members of the Subcommittee, we are privileged to write on behalf of CooperationWorks (CW) – the nationwide network of cooperative developers - to request at least \$26,550,000 for the Rural Cooperative Development Grant (RCDG) program of the Rural Business – Cooperative Service account in the FY 2018 Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill. This proposed amount would maintain level funding for RCDG which includes the Rural Cooperative Development Grant, Socially Disadvantaged Groups Grant, and the Value Added Producer Grant. These appropriations provide crucial contributes to the economic development and vitality of rural America. These programs collectively benefit businesses across industry sectors, enabling small local businesses, farms and food producers, and resident owned communities to thrive.

Since its inception almost 20 years ago, the Rural Cooperative Development programs have been instrumental to the development of hundreds of businesses, the creation of thousands of jobs, and have provided a lifeline for rural towns. Grant recipients surveyed by CooperationWorks found that from 2008-2014, RCDG-funded centers:

Developed over 300 cooperatives

Developed over 350 non-cooperative business

Creating or saved over 4,000 co-op jobs

Created or saved 6,000 non-co-op jobs

The survey conducted for the years 2012-2014 (most recent data and the only survey asking about housing) found that, during that period, RCDG-funded centers developed at least 1,878 housing units. USDA's Rural Cooperative Development programs are unique in supporting cross-sector business development on a national scale.

Food Co-ops: Since 2006, Food Co-op Initiative (FCI) has assisted in opening over 140 new, retail food co-ops with more than 75% still operating. Federal support has enabled FCI to more than double its impact. Conservatively, these grocery co-ops generate:

Over \$250 million in annual sales revenues

1500 full-time jobs

\$50 million in purchases from local growers and producers

As demonstrated by FCI's success, the impact of RCDG funding is large in scope, supporting local economies and businesses, but other development centers highlight that it is also deeply personal. In the 150 person town of Bowdon, ND, the North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Co-ops assisted in saving the town's lone grocery store with the cooperative model, preserving both an economic and community hub. Stories like this can be found throughout rural America. With the consolidation of farms for greater efficiency, rural towns have lost both population and outside investment, and the loss of a small town's grocery store means schools and key community services will be prone to follow. With RCDG funding, the outcomes for these towns are vastly improved, as funds support economic development and stabilize community anchor institutions.

Ag and Natural Resources: University of Wisconsin Center for Cooperatives has leveraged USDA RCDG funds to help develop two food hubs that are using the cooperative business model in unique ways to aggregate, distribute, and market local foods. One such hub is Fifth Season Cooperative – a cooperative headquartered in Viroqua, Wisconsin. It was established in 2010 to provide the infrastructure and coordination needed to move locally grown products into local institutions such as hospitals, universities, and school systems. Now entering its sixth full year of sourcing regional foods, Fifth Season continues to grow its membership and market share. The co-op has over 40 members and has developed innovative products such as a frozen root vegetable mix based on customer demand. According to a 2014 report by the Wallace Center, involvement with Fifth Season has helped 30% of farmer members to access new markets, 60% of farmers members to increase gross sales, and 70% of farmer members to become food safety approved or certified.

In Washington, the Northwest Cooperative Development Center is assisting the Pacific Northwest Fiberweb Cooperative which is building a fibershed on the Olympic Peninsula. The concept of the fibershed is to create a networked local textile culture, enhancing regional agriculture while strengthening local economies. The entire population is expected to benefit including its wool growers, artisans, and related businesses. The 2010 U.S. Census estimated the population of the Peninsula at 489,232. The 2007 Ag Census identified 111 wool production farms within the region.

In the Northwest, the Value Added Producer Grant (VAPG) working capital support enables farm applicants to make investments of their own capital to build new or expand existing facilities and purchase equipment. These infrastructure projects provide rural communities work

opportunities for local contractors and equipment providers as well as new jobs for community members. Since 2011 the Northwest Agriculture Business Center has provided technical assistance to farmers to prepare business feasibility studies, business plans, and to prepare and submit VAPG grant projects and applications to the USDA. This valuable program has provided their clients \$2.2M in working capital which has resulted in more than \$5.6M in new sales and created more than 40 new jobs. Four of these projects involved cooperatives or farmers markets positively impacting more than 80 farms.

Housing: Cooperative Development Institute (CDI) has developed New England Resident Owned Communities (NEROC). This program assists residents of manufactured homes in rental communities in gaining ownership of their communities, spurring affordable housing development in the Northeast. Since the program began in 2009, CDI has assisted in the development of 27 such resident-owned communities, resulting in over 2,500 homes.

USDA's Rural Cooperative Development programs provide grants that have created national impact through networks of organizations. These programs are unique and highly efficient in achieving the federal government's goals.

- Federal support for cooperative development leverages significant private investments in locally-owned businesses and rural jobs.
- RCDG provides essential funding for training and guidance to aid rural business development.
- Cooperative rural enterprises are helping to save and revitalize rural communities' economic foundations.

The RCDG has created the formation of a nationwide cadre of professionals trained and focused on fostering and improving cooperatives in rural and urban areas, with the accompanying economic and community benefits. Since the Small Business Administration and their affiliated SBDCs do not provide technical assistance support for the cooperative business model, RCDG is the only federal program that funds such technical assistance. RCDG is a unique component that focuses on development of new and expanded cooperatively owned businesses in rural areas, which results in regional impact, and nationally networked expertise. The programs within RCDG provide unique and effective economic development capacity to communities throughout rural America and should be preserved in the FY2018 federal budget.



Testimony for the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies

**U.S. Department of Agriculture
Title III
Rural Development Programs
Rural Business – Cooperative Service
Rural Cooperative Development Grants**

**Judy Ziewacz, President & CEO
NCBA CLUSA
May 12, 2017**

Chairman Hoeven, Ranking Member Merkley, and Members of the Subcommittee:

My name is Judy Ziewacz, I am the President & CEO of NCBA CLUSA. NCBA CLUSA is the apex trade association for cooperative business in the United States and an international development organization. Our work provides cross-sector education, support, and advocacy that empowers people to own and control their own businesses through the cooperative model. We also engage with cooperatives around the world.

We reject calls for the elimination of discretionary programs administered by USDA's Rural Business-Cooperative Service made in the America First Budget Blueprint released on March 13, 2017 and request at least \$26,850,000 for Rural Cooperative Development Grants (RCDG), a program in the Rural Business – Cooperative Service account, in the FY 2018 Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill. We request the following bill language:

RURAL COOPERATIVE DEVELOPMENT GRANTS

For rural cooperative development grants authorized under section 310B(e) of the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act (7 U.S.C. 1932), \$26,850,000, of which \$300,000 shall be for a cooperative research agreement with a qualified academic institution to conduct research on the national economic impact of all types of cooperatives; and of which \$2,750,000 shall be for cooperative agreements for the appropriate technology transfer for rural areas program: *Provided*, That not to exceed \$3,000,000 shall be for grants for cooperative development centers, individual cooperatives, or groups of cooperatives that serve socially disadvantaged groups and a majority of the boards of directors or governing boards of which are comprised of individuals who are members of socially disadvantaged groups; of which \$15,000,000, to remain available until expended, shall be for value-added agricultural product market development grants, as authorized by section 231 of the Agricultural Risk Protection Act of 2000 (7 U.S.C. 1632a).

This proposed amount would maintain nearly level funding for RCDG, which would include \$8.8M for grants to institutions to establish and operate centers for rural cooperative development, including those that serve socially disadvantaged groups; cooperative agreements for appropriate technology transfer for rural areas program; for value-added agricultural product market development grants; and for cooperative research agreements with qualified academic institutions to conduct research on the national economic impact of all types of cooperatives. Appropriating these monies will further provide for the economic development and vitality of rural America. These programs collectively benefit businesses across many industry sectors, enabling small local businesses, farms and food producers, and resident-owned communities to succeed.

The continued funding is well justified. We trust the Committee recognizes the important role that cooperatives play in the nation's rural economy and the significant contributions they make in their communities. The primary purpose of this funding is directed at the improvement of economic conditions in rural areas through the creation or growth of new or existing cooperatives. We reject any notion in the FY 2018 budget request that these programs are underperforming and duplicative as they are the only programs in the federal government that are tailored to serve the specific needs of cooperatives in rural communities.

Since its inception almost 20 years ago, Rural Cooperative Development Grant programs have been instrumental to the development of hundreds of businesses, the creation of thousands of jobs, and have provided a lifeline for rural towns. According to grant recipients surveyed by the association CooperationWorks, from 2008-2014, the RCDG grants:

- Developed over 300 cooperative businesses and created or saved over 4,000 cooperative jobs
- Developed over 350 non-cooperative businesses and created or saved over 6,000 non-cooperative jobs

The Rural Cooperative Development Grant program is unique in supporting cross-sector business development on a national scale, including many that support the important sectors of housing and delivery of food in rural America, as well as assisting many family businesses faced with conversion issues as they approach retirement age.

The RCDG program has created the formation of a nationwide cadre of professionals trained and focused on fostering and improving cooperatives in rural and urban areas, with the accompanying economic and community benefits. Since the Small Business Administration and their affiliated Small Business Development Centers do not yet provide technical assistance support for the cooperative business model on a national scale, RCDG should not be considered duplicative and remains the only federal program that funds such technical assistance.

The RCDG program is a competitive grant program, administered by USDA's Rural Development, Rural Business-Cooperative Services Program. The primary objective of the RCDG program is to improve the economic condition of rural areas by assisting individuals or entities in the startup, expansion, or operational improvement of rural cooperatives and other business entities. Grants are awarded competitively on an annual basis to nonprofits or institutions of higher education that operate cooperative development centers who provide technical assistance to those seeking to form cooperatively owned businesses in rural areas. The maximum grant amount that USDA provides in a fiscal year is \$200,000. There is a 25 percent cost share requirement of the total project cost (5 percent cost share for 1994 Institutions). Cooperative development centers currently serve rural communities in

about 30 states. They use the grants to fund critical technical assistance for economic development, such as legal and accounting assistance, feasibility studies, business planning, board education, and other services that help ensure the success of these businesses.

The RCDG program is currently authorized at \$40,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2014 to 2018 (authorized under section 310B(e) of the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act, 7 U.S.C. 1932(e)(13)). The program has received annual appropriations since fiscal year 1993. Recent enacted levels are as follows:

	<u>FY 2013</u>	<u>FY 2014</u>	<u>FY 2015</u>	<u>FY 2016</u>	<u>FY 2017</u>
Total	\$24,600,000	\$26,050,000	\$22,050,000	\$22,050,000	\$26,550,000
RCDG	\$8,700,000	\$8,800,000	\$8,800,000	\$8,800,000	\$8,800,000
ATTRA	\$2,100,000	\$2,250,000	\$2,500,000	\$2,500,000	\$2,750,000
VAPG	\$13,800,000	\$15,000,000	\$10,750,000	\$10,750,000	\$15,000,000

The Committee should also recognize the growing need for coordination across the many cooperative sectors and the federal agencies with jurisdiction over them. The committee should encourage, in any accompanying report language, that USDA use its cooperative expertise and leadership and utilize any funding provided for in this bill to continue working with federal agencies and key national and local cooperative stakeholder organizations on plans coordinated and chaired by its interagency working group, as required in the Agricultural Act of 2014 (7 U.S.C. 1932(e)(12)), that seeks to identify and resolve barriers that inhibit cooperative development and growth nationwide.

The Committee should also recognize the need to revive funding for cooperative research programs with qualified academic institutions that conduct research on the effects of all types of cooperatives on the national economy as provided in law (7 U.S.C. 1932(e)(10)). FY 2010 was the most recent year funds were appropriated for this type of work, totaling \$300,000. The committee should be aware that the U.S. Census Bureau, as part of their 2017 Economic Census, will for the first time in 20 years ask businesses and establishments they survey if they are a cooperative. The data on cooperatives that will be obtained from these Census tabulations should help the public and those that shape public policy better understand their value and application toward economic development and the creation and sustainability of jobs. This data however will need to be analyzed and reported out, which is why this funding is critical especially at this point in time.

As the leading voice for the nation's cooperative industry representing over 29,000 cooperative businesses across the country, the National Cooperative Business Association CLUSA International (NCBA CLUSA) expresses its strong support for the Rural Cooperative Development Grant (RCDG) program and encourages the committee to support it at least at levels that were provided for in FY 2017 that will continue to allow cooperative development centers to operate and further expand its reach into more rural communities to provide the types of technical assistance to cooperatives that allow for economic growth and job creation.

We again encourage you to reject budget requests for the potential elimination of the RCDG program in the Rural Business - Cooperative Service account and instead provide the necessary federal investment needed to help create, sustain, and inspire vibrant rural communities.

Thank you again for allowing me to testify.

Sample Letter to Federal Representatives

“Dear Senator or Representative ___:

I (We) encourage you to join the bipartisan Congressional Cooperative Business Caucus. Cooperatives, or co-ops for short, are important to the economy and a proven business model used to create and sustain jobs that provide valuable products and services throughout many sectors in our economy. Cooperatives also develop and sustain emerging democracies and civil societies around the globe.

This caucus is important because it creates a venue toward better informing our elected officials on the **important role that cooperatives play in the development of our national and international economy**. The use of the cooperative business model can complement other business models in our economy and be viewed as a viable market solution and business option toward solving a number of today's public policy challenges. A cooperative's unique structure and characteristics lend itself to many distinct business and regulatory hurdles. These need to be more fully understood so that policies can be supported and the model is promoted to ensure that they flourish.

A cooperative is an autonomous association of persons united by seven principles to voluntarily meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise. Businesses operating under a cooperative form utilize a model through which those using the entity's goods or services are actively involved in the governance of the organization and whose profits belong collectively to them.

Cooperatives exist worldwide and inject \$3 trillion into the U.S. economy every year. They create millions of jobs; can be found in virtually every sector of the U.S. economy; and offer solutions to meet challenging public policy needs —from affordable housing, to quality sourced food, greater access to electricity, banking and credit needs, and for early childhood learning. They spur economic growth in underserved rural and urban America; empower individuals, families and communities to better their lives; and ensure that people have access to high-quality goods and services at competitive prices and costs.

Despite their position in the American economy, there remain substantial awareness challenges among the general public and the elected leaders that represent them on **what a co-op looks like, who are co-ops, where are co-ops, and why do people choose them**.

The caucus will facilitate briefings to promote greater awareness and understanding of these issues. The caucus will also be a forum for members to share best practices

and work to improve the effectiveness of policy to benefit and promote the cooperative business model nationally and internationally.

I encourage you to join the Congressional Cooperative Business Caucus and have your office contact the officers of co-chairs Rep. Ed Royce (R-CA) or Rep. Mark Pocan (D-WI) and tell them you want to become a member.



November 6, 2017

The Honorable Pat Roberts
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The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
Ranking Member
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The Honorable K. Michael Conaway
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The Honorable Collin C. Peterson
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Dear Chairman Roberts and Conaway and Ranking Members Stabenow and Peterson:

As your committees begin consideration of the 2018 Farm Bill, please consider our association's priorities and suggestions so that cooperatives have the authority they need to carry out the important work they perform in the communities they serve both domestically and around the world. Specifically, we call to your attention to these key areas in the rural development and trade titles, Titles VI and III, respectively, throughout the bill:

TITLE VI – Rural Development

SUBTITLE A – Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act

Rural Cooperative Development Grants

Locally or Regionally Produced Agricultural Food Products

SUBTITLE C – Miscellaneous

Value-added Agricultural Product Market Development Grants

TITLE III – Trade

SUBTITLE A – Food for Peace Act

Minimum Level of Nonemergency Food Assistance

John Ogonowski and Doug Bereuter Farmer-to-Farmer Program

SUBTITLE C – Other Agricultural Trade Laws

Food for Progress Act of 1985

The cooperative business model is a proven economic development tool that creates horizontal and vertical linkages that empower people to overcome barriers of isolation, lack of access to capital and markets, and low-density population in the United States and emerging markets abroad. As a matter of public policy, cooperatives should be eligible for all programs authorized in the farm bill. The bill should also prioritize cooperatives when possible to address critical and emerging policy needs such as access to in-home care and healthy foods, sustainable jobs and retention of small businesses. Cooperatives are one of the most effective strategies to help the bottom line of farmers and provide services such as electricity and credit to people who live in rural communities. They have enabled residents of our rural communities to compete and thrive in increasingly consolidated market places.

The following suggestions will strengthen cooperatives' ability to create economic opportunity:

TITLE VI – Rural Development

SUBTITLE A – Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act

We seek investment in innovative, cooperative strategies in the rural development title for people who live in our nation's rural communities and provide services that help them thrive. Specifically, we ask that the bill provide the following:

Rural Cooperative Development Grants –

We support the continuation of existing law and the program's reservation of funds to address the needs of minority communities and ask that the program be reauthorized by keeping authorization of appropriations to no less than \$40 million annually beyond 2018.

We support enhancements to the cooperative research program whereby the Secretary shall enter into a cooperative research agreement with 1 or more qualified academic institutions in each fiscal year to conduct research on the effects of all types of cooperatives on the national economy. Suggested legislative text could include:

“Section 310B(g) of the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act (7 U.S.C. 1932(e)) is amended by adding at the end the following:

“(10) Cooperative research program.—

“, that includes research and analysis based on data from the Economic Census performed every five years by the U.S. Census Bureau”

We support the continuation of existing law as it relates to the Interagency working group which provides national and local cooperative organizations with a voice and opportunity to collaborate with federal agencies. This collaboration has been successful in linking appropriate federal resources to development and data research needed to forge unique cooperative solutions for the needs of rural people and their communities.

Locally or Regionally Produced Agricultural Food Products –

We would like to see that worker cooperatives who provide jobs and services to underserved, rural communities made eligible under the loan and loan guarantee section of this program. Suggested legislative text, with changes to current law underlined, could include:

“Section 310B(g) of the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act (7 U.S.C. 1932(g)) is amended by adding the following:

“(9)(B) LOAN AND LOAN GUARANTEE PROGRAM.—

“(i) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall make or guarantee loans to individuals, cooperatives, cooperative organizations, businesses, worker cooperatives that provide jobs and services to underserved, rural communities, and other entities to establish and facilitate enterprises that process, distribute, aggregate, store, and market locally or regionally produced agricultural food products to support community development and farm and ranch income.”

SUBTITLE C – Miscellaneous

Value-added Agricultural Product Market Development Grants –

We support the reauthorization beyond 2018 in an amount not less than \$63 million.

TITLE III - Trade

We support the continuation of trade through Food for Peace and other laws and commend the previous 2014 Farm Bill’s objective that Title II programs be modified to focus on building resilience to mitigate and prevent food crises and reduce the future need for emergency aid. NCBA CLUSA has a long history of development activities through the cooperative model and/or principles to address the underlying causes of food insecurity in areas around the world. Assistance under this title has a tremendously powerful, multiplier effect on U.S. communities. Doing these programs overseas directly benefits U.S. businesses, jobs, the agriculture sector, and U.S. communities as a whole. They are "money in the bank domestically" investments. Specifically, we ask that the bill provide the following:

SUBTITLE A – Food for Peace Act

Minimum Level of Nonemergency Food Assistance -

We support a continued authorization beyond 2018 that authorizes \$2.5 billion and no less than \$350 million to carry out nonemergency food assistance programs.

John Ogonowski and Doug Bereuter Farmer-to-Farmer Program –

We support the reauthorization beyond 2018 in amounts not less than the greater of \$15 million or 0.6 percent of the amounts made available under the 2014 Farm Bill. Through programs like this, Americans continue to engage with the world, taking real life, small town American farm experiences to places as far-flung as Senegal, Mozambique, and Burkina Faso. Through this tremendously powerful and

successful program, we share U.S. experience and technology with people worldwide. We build partnerships --and friendships that endure for decades --with communities in every country in the developing world, whose value can never be priced in dollars alone.

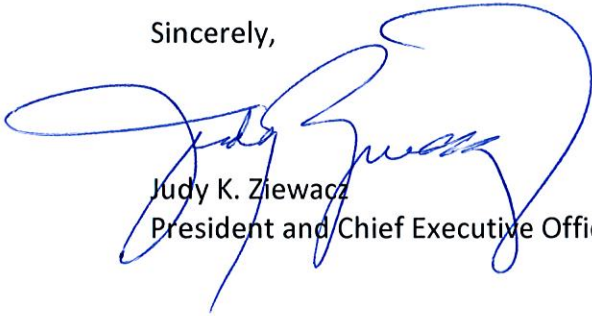
SUBTITLE C – Other Agricultural Trade Laws

Food for Progress Act of 1985 -

We support a continued authorization beyond 2018 for the Food for Progress program. The U.S.-based businesses with whom we work, such as Starbucks and McCormick spices, have enormous financial stakes in sourcing sustainable supplies from emerging markets. Our cooperatives in multiple markets are integral to U.S. multinational corporations' financial bottom line. Through the implementation of this program, we help U.S. businesses succeed, helping U.S. communities grow and strengthen, sustainably, and creating American jobs.

NCBA CLUSA understands the tremendous complexity you and your committee and staff must undertake in this Farm Bill and appreciates your consideration of these above listed priorities and suggestions.

Sincerely,



Judy K. Ziewacz
President and Chief Executive Officer



Senate Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies

Chairperson



Sen. John Hoeven

North Dakota

Ranking Member



Sen. Jeff Merkley

Oregon

Member Breakdown

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Alabama

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Rep. Sanford Bishop

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R 8 Republicans

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