



January 20, 2021

President Joseph R. Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

The Illinois Corn Growers Association wishes to welcome you to the most important job you've ever held – President of the United States of America.

We appreciate your already thoughtful approach to our industry in the nomination of Tom Vilsack for Secretary of Agriculture. It is exciting to think of the opportunities in store with a proven leader like Mr. Vilsack at the helm. Equally, we are pleased that Michael Regan and Katherine Tai have already met with the CEOs of our national agricultural organizations. You have made understanding rural America a priority and acted upon it.

Corn farmers remain passionate about the opportunity for corn-based ethanol to contribute to our nation's clean energy goals. According to the USDA, corn ethanol reduces greenhouse gas emissions by 43 percent when compared to conventional gasoline. It holds the potential for greater reductions with continued improvements in farming practices and ethanol production. Allowing corn-based ethanol to be a part of our clean energy future not only improves our environment, but also boosts rural economies and keeps family farms in business. This locally-grown, lung-healthy fuel cleans the air and boosts U.S. economies – a win-win for everyone.

The Illinois Corn Growers Association looks forward to working with you in the development of a low carbon, high octane energy future utilizing corn-based ethanol. This work began in the fall of 2020 when Congresswoman Cheri Bustos (D-IL) introduced the Next Generation Fuels Act. While we understand that work remains to be done to develop a low carbon, high octane fuel standard, corn farmers are excited and passionate about an opportunity to contribute to your top priority to address climate change.

A second priority for Illinois corn farmers is the upgrading of our inland waterways infrastructure. Certainly, you already realize the competitive advantage the U.S. enjoys via a massive and vibrant inland waterway transportation system, but perhaps its degraded state isn't top of mind. The locks and dams we use today were built in the 1930s with a 50-year lifespan for steamboats and much smaller cargo ships. Today, while other countries continue to modernize their infrastructure, farmers and manufacturers in the Midwest are still using dilapidated locks and dams from the 1930s. Investment here empowers U.S. trade and so much more.

Building updated and upgraded locks and dams will mean jobs for many skilled tradesmen in the Midwest. In fact, the opportunity to get people back to meaningful work is so great that the

United Brotherhood of Carpenters is a part of our inland waterways infrastructure coalition. Additionally, investing in inland waterways infrastructure contributes to your climate change goals, as barges have the lowest carbon footprint among freight transportation. Compared to barges, moving an identical amount of cargo by rail generates 30 percent more emissions, while trucks generate 1,000 percent more emissions.

These top two priorities – a low carbon, high octane fuel standard and upgraded inland waterways infrastructure – naturally empower other important priorities for corn farmers like building profitable trade relationships and helping corn farmers contribute to a global climate solution. Modern locks and dams will make the U.S. the most competitive and efficient agricultural exporter in the world and will certainly come with a boost to the economy. Furthermore, while corn farmers have a lot to be proud of due to their changing farming practices that reduce soil erosion, sequester more carbon in the soil, and minimize nutrient runoff, they feel great about cleaning the air for all Americans via a new fuel standard.

Farmers are proactive. We will always seek to be the best we can be, and we are very proud of our contributions to the U.S. economy and the rural economies closest to us. We excel at employing technology to empower positive environmental changes, with many farmers already mapping their fields and prescriptively planting seeds and applying fertilizers and chemicals precisely and only where needed.

We are carbon sequestration powerhouses. Think about how much carbon dioxide a corn plant can “breathe in” during its lifetime, sequestering all that carbon in the soil. Soil can store 2-3 times as much carbon than our air, so farmers are increasingly no-till farming, which means they do not disturb the soil at all when they plant a new crop. Not tilling the soil prevents soil erosion and keeps carbon in our soils. You can learn more from [Illinois farmer Jeff Jarboe here.](#)

We are working with conservation groups like The Nature Conservancy and consumer packaged goods groups like PepsiCo to grow farmer investment and involvement in these conservation practices. Our flagship conservation program, [Precision Conservation Management](#), works directly with farmers to help them understand the environmental and financial benefits to adopting new practices, and our big partners understand that working directly with farmers to make their businesses more sustainable means economic sustainability too. We are making real progress. In the first two years of working with PepsiCo, participating farmers have reduced CO2 emissions by 8,155 metric tons, equivalent to taking 1,762 cars off the road.

In addition to this great work, the Illinois ag production industry represents six percent of the jobs in Illinois or 482,545 jobs and \$137.6 billion in sales, [according to this 2019 study.](#)

Agriculture has a bright future. We look forward to acting as your administration’s resource in pursuit of both your climate change goals and your economic development goals. We join you in your hope for a very successful and profitable four years for the United States of America.

Sincerely,



Randy DeSutter, President

cc: Illinois Congressional Delegation