

January 8, 2020

The Honorable Jason Crow
Chairman, Subcommittee on Innovation and Workforce Development
House Committee on Small Business
Washington D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Crow:

On behalf of the more than 1,600 member companies of the Irrigation Association, thank you for your focus on technology and innovation in American agriculture, specifically related to irrigation and water management. Tomorrow's hearing on "Farming in the 21st Century: The Impacts of Agriculture Technology in Rural America" addresses technology that affects all Americans. Our nation's farmers provide the food, feed, fuel, and fiber that drives America. Not only is agriculture the backbone of America, it literally provides us the energy to be global leaders in every way.

According to the USDA's 2018 Irrigation and Water Management Survey, 55.9 million acres of American agriculture is irrigated. This accounts for 25 percent of U.S. agricultural land. This amount is actually an increase of approximately 600,000 acres from 2013; however, in 2013 irrigated agriculture accounted for a higher percentage of U.S. agricultural land. With population increasing, more domestic and international pressures impacting our nation's farmers, and less resources (land, water, etc.) available for agricultural production, we need to strive for the greatest productivity possible from our agricultural land.

The mission of the Irrigation Association is to promote efficient irrigation. The most important tools we use for this are education and technology development and adoption. The future of farming lies in technologies developed right here in the United States. The U.S. is not only leading the charge with innovative and sustainable farming practices, we are developing the technologies that will maximize our water use, while increasing our yield.

The U.S. has been at the forefront of innovation and job creation for years. From the advent of the center pivot in 1940 to the implementation of drip-irrigation to the use of IoT and cloud-based technologies, the irrigation industry is providing farmers more tools to help them be successful in their business and conserving our precious natural resource, water, while doing so.

Unfortunately, U.S. farming policy has not kept pace with innovation. While the farm bill, which is developed every five years, has cost-share opportunities for water conservation measures taken by farmers, this is the only federal program that seeks to promote on-farm water efficiency. The Irrigation Association believes that efficient irrigation lies at the crossroads of innovation, workforce development, environmental conservation, and on-farm productivity. In fact, while many of the irrigation manufacturers are larger in size, the majority of businesses involved in the trade of irrigation are rural small businesses. Without these businesses, our rural communities and agricultural operations would suffer tremendously. According to the USDA, in 2018 alone, more than \$1 billion was invested in hired labor dedicated to on-farm irrigation.

We look forward to working with you and the committee as you address opportunities to advance innovation in our nation's agricultural sector. The members of the Irrigation Association are dedicated to efficient irrigation practices and technologies and look forward to providing this expertise as the committee continues to look at on-farm technology opportunities.

If you have any questions, or you would like more information about the innovative efforts happening in irrigation throughout the United States, please feel free to contact me at johnfarner@irrigation.org or 703.536.7080.

Sincerely,



John Farner
Government and Public Affairs Director

CC: Rep. Troy Balderson, Ranking Member
Rep. Marc Veasey
Rep. Chrissy Houlahan
Rep. Abby Finkenauer
Rep. Andy Kim
Rep. Sharice Davids
Rep. Tim Burchett
Rep. Kevin Hern
Rep. Nydia Velazquez, Chair, Small Business Committee
Rep. Steve Chabot, Ranking Member, Small Business Committee