

July 7, 2021

The Honorable Thomas J. Vilsack  
Secretary of Agriculture  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Ave. S.W.  
Washington, DC 20250

Via e-mail: [agsec@usda.gov](mailto:agsec@usda.gov)

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

Thank you in advance for your time and consideration. I am writing on behalf of Family Agriculture Resource Management Services (F.A.R.M.S.), a national nonprofit dedicated to reversing small farmland loss to ensure generational wealth and reducing hunger in rural low-income communities.

Every year, 30,000 acres of Black landownership is lost, primarily because of nonpayment of property tax, eminent domain, unprofitable business models, discrimination, generational outmigration, and lack of estate planning. Compounding farmers' financial burden are federally mandated assessment fees that totaled over \$885 million in 2016 alone and that are paid by agricultural producers, handlers, processors, importers, and others to the agricultural checkoff programs overseen by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Marketing Service.

We have learned from People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) that many of these agricultural checkoff programs use a portion of these fees to fund animal experiments that are cruel, unscientific, and not required by law. We were shocked to learn that in experiments funded by these checkoffs and published between 2015 and 2019, more than 2,600 animals were doused, poisoned, force-fed, starved, irradiated, bled, suffocated, beheaded, and dissected.

Many farmers in today's economy are struggling. They don't need barbaric tests on animals to sell their agricultural commodities. Rather, they need economic relief from inflated assessment fees that are wasted on worthless experiments on animals.

We are firmly against taxing farmers to fund needless and senseless animal tests. **We are joining PETA in respectfully urging you to prohibit the agricultural checkoff programs from using assessment fees to fund animal experiments.** You can contact me via PETA's Dr. Frances Cheng at [FrancesC@peta.org](mailto:FrancesC@peta.org). Please respond by August 4, 2021. Thank you.

Sincerely yours,

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