

Farms to Grow, Inc. |

495 Lake Park Avenue Suite 10504 Oakland, CA, 94610 | Phone: 510-379-8600



October 28, 2021

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

Via e-mail: agsec@usda.gov

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

As you know, Farms to Grow (FTG)—a national nonprofit that advocates for women farmers, physically challenged and limited-access organic farmers, and Black, Native American, Hispanic, and other minority farmers—has collaborated with the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) to promote grant programs and provide these underserved communities with technical assistance.

We’re shocked and disappointed to learn from our friends at People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) that many of the agricultural checkoff programs overseen by the USDA AMS have been using a portion of the federally mandated annual assessment fees paid by commodity farmers to fund pointless tests on animals. Specifically, in experiments funded by several checkoffs and published between 2015 and 2019, more than 2,600 animals were doused, poisoned, force-fed, starved, irradiated, bled, suffocated, beheaded, and dissected so that the checkoffs can attempt to promote dubious human-health benefits for common foods such as blueberries, mangoes, and soybeans.

In today’s economy, in which underserved farmers are struggling financially, it’s inexcusable to waste their limited funds on cruel tests on animals that aren’t even required by law. It also defies logic that these tests—in which animals have been beheaded for blueberries, mutilated for mangoes, and suffocated for soybeans—would purport to help promote those agricultural products, since the majority of consumers don’t support cruelty to animals. Conducting these tests is a horrible marketing strategy that does a disservice to farmers, consumers, and animals.

We’re firmly against forcing farmers to fund needless and senseless tests on animals. **We’re joining PETA in respectfully urging you to prohibit the agricultural checkoff programs from using assessment fees to fund experiments on animals.** You can contact me via PETA’s Dr. Frances Cheng at FrancesC@peta.org. Please respond by November 30, 2021. Thank you.

Sincerely yours,

Gail P. Myers, Ph.D.
Cofounder
Farms to Grow, Inc.
P.O. Box 10504
Oakland, CA 94610

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October 28, 2021

Kasey Cronquist
President
U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council

Via e-mail: kcronquist@blueberry.org; info@blueberry.org; shelly@truebluefarms.com

Dear Mr. Cronquist:

Farms to Grow (FTG)—a national nonprofit that advocates for women farmers, physically challenged and limited-access organic farmers, and Black, Native American, Hispanic, and other minority farmers—has collaborated with the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) to promote grant programs and provide these underserved communities with technical assistance.

We’re shocked and disappointed to learn from our friends at People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) that the U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council, overseen by the USDA AMS, has been using a portion of federally mandated annual assessment fees paid by blueberry farmers to fund pointless tests on animals. For example, experimenters fed rats strawberries or blueberries, forced them to grab wires while suspended and struggle to walk on rods that rotated at an accelerated speed, injected them with a chemical, and killed and dissected them. Five rats were killed before the end of the experiment because of excessive weight loss.

In today’s economy, in which underserved farmers are struggling financially, it’s inexcusable to waste their limited funds on cruel tests on animals that aren’t even required by law. It also defies logic that these tests would purport to help promote blueberries, since the majority of consumers don’t support cruelty to animals. Conducting these tests is a horrible marketing strategy that does a disservice to farmers, consumers, and animals.

We’re firmly against forcing farmers to fund needless and senseless tests on animals. **We’re joining PETA in respectfully urging you to prohibit the U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council from using assessment fees to fund experiments on animals.** You can contact me via PETA’s Dr. Frances Cheng at FrancesC@peta.org. Please respond by November 30, 2021. Thank you.

Sincerely yours,

Gail P. Myers, Ph.D.
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October 28, 2021

Tim Lust
CEO
United Sorghum Checkoff Program

Via e-mail: Tim@sorghumgrowers.com; info@sorghumcheckoff.com;
martinagconsulting@gmail.com

Dear Mr. Lust:

Farms to Grow (FTG)—a national nonprofit that advocates for women farmers, physically challenged and limited-access organic farmers, and Black, Native American, Hispanic, and other minority farmers—has collaborated with the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) to promote grant programs and provide these underserved communities with technical assistance.

We’re shocked and disappointed to learn from our friends at People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) that the United Sorghum Checkoff Program, overseen by the USDA AMS, has been using a portion of federally mandated annual assessment fees paid by sorghum farmers to fund pointless tests on animals. For example, experimenters fed rats sorghum bran and a chemical that induces colitis and then killed and dissected them.

In today’s economy, in which underserved farmers are struggling financially, it’s inexcusable to waste their limited funds on cruel tests on animals that aren’t even required by law. It also defies logic that these tests would purport to help promote sorghum, since the majority of consumers don’t support cruelty to animals. Conducting these tests is a horrible marketing strategy that does a disservice to farmers, consumers, and animals.

We’re firmly against forcing farmers to fund needless and senseless tests on animals. **We’re joining PETA in respectfully urging you to prohibit the United Sorghum Checkoff Program from using assessment fees to fund experiments on animals.** You can contact me via PETA’s Dr. Frances Cheng at FrancesC@peta.org. Please respond by November 30, 2021. Thank you.

Sincerely yours,

Gail P. Myers, Ph.D.
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October 28, 2021

Polly Ruhland
CEO
United Soybean Board

Via e-mail: PRuhland@unitedsoybean.org; info@unitedsoybean.org;
dfarney@unitedsoybean.org

Dear Ms. Ruhland:

Farms to Grow (FTG)—a national nonprofit that advocates for women farmers, physically challenged and limited-access organic farmers, and Black, Native American, Hispanic, and other minority farmers—has collaborated with the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) to promote grant programs and provide these underserved communities with technical assistance.

We’re shocked and disappointed to learn from our friends at People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) that the United Soybean Board, overseen by the USDA AMS, has been using a portion of federally mandated annual assessment fees paid by soybean farmers to fund pointless tests on animals. For example, experimenters fed genetically modified mice who were prone to cystic fibrosis a soy ingredient or a laxative and then killed and dissected them. Forty-nine animals died from the disease before experimenters were able to kill them.

In today’s economy, in which underserved farmers are struggling financially, it’s inexcusable to waste their limited funds on cruel tests on animals that aren’t even required by law. It also defies logic that these tests would purport to help promote soybeans, since the majority of consumers don’t support cruelty to animals. Conducting these tests is a horrible marketing strategy that does a disservice to farmers, consumers, and animals.

We’re firmly against forcing farmers to fund needless and senseless tests on animals. **We’re joining PETA in respectfully urging you to prohibit the United Soybean Board from using assessment fees to fund experiments on animals.** You can contact me via PETA’s Dr. Frances Cheng at FrancesC@peta.org. Please respond by November 30, 2021. Thank you.

Sincerely yours,

Gail P. Myers, Ph.D.
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October 28, 2021

Henry Bierlink
Executive Director
Washington Red Raspberry Commission

Via e-mail: henry@red-raspberry.org; info@red-raspberry.org

Dear Mr. Bierlink:

Farms to Grow (FTG)—a national nonprofit that advocates for women farmers, physically challenged and limited-access organic farmers, and Black, Native American, Hispanic, and other minority farmers—has collaborated with the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) to promote grant programs and provide these underserved communities with technical assistance.

We’re shocked and disappointed to learn from our friends at People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) that the Washington Red Raspberry Commission has been using a portion of annual assessment fees paid by raspberry farmers to fund pointless tests on animals. For example, experimenters fed mice a high-fat diet with raspberry purée, starved them, took their blood, and killed and dissected them.

In today’s economy, in which underserved farmers are struggling financially, it’s inexcusable to waste their limited funds on cruel tests on animals that aren’t even required by law. It also defies logic that these tests would purport to help promote raspberries, since the majority of consumers don’t support cruelty to animals. Conducting these tests is a horrible marketing strategy that does a disservice to farmers, consumers, and animals.

We’re firmly against forcing farmers to fund needless and senseless tests on animals. **We’re joining PETA in respectfully urging you to prohibit the Washington Red Raspberry Commission from using assessment fees to fund experiments on animals.** You can contact me via PETA’s Dr. Frances Cheng at FrancesC@peta.org. Please respond by November 30, 2021. Thank you.

Sincerely yours,

Gail P. Myers, Ph.D.
Cofounder
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Oakland, CA 94610

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October 28, 2021

Bart Minor
President and CEO
Mushroom Council

Via e-mail: Bart@mushroomcouncil.org; info@mushroomcouncil.com;
sonya@firstgenfarms.com

Dear Mr. Minor:

Farms to Grow (FTG)—a national nonprofit that advocates for women farmers, physically challenged and limited-access organic farmers, and Black, Native American, Hispanic, and other minority farmers—has collaborated with the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) to promote grant programs and provide these underserved communities with technical assistance.

We’re shocked and disappointed to learn from our friends at People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) that the Mushroom Council, overseen by the USDA AMS, has been using a portion of federally mandated annual assessment fees paid by mushroom farmers to fund pointless tests on animals. For example, experimenters fed pigs white button mushrooms, repeatedly poked their anuses, took their blood, and killed and dissected them.

In today’s economy, in which underserved farmers are struggling financially, it’s inexcusable to waste their limited funds on cruel tests on animals that aren’t even required by law. It also defies logic that these tests would purport to help promote mushrooms, since the majority of consumers don’t support cruelty to animals. Conducting these tests is a horrible marketing strategy that does a disservice to farmers, consumers, and animals.

We’re firmly against forcing farmers to fund needless and senseless tests on animals. **We’re joining PETA in respectfully urging you to prohibit the Mushroom Council from using assessment fees to fund experiments on animals.** You can contact me via PETA’s Dr. Frances Cheng at FrancesC@peta.org. Please respond by November 30, 2021. Thank you.

Sincerely yours,

Gail P. Myers, Ph.D.
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October 28, 2021

Manuel Michel
Executive Director
National Mango Board

Via e-mail: mmichel@mango.org; info@mango.org; Clark@amazonprod.com

Dear Mr. Michel:

Farms to Grow (FTG)—a national nonprofit that advocates for women farmers, physically challenged and limited-access organic farmers, and Black, Native American, Hispanic, and other minority farmers—has collaborated with the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) to promote grant programs and provide these underserved communities with technical assistance.

We’re shocked and disappointed to learn from our friends at People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) that the National Mango Board, overseen by the USDA AMS, has been using a portion of federally mandated annual assessment fees paid by mango farmers to fund pointless tests on animals. For example, experimenters injected mice with cancer cells, repeatedly forced them mango extracts, and killed and dissected them.

In today’s economy, in which underserved farmers are struggling financially, it’s inexcusable to waste their limited funds on cruel tests on animals that aren’t even required by law. It also defies logic that these tests would purport to help promote mangoes, since the majority of consumers don’t support cruelty to animals. Conducting these tests is a horrible marketing strategy that does a disservice to farmers, consumers, and animals.

We’re firmly against forcing farmers to fund needless and senseless tests on animals. **We’re joining PETA in respectfully urging you to prohibit the National Mango Board from using assessment fees to fund experiments on animals.** You can contact me via PETA’s Dr. Frances Cheng at FrancesC@peta.org. Please respond by November 30, 2021. Thank you.

Sincerely yours,

Gail P. Myers, Ph.D.
Cofounder
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Oakland, CA 94610

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October 28, 2021

Mark Arney
Executive Director/CEO
National Watermelon Promotion Board

Via e-mail: MArney@watermelon.org; info@watermelon.org; jordan@legerandson.com

Dear Mr. Arney:

Farms to Grow (FTG)—a national nonprofit that advocates for women farmers, physically challenged and limited-access organic farmers, and Black, Native American, Hispanic, and other minority farmers—has collaborated with the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) to promote grant programs and provide these underserved communities with technical assistance.

We’re shocked and disappointed to learn from our friends at People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) that the National Watermelon Promotion Board, overseen by the USDA AMS, has been using a portion of federally mandated annual assessment fees paid by watermelon farmers to fund pointless tests on animals. For example, experimenters fed rats an artery-blocking diet with or without watermelon, suffocated them, took their blood, and dissected them.

In today’s economy, in which underserved farmers are struggling financially, it’s inexcusable to waste their limited funds on cruel tests on animals that aren’t even required by law. It also defies logic that these tests would purport to help promote watermelons, since the majority of consumers don’t support cruelty to animals. Conducting these tests is a horrible marketing strategy that does a disservice to farmers, consumers, and animals.

We’re firmly against forcing farmers to fund needless and senseless tests on animals. **We’re joining PETA in respectfully urging you to prohibit the National Watermelon Promotion Board from using assessment fees to fund experiments on animals.** You can contact me via PETA’s Dr. Frances Cheng at FrancesC@peta.org. Please respond by November 30, 2021. Thank you.

Sincerely yours,

Gail P. Myers, Ph.D.
Cofounder
Farms to Grow, Inc.
P.O. Box 10504
Oakland, CA 94610

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

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. Please respond by August 4, 2021. Thank you.

Sincerely yours,

Jillian Hishaw, Esq. LL.M. (Agricultural Law)
F.A.R.M.S. Founding Director
572 John Ross Pkwy., #107
Rock Hill, SC 29730