

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 10, 2006

The Honorable Michael Johanns
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Johanns:

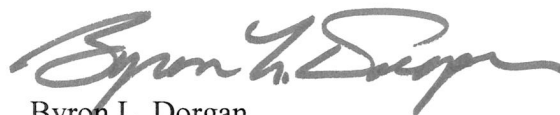
As you know, Section 1614 of the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 requires USDA to “establish procedures to track benefits provided, directly or indirectly, to individuals or entities under titles I and II of the 2002 Farm Bill.” We are becoming increasingly troubled at the continuing delay in creating the Section 1614 farm program payment database.

We wrote to you in November 2005 on this subject and received a response from then-Under Secretary J.B. Penn on January 4, 2006 indicating that the database required by the 2002 Farm Bill was completed. In subsequent discussions, however, it became clear that the project was not in fact complete, but still in progress.

In response to a question submitted to Undersecretary Penn by Senator Dorgan at a hearing of the Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee in March, Undersecretary Penn responded that “The database required by Section 1614 of the 2002 Farm Bill will be made available by the Farm Service Agency...in August 2006.” We are now well past August, and the database is still, evidently, not completed. Although there are undoubtedly technical complexities in finishing this database, we are troubled at the delay and the lack of explanation as to its cause.

We appreciate the effort you have put into seeing that the language of Section 1614 is complied with. In order for Congress to make sound policy decisions about farm payments, access to the best available information is crucial. We urge you to finish work on the database immediately, and we would appreciate an explanation of any outstanding issues that have yet to be resolved.

Sincerely,



Byron L. Dorgan
United States Senate



Charles Grassley
United States Senate