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## **Statement of Executive Director, Marianne Cufone, on Congress Passage of the 2014 Farm Bill**

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Both the House and Senate of the U.S. Congress have now passed the same version of the Agriculture Act of 2014, the reauthorization of the law commonly known as the Farm Bill. President Obama is expected to sign the legislation, making it law soon. The new Farm Bill comes with changes not just for farmers, but also for children, low-income communities and many others nationwide on food access and quality.

While the Bill includes some important provisions, after a more than 2-year wait for its finalization, it is not what it could or should be. Among its weaknesses is the failure to formally recognize recirculating farming as an expanding part of U.S. agriculture. These eco-efficient growing methods include *hydroponics* (raising plants without soil in nutrient-rich water), recirculating *aquaculture* (raising fish in a recirculating tank system) and *aquaponics* (growing plants and raising fish together in one combined system). Such farms are closed-loop, and recycle water and waste. Recirculating farms are ideal operations for farmers of all backgrounds and ages. They can be inexpensive to build and run in virtually any setting, including indoors, on paved urban lots, and even otherwise unused spaces, like rooftops. These farms are an innovative, and exciting way for new farmers to join in the burgeoning local food movement and provide fresh, healthy foods for themselves and their communities. The Recirculating Farms Coalition is greatly disappointed that Congress missed this easy opportunity to acknowledge recirculating farming as a notable and meaningful contribution to U.S. agriculture and our food systems.

Additionally, there are severe cuts to social food programs. For example, funding for food stamps, officially, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, will be reduced by about \$8 billion over the next decade. This significantly undermines any progress made for those not currently working and low-income communities to have access to fresh, healthy food. At a time when unemployment rates are relatively high, nationwide obesity rates are over 35% and 20% of people say they struggle to buy food – this is a significant blow to our country's health and well-being.

We urge President Obama to revisit these and other critical issues before the end of his final term in office, and show a type of forward-thinking leadership that is necessary for the U.S.