

August 27, 2018

Dear Farm Bill Conferees:

Our groups deeply appreciate your commitment and ongoing work to craft a final farm bill through the conference process. As you work to move the House and Senate farm bills into conference, the undersigned organizations write to ask you to protect the funding, structure, and long-term integrity of the conservation title in the next farm bill. Given the strong demand and critical need for conservation across the country, we believe it is essential to protect conservation funding in the final farm bill. Our groups are in the business of making the farm bill even better over the long term, and with that in mind, we urge you to ensure that the final farm bill reflects the following principles with regard to overall funding, to protect and strengthen the overall conservation title in the long term:

- **No Cuts to Overall Conservation Baseline**

The conservation title's programs and policies play a critical role in supporting farmers to protect water quality and quantity, build soil health and prevent erosion, create and maintain habitat for threatened, endangered, or economically important fish and wildlife, and prepare for and mitigate drought. Conservation funding was cut through the 2014 Farm Bill, as well as through sequestration and appropriations bills over the last several years, and these cuts have meant that fewer farmers, ranchers, and foresters have been able to enroll their land in conservation programs. At the same time, overall demand for conservation programs well exceeds available dollars. Given previous cuts to conservation funding and the significant demand, it is critical that no funding leaves the conservation title in a final bill.

- **Protect Long Term Funding**

We know that you operate under difficult budgetary constraints, but it is important that the final farm bill not only provides much needed conservation funding over the next five-year period of this farm bill, but also within the ten-year window, as well as into the future. This farm bill should invest not only in the farmers and ranchers who will utilize its provided authority and funding under this farm bill, but also position the title to expand and enhance future conservation efforts.

- **Retain Complete Suite of Conservation Programs**

The strength of the conservation title depends not only on total funding, but also on retaining and strengthening the diversity of programs available to assist producers in natural resource management, protection, and enhancement. This is critical so we can continue to expand the multiple unique, yet complementary, approaches to conservation. It is important both to retain the complete toolbox of programs within the conservation title, and also to make incremental improvements to them in each farm bill so that we can continue to enhance and expand conservation, in the next five years and beyond.

- **Protect Against Cuts Through Appropriations**

Finally, we urge you to ensure that the conferenced farm bill's conservation title is structured to the maximum extent possible to protect mandatory farm bill conservation funding during the annual

appropriations process. We are pleased that appropriators have avoided cuts to conservation programs in the most recent fiscal years, and we urge you to structure the funding of the overall title to support that investment in future appropriations processes. To do so, we encourage you to continue to structure the conservation title to include a blend of funding dollars and acres available for enrollment in multiple programs, thus better protecting against cuts through the appropriations process.

We look forward to working with you to craft a farm bill that protects conservation funding in the long term and the integrity of the conservation title overall.

Thank you for considering our views.

Sincerely,

National Organizations

American Forests
American Society of Agronomy
Center for Food Safety
Center for Rural Affairs
Clean Water Action
Crop Science Society of America
CROPP Cooperative | Organic Valley
Defenders of Wildlife
Earthjustice
Endangered Species Coalition
Food Animal Concerns Trust (FACT)
Green Latinos
Hip Hop Caucus
Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy
Izaak Walton League of America
Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future
National Farmers Union
National Organic Coalition
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition
National Wildlife Federation
National Young Farmers Coalition
Natural Heritage Institute
Organic Farming Research Foundation
Pollinator Partnership
Rural & Agriculture Council of America
Sierra Club
Society for Range Management

Soil and Water Conservation Society
Soil Science Society of America
The Common Market
The Conservation Fund
The Wildlife Society
Union of Concerned Scientists
Wild Farm Alliance
Women, Food and Agriculture Network
World Wildlife Fund
Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation

State/ Local/ Regional Organizations

California Climate & Agriculture Network
Coastal Enterprises, Inc.
Delta Institute
Endangered Habitats League
Environmental Law & Policy Center
Fair Farms
FairShare CSA Coalition
Farm to Table New Mexico
Friends for Our Riverfront
Friends of the Mississippi River
Green Lands Blue Waters
Gulf Restoration Network
Illinois Stewardship Alliance
Kansas Rural Center
La Montanita Coop
Land Stewardship Project
League of Women Voters Upper Mississippi River Region
Maine Farmland Trust
Michael Fields Agricultural Institute
Midwest Environmental Advocates
Mississippi River Collaborative
Missouri Coalition for the Environment
Montana Organic Association
New Mexico Food & Agriculture Policy Council
Northeast Organic Farming Association
Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Working Group
Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association

Ohio Environmental Council
Oregon Tilth
Pennsylvania Council of Churches
Pesticide Action Network
Practical Farmers of Iowa
Prairie Rivers Network
Quapaw Canoe Company
River Alliance of Wisconsin
Southern Sustainable Agriculture Working Group
The Wetlands Initiative
Virginia Association for Biological Farming
Western Landowners Alliance
Wisconsin Land and Water Conservation Association