

The effects of climate change are becoming clear across the country. Rising average temperatures, shifting precipitation patterns, changing growing seasons, increasingly frequent and severe weather events, and rising sea levels are already making it more difficult to grow food, fuel, and fiber. Because these difficulties will only intensify over time, urgent action is needed.

Farmers and ranchers hold immense power to address this crisis—as many already are working to do so. They have implemented conservation practices that build soil health, which makes the land more resilient to shifts in precipitation, temperatures, and pest pressures, and helps capture atmospheric carbon and store it in the soil. They are also reducing greenhouse gas emissions generated by fossil fuels by producing renewable energy and growing biofuels crops.

These efforts offer many benefits, but they are often expensive, technically demanding, and time consuming. To make on-farm climate action as accessible as possible, farmers and ranchers need financial and technical support, market opportunities, strong policy mechanisms, and robust climate research.

Congress and the administration can help farmers and ranchers adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change by taking the following actions:

DEVELOP VOLUNTARY, INCENTIVE-BASED PROGRAMS AND MARKET INITIATIVES TO SUPPORT FARMERS

Lawmakers and USDA should **work with farmers and ranchers** to develop a package of solutions, such as the one developed by the Food and Agriculture Climate Alliance, that provide options for all types and sizes of operations, crops, livestock, production systems, and regions. These solutions should:

- Use existing USDA programs and create new ones to **remove the financial and technical barriers farmers face** when adopting climate friendly practices as well as rewarding ongoing work.
- **Encourage the development of carbon markets** that benefit farmers and prevent consolidation or corporate purchases of farmland under those markets.
- **Reduce barriers** to the installation of on-farm renewable energy systems and **encourage the use** of biofuels, a low carbon alternative for keeping our transportation system running.

SUPPORT THE GROWING CLIMATE SOLUTIONS ACT

The Growing Climate Solutions Act would create new mechanisms at USDA to ensure that carbon markets work for family farmers and ranchers. The bill establishes a certification program for third-party verifiers and technical service providers that help farmers earn carbon credits to ensure they have the appropriate expertise. Additionally, it would create an advisory committee composed of farmers, industry experts, scientists, and representatives from private markets to make recommendations to Congress and USDA on how they can further strengthen the credibility of carbon markets and facilitate farmers' participation.



SUPPORT THE AGRICULTURE RESILIENCE ACT

The Agriculture Resilience Act would make strategic changes to USDA programs to assist farmers with the implementation of soil health practices across their land. The bill also provides additional resources for USDA research on climate change, promotes soil health work between USDA and state and tribal governments, protects existing farmland, encourages pasture-based livestock systems, supports local meat processing, invests in on-farm energy production, and reduces food waste.

PROVIDE FUNDING FOR USDA CLIMATE INITIATIVES THROUGH THE FISCAL YEAR (FY) 2022 APPROPRIATIONS CYCLE

Congress should ensure there are sufficient resources to hire NRCS field staff to provide technical assistance to farmers and ranchers by providing at least \$1.1 billion for Conservation Technical Assistance in FY2022 appropriations.

While many farmers have implemented conservation practices, many more stand ready to conserve soil, protect waterways, improve air quality, and both adapt to and mitigate the effects of a changing climate. However, insufficient capacity at NRCS is a limitation for those farmers. NRCS needs more staff who are trained to work with farmers to help determine the best practices to adopt for their soil type, operation, weather conditions, and resource concerns.

Congress should fund the Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative (GLCI) at the authorized level of \$60 million to provide assistance to livestock producers seeking to implement climate smart practices on their land.

The natural resource and carbon sequestration benefits from managed grazing of grasslands are well established. But maximizing the benefits of grazing pasture takes knowledge and skill. Through GLCI, USDA works with ranchers and other stakeholders to identify priority issues and develop solutions to effect sustainable changes on private grazing lands.

