While the window to address the climate crisis narrows, lawmakers, administration officials, and industry leaders are directing more energy towards finding solutions. Congress has introduced several bills that would leverage agriculture and forestry to reduce emissions and sequester carbon in the soil, including the Growing Climate Solutions Act. The White House got in on the action too, outlining its plan to conserve 30 percent of the nation’s lands and waters by 2030. As this work progresses, National Farmers Union is providing guidance and feedback as to how it can best support the work of family farmers and ranchers. Read more about it in this month’s Washington Corner.

**NFU MEMBERS ADVOCATE CLIMATE SOLUTIONS**

As climate change poses an increasingly serious threat to farmers’ livelihoods and global food security, a group of National Farmers Union (NFU) members are discussing meaningful legislative solutions with their elected representatives.

During virtual meetings with members of the Senate and House Agriculture Committees in May, participating Farmers Union members pushed for voluntary, incentive-based programs and market initiatives that help operations of all types and sizes implement climate-friendly practices and install on-farm renewable energy systems. To ensure such programs are executed smoothly, they also promoted robust funding for technical assistance.

The attendees of these days of advocacy sit on NFU’s Climate Change Policy Advisory Panel (CCPAP), through which they advise the organization's climate-related legislative work, educational programming, outreach, and communications. Other Farmers Union members had an opportunity to contribute by contacting their legislators as well as by attending a webinar with administration officials about federal plans to combat the climate crisis.

**BILL LENDS CREDIBILITY TO CARBON MARKETS**

In the middle of Earth Week, Senators Debbie Stabenow, John Boozman, and Mike Braun reintroduced the Growing Climate Solutions Act, which aims to provide certainty to farmers and ranchers seeking compensation for climate-smart agricultural practices through carbon markets. To achieve this end, the bill would create a certification program for third-party verifiers and technical service providers that help farmers earn carbon credits to ensure they have the appropriate expertise. Information about those “UDSA certified” providers will be available to farmers via an online portal.

Additionally, the bill would establish an advisory committee composed of farmers, industry experts, scientists, and representatives from private markets to make recommendations to Congress and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) on how they can further strengthen the credibility of carbon markets and facilitate farmers’ participation.

When the bill was introduced last June, National Farmers Union (NFU) endorsed it, saying it was “an important step toward strong and comprehensive climate policy.” Upon its reintroduction NFU President Rob Larew reiterated the organization’s support. Because “there is currently no formal oversight” of carbon markets, selecting the right one can be “a confusing and overwhelming
In May, the administration released a report outlining eight principles that should guide those efforts, several of which pertain to agriculture. For one, it indicates that conservation work should collaborate with and include all stakeholders including farmers and ranchers, as well as farmers, business owners, Indigenous communities, sportsmen and women.

Additionally, the report recommends that the “oversized contributions” of those communities “already make in safeguarding wildlife and open spaces” be recognized and encouraged. It also states that private property owners’ rights should be respected and that ranching should be maintained on both public and private lands.

In response, National Farmers Union (NFU) President Rob Larew said he was “glad to have clarity” on the administration’s conservation plans and was similarly “heartened” that the report “understands the valuable work that family farmers are already doing to improve soil, water and air quality and commits to advancing that work in the future.”

To offset the cost of the plan, President Biden is proposing an array of tax reforms, including the elimination of stepped-up basis. In an overview, the White House promised that such a change would “be designed with protections so that family-owned businesses and farms will not have to pay taxes when given to heirs who continue to run the business.”

President Biden also plans to use climate action to drive job growth. Included on the president’s list of recommendations was “farmers planting cover crops, so they can reduce carbon dioxide in the air and get paid for doing it,” an approach backed by NFU and many other farm groups. Larew said he was “glad to have an ally in the White House” and that he hoped that the statement would be followed by “immediate and aggressive action.”

Another focus of the address was immigration reform. “For more than 30 years, politicians have talked about immigration reform and have done nothing about it,” said President Biden. “It’s time to fix it.” He urged Congress to offer undocumented immigrants a path to citizenship by passing his U.S. Citizenship Act of 2021. Under the bill, farm workers would be fast-tracked for naturalization and would be granted greater protections, both of which NFU supports.

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The Washington Corner can also be found at www.nfu.org/corner.