

## CLIMATE CHANGE

Family farmers, ranchers, and rural communities are feeling the effects of climate change. Rising average temperatures, shifting precipitation patterns, and increasingly frequent extreme weather events, are making farming and ranching more difficult. This year, drought conditions in the western U.S. are more widespread and severe than at any point in at least the last 20 years. It is also hotter, with temperatures making drought impacts more severe, so these problems are expected to get worse.

While the challenges are enormous, farmers and ranchers hold great power to address this crisis—and many already are doing so. They have implemented conservation practices that build soil health, making the land more resilient to shifts in precipitation, temperatures, and pest pressure. Many of these practices help sequester atmospheric carbon in the soil. Farmers are also reducing greenhouse gas emissions generated by fossil fuels by producing renewable energy on their land and growing biofuel crops.

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

Thankfully, the Biden Administration has instituted a whole-of-government approach to tackling the climate crisis. USDA is stepping up by building a climate smart agriculture strategy in consultation with stakeholders, including family farmers and ranchers. And many lawmakers are emphasizing that addressing climate change is a priority, as evidenced by the recently passed budget resolution in the Senate, which would commit billions of dollars more toward climate efforts; these investments include agriculture conservation, rural clean energy development, and agriculture climate research.

The 2010s were the **hottest decade on record.**

USDA has only been able to accept **1/4 of applications received** for conservation programs.

## WHAT WE CAN DO:

- ✓ Encourage lawmakers to significantly increase funding for USDA voluntary, incentive-based conservation programs; these programs are effective and popular but oversubscribed.
- ✓ Encourage lawmakers to invest in public agricultural research that will help farmers adapt to and mitigate climate change.
- ✓ Encourage Congress to pass the Growing Climate Solutions Act (GCSA) to direct USDA to set guidelines for environmental credit markets and make it easier for farmers to participate, so they can be compensated for the ecosystem services they provide.
- ✓ Provide greater support for on-farm energy production, including biofuels.