



Food and Agriculture Climate Alliance

LIVESTOCK AND DAIRY

FARM BILL

POLICY PRIORITIES

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE 118TH CONGRESS



OPPORTUNITIES IN THE 2023 FARM BILL

U.S. farmers, ranchers, and forest owners are at the forefront of national efforts to address climate change. But we cannot do it alone. Further reducing emissions throughout the agricultural and forestry supply chain will require a comprehensive effort involving financial and technical assistance, research investments, proactive response to innovation, public-private partnerships, and a commitment to equitable opportunities for all producers.

With that in mind, FACA has developed a suite of policy recommendations for the upcoming farm bill that would help our sectors achieve our climate mitigation potential while preserving and creating new economic opportunities. These recommendations reflect FACA's guiding principles and fall into six categories, which include:

- **Conservation, Risk Management, and Credit**
- **Energy**
- **Food Waste**
- **Forestry**
- **Livestock and Dairy**
- **Research, Extension, and Innovation**

ABOUT FACA

The Food and Agriculture Climate Alliance (FACA) initially began as an informal dialogue between eight organizations discussing opportunities for the food, agriculture, and forestry sectors to help advance climate solutions across the supply chain. Since formally launching in 2020, FACA has grown into an 80+ member coalition.

Today, our broad membership represents farmers, ranchers, forest owners, agribusinesses, manufacturers, the food and innovation sector, state governments, higher education associations, sportsmen and sportswomen, and environmental advocates.

FACA has served as a resource to Members of Congress and Administration officials. Our past recommendations have been credited with shaping federal laws and programs.

FACA members are united in support of federal climate policies that:

1. **Are voluntary, market- and incentive-based;**
2. **Advance science-based outcomes;**
3. **Promote resilience and help rural economies better adapt to climate change;**
4. **Ensure equitable opportunities for all farmers, ranchers, and forest owners, including historically underserved and small producers; and**
5. **Are strongly bipartisan.**

FACA recognizes the enormous importance of farm bill programs and supports critical investments in the farm safety net and disaster assistance, as well as for conservation, forestry, rural development, market access and research programs. These programs are all vital to sustaining rural livelihoods and protecting our nation's ability to produce the most abundant, affordable, and safe food supply in the world.

FACA's 23-member Steering Committee developed farm bill policy recommendations to advance voluntary bipartisan climate solutions. We urge both chambers of Congress and the President to act this year to pass this essential legislation, which impacts every family in America.

STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS:





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Meaningful and significant USDA technical assistance and policy support would provide livestock and dairy producers with the resources and tools needed to maximize opportunities to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, including methane, carbon dioxide, and nitrous oxide.

FACA recommendations identify opportunities to improve manure management programs, advance science and genetics around feed and nutrition, and increase support for pasture and grazing programs.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:

Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) Limits:

Currently, the main tools for farmers to reduce emissions from manure through improved management are through USDA's Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) programs and the Rural Energy for America Program. NRCS programs are challenging for larger farmers to navigate due to eligibility around AGI and caps on payments. FACA is not looking to further limit access to these programs by creating or tightening AGI limits, particularly given the increasing risks from climate change. Such additional limitations would only serve to hinder access to risk mitigation tools and conservation benefits.

Provide adequate technical assistance for NRCS programs.

- A. Recruit and train the additional NRCS technical professionals and technical service providers needed to provide direct technical assistance to producers to install and operate anaerobic digesters, covers with flares, solid separators, and other manure management technologies that reduce GHG emissions. Tools like methane digesters help livestock producers pursue sustainable manure management, often capturing as much as 80 percent of the methane resulting from a waste stream.
- B. Barriers to the adoption of manure management technologies are not limited to accessing funds. Technical assistance to assist farmers in determining the best technology for manure management and planning is a crucial first step in achieving a higher percentage of manure management practices deployed.

NOTE:

Recommendations are numbered for ease of organization and review. Numeric position does not indicate order of importance.

2 Streamline a forward-looking conservation practice approval process.

- A. A streamlined conservation practice approval process that better keeps up with rapidly changing technology will hopefully free up additional conservation program funds in a more timely manner. Moreover, upfront cost, in addition to the annual maintenance, continues to serve as a barrier to adoption of digester technologies.

3 Expand support for non-biogas manure management options.

- A. Recognize that biogas systems may not be a fit for every farm. Biogas systems are an immediate solution that some farms can implement to reduce agricultural methane emissions. However, they can only be implemented on farms of certain sizes and management characteristics.
- B. Direct USDA to include in every phase (standard development, technical assistance, and funding) opportunities for non-biogas manure management systems that avoid GHG generation and that are widely accessible to farms of all sizes and management systems.
- C. Additional support is needed for on-farm adoption of manure management technologies such as solid/liquid separation and composting that can be utilized on a wider segment of farms and that avoid GHG emissions.

4 Direct USDA to develop a risk- and science-based regulatory pathway to streamline the animal biotechnology approval process.

- A. A risk- and science-based approval process for animal biotechnology products will help farmers and ranchers better insulate themselves and food production from the risks of climate change and contribute to GHG reductions.
- B. Enable the use of technologies, such as gene editing, to improve animal genetics. Improving animal genetics to produce more meat or milk could allow for a reduction in the total number of animals in production, thus reducing the aggregate environmental impact. Improvements of animal genetics will also be a critical aspect to helping livestock producers around the world adapt to a changing climate.

Feed, Nutrition, and Genetics:

Changes in feed composition can directly or indirectly reduce methane emissions resulting from enteric fermentation in ruminant livestock. Improved genetics that support digestive efficiency and productivity can also contribute to reduced GHG emissions and climate resilience. Innovative technologies with the potential to reduce enteric emissions often face regulatory roadblocks preventing or delaying market approval. Incentives are necessary to offset the risk a farmer faces by changing feed rations, testing new enteric methane inhibiting products, or making changes to their breeding/herd genetics.

5 Create NRCS conservation practices focused on nutrition and genetics/breeding management.

- A. Expand support for conservation planning and technical assistance in order to optimize livestock management and land stewardship for climate adaptation and mitigation.
- B. Create conservation practice standards and update existing practice standards to reflect feed management, genetics, and nutrition planning to reduce emissions. Practice standards should make clear that enteric methane inhibiting products that have demonstrated climate and digestive efficiency benefits and are approved for sale and use in the U.S. are eligible for support under NRCS programs.

- C. Third-party TSPs would receive funding to work with livestock farmers and ranchers to develop new nutrition and genetic plans focused on efficiency, animal health, and reduced emissions.

6 Ensure NRCS can provide the support and technical assistance that the livestock sector needs.

- A. Additional resources would enable all technical advisers, including technical service providers, to work with livestock producers through nutrition and genetic/breeding planning to reduce emissions.

7 Ensure NRCS adequately incorporates feed/nutrition management as a tool to reduce emissions.

- A. Currently there is no conservation planning assistance for livestock producers who are working to reduce emissions from their animals.
- B. Explicit inclusion of approved enteric methane inhibiting products in NRCS practice standards would send an important signal to FDA as they consider new methods of regulating these products. On average, FDA takes 3-5 years to review animal feed additives for approval, including those that have important climate benefits. Enteric methane inhibiting products that have climate benefits are a promising tool to address enteric emissions in ruminants, but regulatory burdens are adding years onto the process of making these products available to producers. According to a study by Informa Economics, companies lose \$1.75 million per year in revenue while they wait for approval of new animal feed additives.

8 Ensure feed, genetics and nutrition management are eligible under the Conservation Innovation Grant (CIG) On-Farm Trial Program.

- A. Preserve enacted increase in funding to accommodate the additional categories.
- B. CIG on-farm trials are a critical tool for farmers to try out and prove new practices with reduced risk. Inclusion of feed management provides additional means for farmers to test out the newest technologies to ensure they work in their operations. These include animal feed rations and additives, grazing systems, and genetics that have been proven to reduce enteric emissions.

Pasture/Grazing:

Improved pasture and grazing management has the potential to play a substantial role in terrestrial carbon sequestration. More needs to be done to develop protocols and to deploy prescribed pasture and grazing practices to reduce emissions.

9 Direct NRCS to identify regions and practices with the greatest potential for carbon sequestration and methane emissions reduction, and support research, development, and widespread use of decision-support tools for climate and land stewardship outcomes.

- A. Adjust NRCS state office priorities for providing technical assistance to grazing land managers in high-priority regions in coordination with the National Grazing Lands Coalition.
- B. Initiate research and development efforts to improve enteric fermentation/forage intake estimation models.
- C. Ensure conservation planning and climate-beneficial practices are accessible to all grazing lands managers and increase adoption of such practices by streamlining access to and expanding capacity and support for technical assistance delivery, including recruitment and training of additional NRCS staff and expansion/enhancement of the technical service provider program.
- D. Expand research and development to improve and expand use of tools like COMET-Farm, COMET-Planner, LandPKS, Rangeland Analysis Platform and CART that support farm and ranch management for increased biodiversity, soil health, carbon storage/sequestration, and other conservation outcomes.
- E. Support and expand practices that have demonstrated emission reductions capability.
- F. Support additional funding for technical assistance to support producers in conducting conservation planning, including the recruitment and training of NRCS staff and expansion of TSP program. Practices appropriate to each operation/landscape can be best identified through a conservation planning approach, as defined by NRCS and through the National Conservation Planning



Partnership. Conservation planning currently can be cost-shared but is often limited by lack of local technical assistance or technical service provider support.

- G. Continue prescribed grazing and related land stewardship and increase funding for technical assistance, including conservation planning. These are longstanding NRCS conservation practices with demonstrated results. The proper management of grazing lands can lead to soil and aboveground carbon sequestration, helping the animal agriculture sector reduce net GHG emissions. Increased funding for technical assistance will help farmers and ranchers carry out prescribed grazing and related practices.

10 Provide mandatory funding for the Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative (GLCI) and add new elements to the program purpose.

- A. Include robust funding for the GLCI, which supports voluntary efforts to improve the management, productivity, and health of the nation's private grazing lands. Well managed grazing lands can help improve soil health, sequester carbon in the soil, protect water quality, improve biodiversity, and increase resilience and producer profitability.
- B. Disperse GLCI funds through competitive grants and cooperative agreements to support partnerships that address unique grazing lands needs at the local, state, and regional levels. FACA supports a diversity of projects, inclusive of different stakeholders and encourages, whenever possible, to scale conservation and agronomic impacts, including in conjunction with other existing programs and initiatives. GLCI partnership agreements may provide grazing lands conservation technical services for grazing planning and implementation, workshops and demonstrations, peer-to-peer education, and support for producer networks, and producer outreach.