

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
Chair
Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Boozman
Ranking Member
Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Glenn “G.T.” Thompson
Chair
Committee on Agriculture
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable David Scott
Ranking Member
Committee on Agriculture
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Stabenow, Ranking Member Boozman, Chairman Thompson, and Ranking Member Scott:

On behalf of organizations focused on climate, conservation, agricultural sustainability, public interest, and fiscal responsibility, we write to urge you to ensure that the nearly \$20 billion in conservation funding investments included in the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) are not diverted to increase subsidies in the farm bill’s commodity or crop insurance titles.

Certain farm commodities already have a generous safety net provided by taxpayers, totaling tens of billions of dollars annually. Farm bill conservation programs have historically been oversubscribed, and demand for participation by farmers currently outstrips available funds. Effectively prioritized agricultural conservation investments can improve public goods and deliver a positive return for taxpayers.

Further, strong investments in climate-focused conservation programming can help to reduce crop insurance program costs. A [recent study by the Environmental Working Group](#), for example, notes the rising costs to taxpayers for flood and drought indemnity payouts as a result of increases in extreme weather events that are affecting American farms. Utilizing [appropriate conservation practices](#) to build healthier, more sponge-like soils can protect these farms from both floods and drought, saving money in the process. In light of this, moving IRA conservation funding to heavily subsidized crop insurance doesn’t make fiscal sense, when conservation programming can play a key role in helping lower crop insurance and ad hoc disaster costs.

Effective agricultural conservation program investments provide a positive return on investment for taxpayers. For example, a [2018 UCS study](#) illustrates the strong return on investment for the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), with every dollar invested in CSP yielding a return of nearly \$4. Additional support provided by IRA conservation funds can help to create an even stronger return on investment from these programs and allow more farmers to participate in them. A [recent University of Illinois analysis](#) has shown that diverting IRA funds from conservation would reduce funding opportunities for farmers in every state, with more farmers losing out than would receive additional farm-support payments.

Our organizations believe that the upcoming farm bill provides a critical opportunity to support farmers who want to improve conservation practices on their lands while also ensuring fiscal responsibility and wise use of taxpayer dollars. Smart investments through programs such as CSP, the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program, and the Regional Conservation Partnership Program have proven their value both as vehicles to increase use of conservation practices on American farms and wise returns on our country's fiscal investments. As we look toward the next farm bill, it is essential for Congress to ensure IRA conservation programming investments are not diverted to commodity or crop insurance programs, which are already heavily subsidized by taxpayers.

We appreciate your leadership on the farm bill, and our organizations are available to discuss these important topics in more detail. We look forward to continuing to work with you.

Sincerely,

Union of Concerned Scientists
Taxpayers for Common Sense
California FarmLink
Chesapeake Climate Action Network AF
Citizens' Climate Lobby
Climate Action Campaign
Defenders of Wildlife
E2
Earthjustice
Environmental Defense Fund
Environmental Law & Policy Center
Environmental Working Group
Evergreen
Farm Action Fund
HEAL Food Alliance
Health Care Without Harm
Interfaith Power & Light
League of Conservation Voters
Mercy For Animals, US
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition
Natural Resources Defense Council
North Carolina Association of Black Lawyers Association Land Loss Prevention Project
R Street Institute
Roots of Change, a program of the Public Health Institute
Sierra Club
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas Justice Team
The Transformation Project
U.S. PIRG
Wallace Center at Winrock International