



May 22, 2025

The Honorable John Hoeven
Chairman
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural
Development, FDA & Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
US Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural
Development, FDA & Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
US Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Andy Harris
Chairman
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural
Development, FDA & Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
US House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Sanford Bishop, Jr.
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural
Development, FDA & Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
US House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen and Ranking Members:

On behalf of the more than 1.1 million US supporters and family farmers of The Climate Reality Project, we urge the subcommittee to protect key federal resources that provide the nation's farmers with the tools they need to ensure the health, longevity, and production of their farms.

We request that FY 2026 appropriations legislation maintain full authorized funding for all Farm Bill conservation programs, including the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) that fall under the Natural Resources Conservation Services division (NRCS). Through incentives and no-cost technical assistance programs, NRCS offers science-based technical assistance to help farmers make informed decisions about their land. It also helps agricultural producers and forest landowners address natural resource concerns, including air and water quality, soil health, and resilience to climate shocks making these programs immensely popular.ⁱ Some of these approaches include low or no-tillage or conservation tillage, cover crops, perennial crops, and diverse crop rotations.ⁱⁱ


We are also concerned about the Trump Administration's proposed FY 2026 "skinny" budget that would eliminate funding for the Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA) program. As the Office of Budget Management notes:

"The Budget eliminates discretionary funding for conservation technical assistance because it has historically received over a billion dollars in mandatory funding, in addition to funding at the State and local levels." ⁱⁱⁱ

However, the administration fails to mention they froze CTA funding (and other conservation programs like EQIP), which received a significant boost from the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), in January and before then, USDA has long had a massive backlog of demand from farmers who need this assistance.^{iv}

Combined, these bipartisan, voluntary, incentive-based, and locally led USDA programs are used by producers across the US to adopt conservation practices in their operations that enhance water quality and soil health, increase resilience to extreme weather shocks, reduce harmful emissions, and extend the life and health of their land.^v Without USDA conservation programs, farmers would face significant challenges in implementing practices that improve their agricultural operations and production and benefit the environment, and we urge you to protect these vital resources.^{vi}

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Phyllis Cuttino". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Phyllis" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Cuttino".

Phyllis Cuttino
President and Chief Executive Officer
The Climate Reality Project

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- ⁱ <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/conservation-basics/natural-resource-concerns>;
<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs-initiatives/csp-conservation-stewardship-program>;
<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs-initiatives/eqip-environmental-quality-incentives>;
<https://www.farmjournal.com/new-poll-farmers-want-congress-to-protect-climate-smart-agriculture-in-farm-bill/>
- ⁱⁱ <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/conservation-basics/natural-resource-concerns/soils/soil-health>
- ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/Fiscal-Year-2026-Discretionary-Budget-Request.pdf> pg. 32
- ^{iv} <https://www.sierraclub.org/sierra/trump-funding-cuts-farmers-feeling-pain-conservation-funds-frozen>;
<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/usda-freezes-farmer-funding-some-programs-conservation-contracts-2025-02-08/>; <https://www.ewg.org/news-insights/news/2023/12/usda-conservation-backlogs-grow-despite-new-climate-smart-funding>
- ^v <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF12024>; <https://sustainableagriculture.net/blog/a-closer-look-at-the-2018-farm-bill-working-lands-conservation-programs/>
- ^{vi} <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/climate-smart-agriculture>