

May 20, 2024

The Honorable Glenn Thompson
Chairman
House Committee on Agriculture
400 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Thompson:

The undersigned farmers, farmworkers, and advocacy organizations call on Congressional leadership to protect critical funding for agriculture communities to prioritize their long-term, sustainable resilience, sovereignty, and food security. As leadership looks to champion a robust and transformative Farm Bill that addresses the pressing challenges facing our farming communities, food systems, and the environment, **it is a necessity to preserve the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) guardrails from any financial or legislative cuts.**

The Inflation Reduction Act's \$20 billion allocation and the legislative guardrails on climate serve as crucial components to help farmers improve water and soil quality, withstand severe weather events, and grow more food — all while reducing harmful emissions that put future yields at risk. This funding would support farmers' adoption of easily accessible, low-tech agro-ecological, climate-friendly practices. Without these provisions, most USDA conservation funding will not help address the climate crisis. Before the enactment of the IRA, only one-fifth of EQIP funding flowed to practices that reduce greenhouse gas emissions or build soil carbon. Further, some legislators are pushing to divert spending to false climate solutions such as robotics, AI, cultivated meat, and precision farming, including drones and drip-irrigation technologies, which are expensive, proprietary, and/or chemical- and energy-intensive. These methods are generally misguided, unproven, and often result in negative social and environmental impacts.

All farmers and ranchers – regardless of what they grow or where they live – are eligible for conservation funding and these funds should not be diverted to support false solutions that negatively impact farmer resilience. Until Congress passed the IRA, 75 percent of farmers and ranchers were turned away when seeking USDA conservation funding due to insufficient funding, and the number of farmers being turned away had been increasing. The demand for this funding across farming communities in the country is staggering. Here are a few examples (Source: <https://www.protectagconservation.com/>):

- In **Pennsylvania**, NRCS has funded 3,100 contracts to implement practices on 615,260 acres (2019-2023). Over that time, NRCS obligated over \$17.3 billion through 215,543 contracts, implementing practices on over 117 million acres nationally.
- In **Florida**, farmers who seek USDA help to install high-priority conservation practices like brush management, planting cover crops, mulching, tree planting, and improving forest stands can get rapid approval as long as they meet minimum requirements. IRA funds 9 of Florida's top 15 practices used in 2022. In Florida, nearly 800,000 acres are eligible for 2024 IRA funding.
- In **Arkansas**, farmers in 2020 received \$15.9 million in IRA funding, set to increase significantly by 2026. However, 67% of Arkansas' IRA applications were rejected due to funding shortages, while nationwide, only 18% of applications to EQIP and CSP were successful. Despite this, Arkansas farmers can obtain rapid approval for USDA assistance if they meet minimum qualifications, including adopting conservation practices like installing seasonal high tunnels and improving soil health.
- In **North Carolina**, NRCS has funded 3,542 contracts to implement practices on over 558,000 thousand acres (2019-2023). Over that time, NRCS obligated over \$17.3 billion through 215,543 contracts, implementing practices on over 117 million acres nationally.
- In **California**, farmers and ranchers eagerly pursue IRA-funded conservation practices. In 2023, over \$9 million was allocated to 140 applications, but many were rejected due to federal funding shortages. Among California's top 15 practices covering 1.4 million acres, many are eligible for 2024 IRA funding, mirroring a national trend, including cover crops, forest stand improvements, prescribed grazing, weed control, and energy efficiency upgrades.

Retaining the legislative guardrails will ensure that USDA makes climate change a priority, for the long-term resilience of farming communities. Retaining the IRA funding guardrails is critical to the USDA's evolution, from an agency that funds hundreds of different conservation practices and hopes for the best, to an agency that makes combatting the climate crisis a priority.

In conclusion, we urge you to consider these priorities and advocate for a Farm Bill that reflects the urgent need for transformative change in our food and agriculture systems. Your leadership in advancing these critical provisions will help ensure a more equitable, sustainable, and resilient future for farmers, workers, communities, and the planet.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. We look forward to your continued support and action on behalf of our agricultural communities.

Sincerely,

State Organizations:

Alaska, Alaska Community Action on Toxics

Pamela Miller

California, Alianza Nacional de Campesinas, Inc, California

Mily Trevino-Sauceda

California, California Nurses for Environmental Health and Justice

Vanessa Forsythe

Mechelle PereaRyan

California, Central California Environmental Justice Network

Rocio Madrigal

California, Center for Farmworker Families

Ann Lopez

California, Individual

Marysol Madrigal

California, Safe Ag Safe Schools

Edward Rehanek

Yanely Martinez

California, The Spicy Meatball

Crystal Vasquez

California, Valley Improvement Projects

Bianca Lopez

California, Wild Farm Alliance

Shelly Connor

Colorado, Phoenix Rising Resources, LLC

Calla Rose Ostrander

Connecticut, Partners in Healthy Communities

Dr. Bud McAllister

Delaware, BASEstud.io

Heidi Adams

Florida, Farmworker Association of Florida

Jeannie Economos

Georgia, Harambee House Citizens for Environmental Justice

Shakeena Reeves

Iowa, 100 Grannies

Christine Kapp

Diane Norden

Joyce Myer

Katharine Nicholson

Kris Johnson

Lula Palmer

Miriam Kashia

Shelley Dawn Pawlowski

Susan Eberly

Iowa, Des Moines County Farmers and Neighbors for Optimal Health

Jean Lappe

Iowa, Henry County Farmers and Neighbors

Ronald Wyse

Iowa, Individual

Jan Blake

Iowa, Individual

Rebecca Ross

Iowa, Iowa CCI

PJ Bowen

Iowa, Jefferson County Farmers & Neighbors, Inc.

Diane Rosenberg

Iowa, Landowner in Osceola and Palo Alto Counties in Iowa

Jane Shuttleworth, Farmer

Iowa, Poweshiek CARES

Valerie Vetter

Iowa, Sustainable Iowa Land Trust

Breanna Horsey

Kansas, Kansas Black Farmers Association

JohnElla Holmes, PhD, Farmer

Maryland, Locust Point Community Garden

Dave Arndt, Farmer

Massachusetts, Springfield Food Policy Council/40 Acres Farms

Liz O'Gilvie, Farmer

Massachusetts, World Farmers

Jessy Gill

Michigan, Ecology Center

Gillian Miller, Farmer

Montana, Individual

Clare Ols, Farmer

New Hampshire, Soil and Climate Initiative of Green America

Julie Davenson, Farmer

New Mexico, Los Jardines Institute

Richard Moore, Farmer

New Mexico, Women Food and Agriculture Network (WFAN)

Juliann Salinas, Beekeeper

New York, Moms for a Nontoxic New York

Kathleen Curtis

New York, WhyRegenerative

Jackson Baris

North Carolina, American Indian Mothers Inc

Beverly Collins-Hall, Farmer

North Carolina, Blue Ridge Women in Agriculture

Courtney Wheeler

North Carolina, Carteret Local Food Network

Catherine Elkins, Farmer

North Carolina, Eco-Charlotte Greenpeace

Tiana Bates

North Carolina, North Carolina Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church

Keith Sexton, Creation Care Team
North Carolina, Ozark Akerz Regenerative Farm
Mike Hansen, Farmer
North Carolina, The Bread Riot
Dortha Hoy
North Carolina, The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Food Policy Council
Kenya Joseph
North Carolina, Toxic Free NC
Kendall Wimberley
Ohio, Vel's Purple Oasis
Vel Scott, Farmer
Oklahoma, Oklahoma Black Historical Research Project, Inc.
Willard Tillman, Farmer
South Carolina, Rural Advancement Fund of the National Sharecroppers Fund
Willie Booker
Tennessee, Golden Roots Farm
Kayla Carter, Farmer
Texas, Texas Environmental Justice Advocacy Services
Ana Parras
Juan Parras
Wisconsin, Family Farm Defenders
John Peck, Farmer

Additional Multi-State or National Organizations:

Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments
Katie Huffling
American Sustainable Business Network
Liza LaManna
Black Women for Wellness
Tianna Shaw-Wakeman
Breast Cancer Prevention Partners

Lisette van Vliet
Center for Food Safety
Dashel Murawski
Jaydee Hanson
Coming Clean
Maya Nye
Comunidades Aliadas Tomando Acción
Elizabeth Martinez
Earthjustice
Ranjani Prabhakar
Environmental & Public Health Consulting
Ann Blake
Environmental Horizons
Danielle Wirth
Environmental Justice Health Alliance for Chemical Policy Reform (EJHA)
Stephanie Herron
Kathryn Super
Ethical And Respectful Treatment of Humans
Yolanda Whyte
Families Advocating for Chemical and Toxics Safety
Catherine Dodd PhD RN
Global Center for Climate Justice
Nina Schlegel
Health Care Without Harm
Lucia Sayre
Individual
Sandra Alper
Lake Erie Waterkeeper
Sandy Bihn
Learning Disabilities Association of America
Tracy Gregoire

LHL Consulting

Lydia Lazar

National Family Farm Coalition

Antonio Tovar

Naturepedic Organic Mattresses

Peter Junker

Organic Farming Research Foundation

Gordon Merrick

Pesticide Action Network North America

Margaret Reeves

PODER

Susana Almanza

Rural Coalition

Elliot Cordano

Irma Durand

Lorette Picciano

Sciencecorps

Kathleen Burns

Stacey Shaller Designs

Stacey Shaller

Until Justice Data Partners

Monica Unseld