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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CARBON MARKETS HAVE NO PLACE IN CLIMATE POLICY, WILL NOT HELP AGRICULTURE

A new paper released by Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP) and National Family Farm Coalition (NFFC) warns of the ineffectiveness of carbon markets and how they will not help agriculture.

MINNEAPOLIS—Carbon markets have a bad track record yet remain a default recommendation in policy proposals promising the reduction of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. In practice, these markets enable the perpetuation of pollution, environmental injustices and fraud. Successful climate and agriculture policies must not include carbon markets, caution [IATP](#) and [NFFC](#).

The price of carbon credits has historically been too low to effectively reduce GHG emissions. In addition, polluters often move their operations outside of a carbon market area to evade regulation. With most power plants and polluting industries located near low-income, minority and other disadvantaged communities, carbon markets disproportionately impact these communities.

When it comes to agriculture, carbon markets are especially detrimental. Soil carbon offsets count carbon sequestered in the soil as mitigation for carbon emissions elsewhere. However, tools to measure soil carbon accurately and reliably do not exist. In addition, soil carbon storage is highly impermanent; a change in land management practices or severe weather events can release carbon from the soil rapidly. While public resources should support farmers to integrate conservation practices into their operations, they should not be tied to a volatile carbon market that could make farming more economically unstable. Ultimately, paying farmers for soil carbon offsets treats agricultural land simply as a carbon sink, discounting its other functions such as production for local food systems.

Right now, family farmers are struggling with sinking incomes, low prices and increasing climate disruptions, and carbon markets will not provide them a solution. In fact, farmers are already speaking out against the detriments of carbon markets.

According to Jim Goodman, an organic dairy farmer in Wisconsin and NFFC board president, “The last thing we should be doing is turning carbon into another commodity to be sold or traded in the global economy. Carbon markets will do nothing to reduce GHG emissions. All they will do is create another way for polluters to profit from their lack of environmental concern.”

Elizabeth Henderson, an organic farmer in New York, says, “As a farmer, I reject solutions like carbon markets that leave power in the hands of the dominant corporations that have led us to the farm crisis we have been living through. Instead, we need public policy that incentivizes a culture of soil health, paying farmers for healthy soils practices and the ecological services that come with them, like reducing erosion, building farm resilience to climate extremes of drought and heavy rains and increasing soil carbon.”

"The national fisheries 'Catch Share' policies that are further privatizing fisheries access were modeled after carbon cap-and-trade," says Jason Jarvis, a commercial fishman in Rhode Island. "In the same way that Catch Shares have not saved the fish, carbon markets won't solve the climate problem."

Addressing the climate crisis and ensuring a just transition will take forward-thinking public investment combined with strong regulation. Carbon markets will not contribute to these goals. Rather, they let big polluters off the hook, fail the needs of the family farming sector and ignore innovative community-based approaches.

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ABOUT IATP

Based in Minneapolis with offices in Washington, D.C., and Berlin, Germany, the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy works locally and globally at the intersection of policy and practice to ensure fair and sustainable food, farm and trade systems. For more information, visit iatp.org.

ABOUT NFFC

The National Family Farm Coalition is an alliance of grassroots farmer- and advocate-led groups representing the rights and interests of independent family farmers, ranchers and fishermen in Washington, DC since 1986. Today, NFFC's 42-state membership comprises over 30 state and regional farm and rural organizations. Learn more at nffc.net.