Conservation and climate in the Farm Bill

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What do USDA conservation programs do for farmers?

- Help farmers pay for conservation practices;
- Assist with whole-farm conservation plans;
- Benefit watersheds and soil health while reducing greenhouse gas emissions and/or sequestering carbon;
- Examples include Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP).
The percentage of EQIP applicants nationwide who were denied contracts in 2023. **100,228 applicants were denied.** 34,222 were awarded contracts ($1.66bn)
The percentage of CSP applicants nationwide who were denied contracts in 2023. 24,645 applicants were denied. 11,038 were awarded ($835m)
Farmers Closed Out of USDA Conservation Programs

Between 2010 and 2022,
% of EQIP and CSP Applicants Awarded Contracts, 2010-2023, USA

- CSP
- EQIP

2014 Farm Bill
2018 Farm Bill
IRA
### Comparing the Senate and House versions

#### Senate
- IRA funding keeps climate sideboards, goes to 4 main programs;
- No 50% livestock requirement for IRA;
- Includes precision agriculture practices;
- New 10% set-aside for small farms;
- New reporting on farm size;
- Lowers AGI limit from $900k to $700k;
- Permanent disaster program;
- Adds climate change adaptation/mitigation as a purpose of EQIP.
- Raises CSP minimum payment to $4,000

#### House
- IRA funding loses climate sideboards, funds CRP, forest eastments, feral swine;
- 50% livestock requirement for IRA back;
- Focuses on precision agriculture;
- No focus on small farms;
- Block grants and reforms for disaster;
- Eliminates AGI limit for many operations;
- No mention of climate change
- Raises CSP minimum payment to $2,500
Other highlights and lowlights

- Senate bill includes Relief for Farmers Hit with PFAS Act;
- Animal confinements would be required to submit plans showing how they plan to reduce emissions and nutrient runoff before receiving payments;
- Senate bill better incorporates Tribes into state conservation planning;
- House bill includes direct hire authority for NRCS;
- Both bills could be stronger on increasing set-asides for farmers of color;
- Both bills need increased technical assistance provisions;
- Both bills increase maximum guaranteed loan amount for Rural Energy for America Program from $25 million to $50 million without guardrails for unproven technologies.
What about nutrition?

- Will likely be major sticking point in negotiations
- Senate bill makes targeted reforms to the program such as bringing Puerto Rico residents into SNAP, increasing transaction security, etc.
- House bill requires Thrifty Food Plan to be “cost-neutral” for 10 years, which the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities has identified as the equivalent of a 30% cut to SNAP.
- House Chair Thompson says his aim is to prevent an administration from unilaterally increasing or decreasing nutrition spending without Congress
What happens next?

- House releases its full Farm Bill text this week or next!
- House Ag Committee marks up their bill on May 23
- Senate likely moves next
- ???
Resources

Email Michael at michael@iatp.org

Read IATP’s latest reports on EQIP and CSP

Opening the Door for More Conservation

Costly vs. Cost Effective and Top 5 EQIP Practices per state

House section-by-section

Senate section-by-section