

U.S. farm policies should deliver programs that support conservation and promote sustainable agricultural practices that enhance natural resource conservation and agricultural diversification. Since commodity producers are paid by the acre and by the bushel, producers are inclined to grow more than demand can support in order to maximize profits at the expense of the environment and sustainable farming.

Reforming the 2007 Farm Bill: Making Conservation a Priority



Other farm programs that would provide better incentives to protect water, soil and air, while making a more careful use of fertilizer and pesticides have been largely unavailable to most farmers. Instead, commodity producers are rewarded to overproduce and often place the environment at risk. Conservation programs help farmers reduce soil erosion, enhance water supplies, improve water quality, protect wildlife habitat, and repair damages caused by natural disasters. Yet, with each new budget moving through Congress, programs like the Conservation Security Program, the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, and other initiatives are not funded to their full potential and cannot come close to meeting demand. This means that three out of four farmers who sign-up are turned away.

What's more, a public opinion survey conducted by the American Farmland Trust found that most Americans (82%) are in favor of tying conservation and sustainable farming practices to farm payments. Even with public and farmer backing, conservation programs are grossly under-funded in comparison to commodity payments. In 2005 Congress spent roughly 4 billion on conservation and nearly 5 times as much on commodity programs that encourage poor land management. A better use of these funds is to support America's producers to ensure farm viability, benefit the environment, encourage stewardship and prevent distortion of the world market or non-compliance with world trade rules.

Reforming the Farm Bill by shifting funds to support sustainable, diverse and equitable agriculture and conservation programs will truly help sustain America's farmland.

Together, we can end poverty.

