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Senate Farm Bill Will Improve Data Management and Crop Insurance Guidelines to Expand Conservation

Washington, DC, June 11, 2018 – AGree’s [Conservation and Crop Insurance Task Force](#) (CCITF) applauds the U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry for releasing a bipartisan farm bill. The bill includes important provisions that will harness the power of agricultural data to provide farmers and policymakers with insights into the impacts of conservation practices on farm and ranch profitability, yield variability, and risk while protecting producer privacy. The bill also improves federal guidance on conservation practices for crop insurance determinations and establishes a process for crop insurance premium discounts on risk-reducing conservation practices.

“This bill will remove roadblocks for farmers who want to implement practices that improve soil health and water quality and ultimately save money and reduce risk on their land. Improved data management systems and federal guidance on conservation practices will give farmers the information they need to make important land management decisions,” said Jim Moseley, Indiana farmer, Task Force member, Former Deputy Secretary of USDA, and AGree Co-Chair. “We thank Chairman Roberts, Ranking Member Stabenow, and the rest of the committee for their hard work to craft a bipartisan farm bill, and commend Senators Klobuchar, Thune, and Donnelly for their leadership on issues that take care of producers and the environment. We urge both houses of Congress to work together to pass a farm bill with these important provisions this year.”

The bill incorporates several recommendations developed by AGree’s Conservation and Crop Insurance Task Force, which is comprised of leading researchers, academics, former USDA leaders, producers, and representatives from farm-based and environmental NGOs. The Task Force has worked since 2013 to develop innovative strategies to increase adoption of conservation practices through federal crop insurance and conservation programs.

Among other provisions, the bill builds upon the [Agriculture Data Act of 2018](#) introduced in March 2018 by Senators Thune (R-SD) and Klobuchar (D-MN) to create a secure data warehouse that will use existing data to enable cutting edge research and analysis about conservation practices and economic and environmental sustainability. The bill improves procedures for greater data interoperability at USDA and introduces strong producer privacy safeguards prohibiting the sale of data and requiring published research to release only aggregated data.

The bipartisan bill will also enable conservation adoption on more acres through policy changes. Those changes, championed by Senator Donnelly, include recognizing Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) conservation practices and enhancements as Risk Management Agency (RMA) Good Farming Practices. This will ensure that crop insurance determinations for a wide range of conservation activities, including cover crops, rely upon local agricultural experts as part of RMA's Good Farming Practices. In addition, it will establish a process to enable crop insurance premium discounts for farmers that adopt risk-reducing conservation practices such as cover crops, crop rotation, and more. These common-sense changes make the long-term sustainability of agriculture part of the purpose of the crop insurance program.

As farm bill discussions progress, the Task Force remains committed to working with members of Congress in both chambers to pass a bill that maintains and enhances our federal risk management programs by recognizing and strengthening the link between conservation and crop insurance.

Since 2013, the AGree advisors and partners that comprise the Conservation and Crop Insurance Task Force have been working to drive broader adoption of conservation practices through the intersection of conservation and crop insurance. More information about the Task Force can be found [here](#).

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