



SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE COALITION

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SAC Policy Director Ferd Hoefner Testifies Before Senate Agriculture Committee *Urges Committee to Streamline Conservation Program Delivery*

Washington, D.C., May 1, 2007 – Sustainable Agriculture Coalition Policy Director Ferd Hoefner testified today before the U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry on the need to expand and improve federal agricultural conservation programs.

“The 2007 Farm Bill presents an opportunity to strengthen the entire conservation portfolio by establishing some broad ground rules and creating a stronger foundation for addressing critical agro-environmental issues in a comprehensive fashion,” said Hoefner. Through new provisions that would cut across all conservation programs such as a unified sign-up and application process and whole-farm total resource management conservation planning, Hoefner suggests that the 2007 Farm Bill can “make conservation programs in reality what they are so often touted to be rhetorically, namely interdependent components of a mutually supportive portfolio.”

The Coalition’s major recommendations for the conservation title in the 2007 Farm Bill include:

- Retaining, streamlining, and fully funding the Conservation Security Program (CSP) as the primary agriculture stewardship incentive program available to producers nationwide;
- Coordinating the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) with the CSP to improve local conservation delivery and restoring EQIP provisions that help ensure a net positive effect on the environment;
- Adopting a new Organic Conversion and Stewardship Incentives priority to provide technical and financial assistance for organic farming-based conservation systems;
- Restoring a long-term funding baseline to the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP); and
- Increasing the Conservation Reserve Program’s emphasis on high impact conservation buffer enrollments while instituting a new permanent easement option for marginal lands with high importance as wildlife habitat.

“Resource conservation and environmental enhancement can be promoted in such a way as to re-enforce the public interest in sustaining family farms and supporting rural community development, but only if our public policy choices are aligned with those goals.”

The Sustainable Agriculture Coalition represents grassroots farm, rural, and conservation organizations from across the country that advocate for federal policies and programs supporting the long-term economic and environmental sustainability of agriculture, natural resources, and rural communities.

