



**For Immediate Release**  
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**WYDEN-HARKIN AMENDMENT TO THE SENATE FARM BILL'S ENERGY TITLE  
SUPPORTED BY WIDE ARRAY OF ORGANIZATIONS**

*Washington, D.C. December 7, 2007-* Yesterday, the Sustainable Agriculture Coalition joined with ninety-one organizations and bioenergy companies on a letter to Senators urging them to support the Wyden-Harkin Amendment to improve a new Bioenergy Crop Transition Assistance Program in the Senate farm bill. While the Senate farm bill Energy Title provides several types of assistance for research and development of the next generation of bioenergy refineries, the Bioenergy Crop Transition Assistance Program is the only measure designed to assist farmers and foresters who want to start producing cellulosic bioenergy crops.

The signers of the letter include farmer and rural community organizations, bioenergy associations and companies, scientific societies, and conservation and environmental groups. They are calling for improvements to the Program to make it more useful to farmers and to incorporate measures that promote the sustainable production of the next generation of perennial bioenergy crops and trees.

“Many bioenergy crops will be new crops which farmers will need to incorporate into their farming systems,” said Martha Noble, Senior Policy Associate with the Sustainable Agriculture Coalition. “The Wyden-Harkin Amendment provides for feasibility studies, outreach to farmers about bioenergy crop production, and flexibility for farmers to field test new crops for proposed and existing bioenergy facilities.”

The Wyden-Harkin Amendment also provides financial assistance and incentives for farmers to implement good conservation measures and to generate information that other farmers can use to grow bioenergy crops in a sustainable manner.

“Growers want to produce the next generation of bioenergy crops, because everyone knows we need to surpass corn ethanol,” said Loni Kemp, Senior Policy Analyst with The Minnesota Project. “This amendment will ensure that cellulose is grown in sustainable systems that provide clean water, healthy soil, wildlife habitat, reduced carbon to address climate change, and higher net levels of energy production from non-food crops. Farmers who achieve conservation excellence in biomass production will be further rewarded by a link in the Amendment for enrollment in the Conservation Security Program.”

The Amendment also includes conservation goals to ensure that use of the Program does not harm wildlife or destroy native habitat. “The wildlife community has been strongly supportive of assistance to help farmers get started growing next generation energy crops in a sustainable

manner,” said Julie Sibbing, Senior Program Manager for Agriculture and Wetlands Policy with the National Wildlife Federation. “The Wyden-Harkin Amendment would set bioenergy crop production on the right track by adding provisions that prohibit the use of Program funding to destroy rapidly declining native habitats and wildlife or to allow planting of invasive species.”

As evidenced by the diversity of organizations signed onto the letter in support of the Wyden-Harkin Amendment, the emerging bioenergy sector has the potential to increase the economic well-being of farmers and rural communities, enhance the nation’s energy security, and meet reasonable environmental and conservation standards. The Wyden-Harkin Amendment will help fulfill these goals.

[Click here for a copy of the letter.](#)

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*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.*