

**Biofuelwatch – Businesses for a Livable Climate - CatholicNetwork US
Food & Water Watch- Family Farm Defenders - Friends of The Earth
Indigenous Environmental Network - Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy
Organic Consumers Association – Progressive Democrats of America
Public Justice - Zero Hour**

March 10, 2021

Chairwoman Stabenow.
Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, & Forestry
328A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC, 20510

Re: Oppose False Agriculture and Climate Solutions

Dear Chairwoman Stabenow:

We appreciate that you are holding a hearing on Thursday called “Farmers and Foresters: Opportunities to Lead in Tackling Climate Change.” However, we are concerned about efforts to use risky carbon offsets from soil carbon, forests, and factory farm gas (so-called biogas) for sale to polluters to allow them to keep polluting, as an incentive for addressing the climate crisis. Offset programs are ineffective at reducing emissions, increase harmful air pollution in environmental justice communities and Indigenous communities, and undermine efforts to build a healthy, sustainable, and resilient food system.

We would like to bring to your attention [a letter from over 200 organizations opposing the Growing Climate Solutions Act](#), which enumerates significant concerns with offset programs. Simply put, offset programs empower polluters to keep polluting rather than delivering healthy air for communities and families.

Instead of continuing the legacy of pollution trading schemes, we encourage policies that eliminate pollution through direct reductions at the source and support local food economies, better living wages for farmers and food chain workers, and pathways for sustainable practices of food and energy production. Agroecological, regenerative farming should be incentivized in addition to, and not instead of, carbon reductions in other sectors.

USDA already has the tools for incentivizing soil carbon sequestration while boosting farm income. With the level of urgency required to mitigate the climate crisis and aid a struggling farm economy, Congress should be boosting the existing proven and science-based programs that farmers are already familiar with, rather than investing in pollution trading schemes. Existing conservation programs pay farmers for the same practices yet are woefully underfunded, and some loopholes and incentives actually promote unsustainable practices:

- The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) pays farmers for practices that can sequester carbon, build soil and make farmland more resilient to a changing climate. Yet up to 85 percent of farmers vying for EQIP funding are turned away each year.
- The Grassland Reserve Program and Farmable Wetlands Program target restoration and conservation of private land. Increasing funding for these programs will generate income for farmers while preventing conversion of these important carbon sinks into cropland.
- The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) is another frequently over enrolled USDA conservation program that provides farmers with 5 year contracts to perform various conservation practices that can improve soil health and mitigate climate change.

- The Conservation Technical Assistance Program, with enough funding, would also assist farmers in transitioning towards practices that would be rewarded under existing conservation programs.
- Incentives should not simply fund ad-hoc practices but promote the shift to organic regenerative agroecological farming systems. Simply encouraging farmers to practice no-till agriculture, dependent upon fossil-fuel derived herbicides like glyphosate, for example, will not meaningfully reduce emissions or build healthy, resilient soil.
- Congress must also close loopholes that enable unsustainable factory farms to capture conservation funding for use in other false solutions such as building manure lagoons and creating factory farm gas (biogas) operations.

We appreciate your attention to this matter and stand ready to work with you and the Senate Agriculture Committee to find real solutions to our climate crisis that strengthen communities and build a more sustainable future for everyone.

Sincerely,

Gary Hughes, Biofuelwatch

Jim Smith, Businesses for a Livable Climate

Stephanie Klass, CatholicNetwork.US

John E. Peck, Family Farm Defenders

Mitch Jones, Food & Water Watch

Jason Davidson, Friends of the Earth

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Alan Minsky, Progressive Democrats of
America

Brent Newell, Public Justice

Lana Weidgenant, Zero Hour

CC: Members of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry