



2007 FARM BILL

July 2007

The Conservation Title of the Farm Bill provides financial and technical assistance for farmers, ranchers and forest landowners to address natural resource concerns on their agricultural operations. This year Congress has the opportunity to build upon and strengthen the commitment provided to critical conservation programs under the 2002 Farm Bill.

Locally-led, voluntary, incentive-based conservation programs in the Farm Bill help producers address water quality, air quality, soil quality and wildlife habitat needs on their farms. Our predominantly county-level conservation districts across the country assist producers in participating in these programs by gathering local input and setting priorities at the county and state level. This input is critical to addressing the most pressing natural resource issue in a local area. Water, air, habitat concerns and improvement strategies differ across the country, so it is vital that national programs be tailored to fit unique local situations.

Conservation districts' original mission was to protect soil quality. Over the last 70 years, our capacity has increased to address all natural resource issues. Conservation district employees staff offices and assist producers with applications and provide technical expertise on natural resources issues and soil health. To help farmers, ranchers and forest landowners adopt conservation practices and manage their operations with improved conservation implementation, we believe the 2007 Farm Bill Conservation Title should:

- Maintain the locally-led conservation program delivery system of Local Work Groups and State Technical Committees;
- Focus on working lands conservation programs;
- Deliver adequate technical assistance through the conservation programs;
- Consolidate conservation programs to ensure ease of producer participation in the programs;
- Maintain a strong funding commitment to conservation;
- Contain programs that are workable for producers across the country and allow them to maintain viable farming operations; and
- Maintain USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service administration of the majority of conservation programs.

REQUEST

NACD supports the conservation title of H.R. 2419, the 2007 Farm Bill unanimously passed by the House Agriculture Committee. This bipartisan legislation provides needed financial and technical resources for producers across the country. Please vote in support of this legislation, and the *en bloc* amendment that provides additional funding to continue conservation programs.