

ATT: Farm Bill

June 19, 2012

Dear Senator:

We urge you to vote for the Soil and Wetlands Conservation Amendment (SA #2438) to the farm bill introduced by Senator Chambliss. This amendment would level the playing field for farmers by renewing and updating our nation's long-standing conservation compact. This is a common sense, non-threatening amendment that deserves overwhelming support.

The Soil and Wetlands Conservation Amendment ensures that taxpayer funds are not rewarding agricultural producers who are draining wetlands or farming highly erodible land without adequate conservation measures. This is a protection that is enormously important to our farmers, the vast majority of which are careful stewards of natural resources and the bulk of whom are already subject to these soil and wetland protection provisions. This amendment levels the playing field and in our considerable experience is widely supported by farmers.

Basic conservation requirements were applied to crop insurance premium support through 1996 and the sky did not fall. With the movement toward more of our safety net being invested in crop and revenue insurance relative to commodity programs, now is exactly the right time to modernize the conservation compact by making it relevant to the evolving nature of the safety net.

There has been some misinformation circulated about the amendment. To be clear, the amendment does not impact indemnity payments at all. It does not impact the ability of farmers to purchase crop insurance. It is simple to implement. It keeps fully intact the current rules with respect to good faith exemptions, minimal effect exemptions, graduated penalties, and the one-year grace period to fix problems. It also includes a very reasonable five-year transition period for anyone who becomes subject to the provision for the first time.

This is a pro-farmer, pro-conservation, pro-safety net amendment. We urge your support.

Sincerely,

Jon Scholl
President
American Farmland Trust

Roger Johnson
President
National Farmers Union

Ferd Hoefner
Policy Director
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition

Jim Gulliford
Executive Director
Soil and Water Conservation Society