NATIONAL SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE COALITION

Principles on Agriculture and Climate Change

The National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC) is committed to advancing policies that address the climate crisis in the agriculture sector. We believe it is essential that farmers and ranchers have a seat at the table as we work to develop comprehensive climate change solutions. Farmers and ranchers work at the frontlines of climate change, as they struggle to prepare for increasing droughts, floods, extreme temperatures, severe storms, and shifting pest and disease pressures. Thus, they have a critical stake in building healthy soils and systems with enhanced resilience to these stresses (*climate change adaptation*). In addition, they are uniquely positioned to contribute to *climate change mitigation* through soil health practices that store carbon in the soil and biomass, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Farmers and ranchers can, and absolutely must, be part of climate change solutions.

We need "win-win" solutions for climate change and agriculture. We need agriculture policy solutions that not only mitigate climate change, but that also support the viability and diversity of farmers, ranchers, and rural communities for generations to come by building resilience, soil health, economic justice, and profitability. In order to achieve these goals, NSAC supports policy solutions that:

1. Support producers to make U.S. agriculture climate-neutral by:

- Establishing a national goal to make agriculture climate-neutral.

- Increasing USDA's ability to measure, evaluate, and report on the carbon sequestration, soil health, and greenhouse gas mitigation benefits of farm conservation programs and practices, and to utilize data to pilot and develop pay-for-performance models based on soil health science and evidence-based carbon sequestration outcomes.

- Significantly increasing incentives and providing technical support for farmers to adopt conservation activities and farming systems that build soil organic matter, increase soil carbon sequestration, store carbon in woody biomass, and prevent denitrification.

- Appropriately assessing and promoting the climate change adaptation and mitigation benefits of soil health management and other conservation activities to increase farmer adoption.

- Supporting farmers and ranchers in the transition to systems that keep the land in perennial vegetation and sod, including rangeland and pasture management that promotes climate benefits.

- Protecting existing farmland and ensuring it is affordable for farmers and ranchers so that the carbon sink and other benefits of the practices above can be realized and the land is protected from carbon emitting development.

- Strengthening the requirements for recipients of federal commodity and crop insurance, farm loan, and conservation program benefits to meet minimum requirements for conservation practices that enhance the natural resource base on which long-term productivity depends.

- Supporting structural reforms to federal commodity and crop insurance programs in order to better align the current system with climate change mitigation and adaptation objectives.

2. **Strengthen sustainable and organic production systems by accelerating investment in public research in sustainable agriculture systems with focused attention to agroecology, soil health investment for agricultural resilience, perennials, biodiversity, and on-farm adaptation and mitigation strategies.**

3. **Support climate-friendly nutrient management to reduce agricultural N2O emissions.**

4. **Increase support for composting as a climate friendly alternative to landfill and manure lagoon disposal of organic "wastes".**

5. **Strengthen the protection of carbon sequestration potential on sensitive and marginal lands.**

6. **Support climate-friendly, pasture and grazing-based livestock production systems and end subsidies for CAFOs with their massive greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) and water pollution impacts.**

7. **Assist farmers and ranchers to adopt energy conservation, energy efficiency, and on-farm solar, wind, and other renewable energy production as ways to mitigate agricultural GHG and increase resiliency.**

8. **Expand federal investments in the development of new, regionally adapted, public crop cultivars and livestock breeds with improved resilience to climate change impacts and improved performance in climate-friendly production systems, including organic, conservation agriculture, and advanced grazing.**

Important Note: These science-based principles apply specifically to Farm Bill authorized programs that directly address farm production and land stewardship issues, and are explored in greater depth in an NSAC policy position paper to be available at https://sustainableagriculture.net/publications. Future legislative and policy action must also take a broader perspective on climate change impacts in agriculture and the entire food system, with solutions that also:

- Address the disproportionately heavy impacts of climate disruption on low-income, rural, and minority communities; and on farmers of color, migrant farmers and farmworkers, and other historically underserved constituencies; and recognize the invaluable contributions of indigenous communities to agricultural solutions to the climate crisis.

- Promote racial equity, socio-economic justice, and food sovereignty throughout the food system.

- Address agriculture-food system GHG impacts beyond the farmgate by reducing food waste and fossil fuel use for input manufacture, transportation, food processing, and distribution.

- Support the development of regional and local food systems which play an important role in increasing farm viability and resilience, conserving energy, fostering ecosystem functions, and reducing GHG emissions in our nation's farming and food system.