

Conservation and Crop Insurance Task Force



Overview

The AGree Conservation and Crop Insurance Task Force (CCITF) is a diverse group of experts – including agricultural producers, researchers and academics, former USDA leadership, and representatives from farmer-based, environmental, and conservation NGOs – developing and pursuing innovative ways to drive broader adoption of conservation practices through opportunities in federal crop insurance and federal conservation programs. The CCITF is identifying and advocating for opportunities in the 2018 Farm Bill and in other venues to support increased adoption of conservation practices across U.S. working lands.

Overarching Goal

Drive broader adoption of conservation practices on working lands, while maintaining a viable federal crop insurance program, across the United States.

Task Force members believe that accomplishing this goal will require both effective and efficient crop insurance and conservation programs for producers across a diversity of production systems. To guide its deliberations, the Task Force has developed this set of Principles against which it will test its actions and any proposed recommendations.

Principles

1. **Resilience** – Build resilience across farms and ranches of all types.

Resilience – both economic and environmental – contributes to the long-term ability of farms and ranches to provide safe, affordable food despite incidence of extreme weather events such as floods and droughts, as well as pest and disease outbreaks. Increased resilience can improve the profitability of farming and ranching operations and – over time – lower the cost of the federal crop insurance program by reducing yield risk and indemnity payments.

2. **Knowledge** – Increase knowledge of the effects of conservation practices on risk and other variables such as soil health, yield, yield variability, resilience, environmental outcomes, and profitability.

Improved understanding, driven by sound data, will support improvements to federal conservation programs, the federal crop insurance program, and private sector initiatives such as markets for ecosystem services and supply chain sustainability standards. More effective and efficient federal data collection is critical to increase knowledge in these areas.

3. **Innovation** – Support innovation among U.S. producers.

Federal crop insurance rules can both enable and impede producer innovation. Crop insurance can enable producers to innovate by providing financial security and, in many cases, allows producers to secure operating loans; yet it can also pose barriers to innovation and conservation that must be addressed.

4. **Actuarial Soundness** – Maintain and improve the actuarial soundness of the Federal crop insurance program.

The actuarial soundness of the Federal crop insurance program is required by law and must be maintained, and – with enhanced understanding through data collection and analysis – improved over time.

5. **Privacy** – Support the confidentiality of federal agricultural data.

The confidentiality of federal agricultural data collected at the field and farm level must be protected, as required by law.

6. **Data Access** – Improve access to federal agricultural data – with strict privacy protocols in place – among the research community, private sector, and NGOs.

Federal program and survey data – including data regarding conservation practices, yield, yield variability, and other environmental indicators – is needed to conduct cutting-edge research on solutions that improve farm productivity, profitability, risk management, and environmental outcomes. Confidential USDA data can be made available to researchers outside USDA without compromising producer privacy; to do so efficiently, appropriate data systems and access protocols that protect all producer identification must be developed.

7. **Transparency** – Increase the transparency of research and analytical methods utilized by U.S. Department of Agriculture agencies.

Improvements in transparency will increase program accountability and confidence among producers, researchers, taxpayers, environmental NGOs, and the crop insurance industry, thereby broadening the base of political support for federal crop insurance and conservation programs.

8. **Availability** – Ensure equal access to participation in the federal crop insurance program among producers of all crops and farming systems.

Producers growing crops with inferior federal crop insurance options – or no federal crop insurance options – experience a competitive disadvantage, which influences banks' lending behavior and creates market distortions.

9. **Understanding** – Provide a safe venue for diverse interests to generate, test, and pursue innovative ideas.

Constructive dialogue among diverse stakeholders fosters respect and understanding and enables the development of innovative and enduring solutions. There is value even in discussing ideas that are eventually abandoned.

Conservation and Crop Insurance Task Force Participants

The following individuals are members of the AGree Conservation and Crop Insurance Task Force:

- **Robert Blair:** *Three Canyon Farms*
- **Larry Clemens:** *The Nature Conservancy*
- **Pipa Elias:** *The Nature Conservancy*
- **Callie Eideberg:** *Environmental Defense Fund*
- **Suzy Friedman:** *Environmental Defense Fund*
- ***Dave Gagner:** *National Fish and Wildlife Foundation*
- **Ferd Hoefner:** *National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition*
- ***Wayne Honeycutt:** *Soil Health Institute*
- ***Bruce Knight:** *Strategic Conservation Solutions, and Former Chief of USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service*
- **John Larson:** *American Farmland Trust*
- **Scott Marlow:** *Rural Advancement Foundation International*
- **Carl Mattson:** *George Mattson Farms, Inc.*
- ***Stephanie Mercier:** *Farm Journal Foundation*
- **James Moseley:** *AGree Co-Chair, and Former Deputy Secretary of USDA*
- **Kellis Moss:** *Ducks Unlimited*
- ***Rob Myers:** *USDA Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education*
- **William Salas:** *Applied GeoSolutions*
- **Ryan Stockwell:** *National Wildlife Federation*
- **Eric Washburn:** *Windward Strategies*
- **Kristin Weeks Duncanson:** *Duncanson Growers*
- **Joshua Woodard:** *Cornell University*
- **Paul Wolfe:** *National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition*
- **Fred Yoder:** *Yoder Ag Services*

* Not involved in lobbying activities related to the CCITF.



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