

June 10, 2021

The Honorable Tom Vilsack  
Secretary of Agriculture  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Secretary Vilsack,

On behalf of the [AGree Economic and Environmental Risk Coalition](#), we applaud USDA's recently announced Pandemic Cover Crop Program (PCCP), which provides a \$5/acre crop insurance premium discount to producers who planted cover crops during the 2021 crop year. There is a strong body of research demonstrating the significant benefits of conservation practices like cover crops—such as improved soil health, water retention, and crop resilience to extreme weather events. This program is a step in the right direction toward better alignment of USDA's risk management and conservation programs.

The PCCP builds upon the overwhelming success of similar programs funded by the states of Iowa, Illinois, and Indiana. In those states, demand from farmers for this modest incentive payment has far out-paced available funding. To be truly effective, an incentive needs to be ongoing and available on an annual basis to not only reward past practices, but encourage greater adoption. We also believe the incentive should be extended to Whole Farm Revenue Protection, so that the program is inclusive of diversified operations including specialty crops. Additionally, given the short turnaround between when this program was announced and when producers must verify their acres with their local FSA office, we encourage USDA to provide additional flexibility to ensure that this program can benefit all of the producers that utilize cover crops as part of their farming practices. Lastly, additional funding for the Risk Management Agency to incorporate cover crop reporting into the Acreage Crop Reporting Streamlining Initiative (ACRSI) would also make cover crop reporting easier in the future. We look forward to working with and supporting your efforts to further improve and extend the program in future years.

As the PCCP is implemented, we encourage USDA to capture and publish the results of this incentive to further demonstrate our understanding about the risk-reduction benefits of cover crops and ensure that federal crop insurance policies acknowledge the connection between conservation, soil health, and agricultural risk.

AGree is a bipartisan initiative focused on advancing common-sense policies that promote conservation on working lands and support farmer's livelihoods. We appreciate your leadership in launching and developing the PCCP program and look forward to working together on further actions that support farmer livelihoods and advance conservation.

Sincerely,

The AGree Economic and Environmental Risk Coalition