

AGRICULTURE INNOVATION ACT

Senators Amy Klobuchar & John Thune

Bipartisan Legislation to Help Farmers Better Understand the Value of Conservation and Other Production Practices

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) manages a wealth of farmer data, from conservation practice adoption to yields and risk management. Unfortunately, this data sits within different USDA agencies – the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Farm Service Agency and the Risk Management Agency – making it cumbersome, if not impossible, to access.

Many farmers and ranchers rely on anecdotal information when determining the value of conservation and other production practices. To better quantify risks and rewards, and incentivize the practices that enhance and protect water quality, increase crop yields, and improve soil health, we need to make USDA data more accessible. Little has been done to collect, link, and analyze USDA data to quantify the increased crop yields, improved profitability, and risk reduction that results from implementing conservation and other production practices on farms and ranches.

Action starts with information.

The Agriculture Innovation Act will:

- Allow USDA to identify, collect, link, and analyze data on conservation and other production practices to determine the impacts of these practices on enhancing crop yields, soil health, and ecosystem services, reducing risk, and improving working land profitability.
- Allow USDA to establish procedures and incentives for producers to voluntarily elect to participate in or submit data that may be useful in building evidence on the impacts of conservation and other production practices on enhancing crop yields, soil health, and ecosystem services, reducing risk, and improving working land profitability.
- Allow USDA to strengthen its data management systems by establishing a secure data center.
- Allow USDA to make anonymized and aggregated data available through the secure data center to trusted academic institutions and researchers for research, analysis and evaluation.
- Allow USDA to use research, analysis, and evaluation products to provide technical assistance to farmers and ranchers and improve farm program implementation
- Require USDA to report annually to Senate and House Agriculture Committees.
- Apply existing privacy protection laws to all activities, including:
 - Confidentiality of data collected by ensuring aggregation so that no identifiable or discernable producer information is released;
 - Prohibits any disclosure of information on specific farm operations provided in order to participate in USDA farm programs;
 - Prohibits disclosure of any information provided for crop insurance purposes unless aggregated or with producer consent;
 - Prohibits federal agencies from disclosing any information without written consent.