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American Farm Bureau Federation

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Ben Thomas
Co-Chair, FACA Carbon Bank Working Group
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Jenny Hopkinson
Co-Chair, FACA Carbon Bank Working Group
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Dear FACA Leadership:

It has come to our attention that the Food and Agriculture Climate Alliance (FACA) plans to recommend categories of pilot programs to help guide the federal government's efforts to design and implement a carbon bank for the agriculture sector.

We encourage FACA to include a carbon bank pilot category for: **stewardship incentives offering a profit opportunity to farmers.** In this pilot, incentives should exceed the cost of implementing climate-smart practices plus the increased costs imposed by climate policy generally. This category of a pilot program is important because for most farmers, the carbon farming payments alone are not likely to cover the cost of climate-smart practices nor climate policy's cost increases on inputs, so this innovative approach offers a promising direction to explore. Effective practices can offer a profit opportunity to farmers while simultaneously delivering equal or greater benefits to the public through improved carbon sequestration, soil health, water quality, water conservation, biodiversity, and other ecosystem services.

We also wholeheartedly agree with the emerging consensus that a successful program must be producer-led, incentive-based with strictly voluntary participation, and not penalize early actors.

An example of this type of incentive offering a profit opportunity can be found in the RIPE100 program. RIPE (Rural Investment to Protect our Environment) is a farmer-led group with a voluntary, incentive-based plan to help farmers and ranchers profit by investing in conservation practices. RIPE's Steering Committee is listed below. Under the RIPE100 plan, USDA would compensate farmers and ranchers \$100 per acre or animal unit for implementing an approved farm stewardship practice like no

till, cover crops, or conservation irrigation. Each approved practice would deliver a public benefit that exceeds \$100 when considering the value of sequestered carbon along with other public benefits like improved soil health, water quality, flood mitigation, and increased biodiversity. The scientific citations are detailed in the RIPE100 White Paper which is available on their website at <https://www.riperoadmap.org/>.

Compensating producers with this environmental service “stack” approach rather than just for carbon sequestration encourages wider adoption of key conservation measures and is more popular with farmers than compensating for carbon alone. To illustrate, RIPE commissioned the Farm Journal's Trust in Food division to poll commodity farmers in six key states in the Midwest and Southeast in March 2021. The results showed that 78% of farmers prefer payments for stacked environmental benefits over carbon alone. Support remained robust even when tied to climate policy and higher government costs, as 76% support climate policy if it increases farmer profit by paying \$100 per acre and 65% prefer ambitious voluntary conservation programs even when tied to higher government program costs. These results are aligned with the study conducted in 2020 by Robert Bonnie and Victoria Plutshack from the Duke University Nicholas Institute. That study found that only 39% of rural Republicans support government spending on climate, but that number rises dramatically to 77% support for government spending to help farmers address climate change, and rises even further to 93% support for financial incentives to farmers for water and soil health.

We are farmers and ranchers who serve on the RIPE Steering Committee and we volunteer our time with this initiative because we believe it offers a promising avenue for agricultural producers to prosper as we invest in our climate and environment.

Again, we encourage FACA to include a category recommending that stewardship incentives provide a profit opportunity to producers by offering an incentive that meets or exceeds the cost of implementing climate-smart practices plus the increased costs imposed by climate policy generally. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

RIPE Steering Committee

Adam Bierbaum, Member, Board of Directors,
Iowa Corn Growers Association

Brandon Hunnicutt, Conventional and
Organic Corn Farmer, Nebraska

John Wesley Boyd, Jr., President, National
Black Farmers Association

Eunice Biel, Minnesota Farmers Union Board
of Directors; Fillmore County Soil and Water
Conservation District Supervisor (serving in
personal capacity)

Brad Doyle, Board of Directors, American Soybean Association; President, Poinsett County Farm Bureau; former President, Arkansas Soybean Association (serving in personal capacity)

Ben Gleason, Sr. Manager of Sustainable Programs, Iowa Corn Growers Association

Jim Whitaker, Member, Arkansas Rice Farmers Board; Member, USA Rice Farmers Conservation Committee, Sustainability Committee, and Domestic Promotion Committee (serving in personal capacity)

Meredith Ellis, Rancher, G Bar C Ranch; Board Member, Integrity Beef Alliance; U.S. Roundtable for Sustainable Beef (serving in personal capacity)

Phil Gordon, Vice President, Michigan Corn Growers Association (serving in personal capacity)

Fred Yoder, Co-Chair, Solutions from the Land; Past President, National Corn Growers Association (serving in personal capacity)