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May 30, 2007 Action Alert #6

**ENSURE THE CONSERVATION SECURITY PROGRAM IS RESCUED
DURING HOUSE AGRICULTURE FULL COMMITTEE MARKUP**

Below is an Action Alert from the Sustainable Agriculture Coalition that explains the current status of the Conservation Security Program (CSP) and the need for continued calls or letters in support of CSP before the House Agriculture Full Committee Markup in mid-June. In order to secure full funding for CSP and to oppose the proposed severe weakening of language in the program that essentially lowers the program's environmental standards, calls or letters are needed to Rep. Boyda and Rep. Moran, both on the House Agriculture Committee. Between now and mid-June, please contact them to urge them to support CSP full funding and to oppose weakening the program.

See below for more detail and for contact information.

Mary Fund
Ks. Rural Center

Sustainable Agriculture Coalition ACTION ALERT for the Week of May 28

**ENSURE THE CONSERVATION SECURITY PROGRAM IS RESCUED
DURING HOUSE AGRICULTURE FULL COMMITTEE MARKUP**

A lot has happened on the Conservation Security Program (CSP) recently:

In his farm bill proposal announced May 17th, House Agriculture Committee Chairman Collin Peterson (D-MN) freezes any new sign-ups for the CSP until 2012, robs the program of \$1.1 billion to increase funding for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and Farm and Ranchland Protection Program (FRPP), and seriously weakens the substance of the program, including weaker environmental standards and the elimination of enhancement payments.

During the Subcommittee markup of Chairman Peterson's proposal on May 22nd, Rep. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY) offered an amendment to restore the proposed funding cut and to then increase funding for the CSP by an additional \$2 billion. Like all of the amendments that required increased funding, Gillibrand's amendment was withdrawn with the understanding it would be back on the table for discussion at full committee.

Then, on May 24th, in a partial about-face, Chairman Peterson announced to the press that he would be restoring the \$1.1 billion cut to CSP when the subcommittee bill comes to the full committee, and that he would allow the program to restart in 2010 instead of 2012.

While elimination of the previously proposed \$1.1 billion cut is a step in the right direction, the fact remains that over \$4 billion has been cut from the CSP by previous actions of Congress, and without the restoration of those funds the program cannot serve family farmers and the environment on a nationwide basis. Restoring full funding and strengthening rather than weakening the substantive language of the program remain critical goals.

The full House Agriculture Committee is expected to take up the issue again during markup in mid-June. Between now and then, if you are in a district or state of a Member who is on the House Agriculture Committee, please urge them to oppose the severe weakening language changes made to the Conservation Security Program in Rep. Peterson's proposal and to support full funding for CSP during the full House Agriculture Committee markup. "

Both Rep. Nancy Boyda and Rep. Jerry Moran are on the House Agriculture Committee.

PLEASE CALL OR FAX

The message is simple:

" I am a constituent (or resident of the Kansas) and I am calling to urge Representative Boyda or Moran to stand up for the Conservation Security Program during the full House Agriculture Committee markup by:

- 1) expressing their support for the Conservation Security Program
- 2) requesting full funding and a restoration of the \$4 billion previously cut from the program
- 3) voicing their disapproval of the language currently in the House bill that would gut the primary features of the Conservation Security Program

Please call Representative Boyda's or Moran's offices (phone numbers below).

Ask the receptionist to connect you with the staff person responsible for agriculture. If the agriculture aid is unavailable, leave your name, phone number, and the message above on the aid's voice mail, or, if necessary, with the receptionist.

If you prefer to write, fax a brief letter with the same points above, along with your name, address, and contact information (fax numbers below).

Rep. Nancy Boyda (Ks. 2nd District)
(Ag Aide Shana Guinn; Phone 202-225-6601) FAX: 202-225-7986

Rep. Jerry Moran (KS-1st District)
Ag Aide Aaron Popelka; Phone: 202-225-2715 FAX 202-225-5124

Background:

The Conservation Security Program (CSP) is an innovative and proactive stewardship incentives program first authorized in the 2002 Farm Bill. The CSP provides financial and technical assistance to farmers and ranchers who develop and maintain conservation systems that solve critical natural resource and environmental concerns, rewarding them for investments of labor, management, and capital aimed at fostering healthy, productive, and non-eroding soils, clear air and clean water, energy savings, and wildlife habitat. The CSP helps sustainable and organic farmers, drives new conservation investments, and supports farmers for the environmental benefits they can foster rather than production of particular crops.

Despite its wide popularity with farmers and ranchers, the intent and scope of the CSP have been stunted by repeated cuts to its funding levels. In total, \$4.3 billion has been cut from the program, resulting in decisions by USDA to make the program available in a limited number of watersheds rather than on a nationwide basis. The 2007 Farm Bill is the vehicle for improving the CSP, strengthening its environmental criteria, ensuring that it serves sustainable and organic farmers, and getting its funding back to a level where the program can be made available to farmers on a regular nationwide basis.

Chairman Peterson's original proposal, rather than restoring funding to the CSP, instead would make another huge cut, effectively shutting the program down for the life of the new 5-year farm bill. His revised proposal would restore the funding cut he proposed, but not restore any of the \$4.3 billion cut previously. Moreover, his proposal would delay implementation of the CSP for two years (2008 and 2009) and the program that would then go into effect under his plan would be a mere shadow of the current program. There would be lower environmental standards, no graduated enrollment tiers, and no enhancement payments, just new practice cost share. Enhancement payments for superior resource management currently account for the vast majority of CSP payments.

In essence, the Peterson plan would retain the name "CSP" but would turn it into an entirely different and more traditional program.

For Further Information, or to sign up for KRC Action Alerts, contact:

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5/30/07 Action Alert #7