

## SENATE FARM BILL - PROPOSED FLOOR AMENDMENT

### HELP FARMERS GROW THE NEXT GENERATION OF BIOENERGY CROPS – THE RIGHT WAY

The Biomass Energy Crop Transition Assistance provision in Section 9001 of the Senate Farm Bill Energy Title was originally designed to provide incentives to farmers to grow bioenergy crops *in a sustainable manner*.

Many bioenergy crops will be new crops, grown for the first time in regions across the country. The goal of the original measure – a Bioenergy Crop Transition Assistance Program - was to give farmers financial assistance and incentives to incorporate good conservation measures into new bioenergy crop systems and to participate in projects that can generate information that other farmers can use to grow bioenergy crops sustainably.

As passed by the Senate Agriculture Committee, however, the biomass crop transition measure has many drawbacks, with adequate conservation goals removed from the original measure. The Proposed Floor Amendment would restore the Program’s ability to help groups of farmers come together to begin to grow biomass crops for energy, restore conservation measures removed in the Senate bill, and target the Program to land where the establishment of perennial bioenergy crops will result in improved conservation performance.

### IMPROVEMENTS PROVIDED IN THE FLOOR AMENDMENT

#### Improvements for Farmers

Senate Ag Committee Drawbacks	Floor Amendment Improvements
No funds for feasibility studies or other planning tools to bring farmers together with bioenergy facilities for bioenergy crop production projects.	Offers matching grants of up to \$50,000 to farmer groups, counties, or other local entities for feasibility studies and planning including outreach to farmers about bioenergy crop production.
Assistance only to landowners who have already entered into a “financial commitment” with an energy facility to provide biomass.	Letter of intent from an existing or planned facility is sufficient to allow farmers to apply for assistance in planting and maintaining bioenergy crops, allowing farmers more flexibility to field test new perennial bioenergy crops for proposed and existing bioenergy facilities.
No priority for projects that include beginning farmers or socially disadvantaged farmers.	Priority for projects that include beginning farmers and socially disadvantaged farmers to assist them in accessing the emerging markets for bioenergy feedstocks.

## Improvements for Conservation

Senate Ag Committee Bill Drawbacks	Floor Amendment Improvements
Inadequate conservation requirements for farmers receiving funding from the program.	Participating farmers meet reasonable conservation goals in return for financial assistance and incentives to establish and maintain perennial bioenergy crops under a 5-year contract with USDA.
No targeting of program funds to land where bioenergy crops could improve conservation performance.	Program funds targeted to land such as eroding cropland where establishment of perennial bioenergy crops could improve conservation performance.
No restrictions on land eligible for payments to establish and grow bioenergy crop. Program incentives could be used to destroy native grasslands, mature forests, wetland and other sensitive resources.	Limits eligible land to that which has already been used for production, such as previously cultivated land, managed pasture, or clearcut forest land, ensuring that public subsidies do not promote the loss of native habitats.
No restrictions to ensure that harvesting of a bioenergy crop does not harm wildlife. Crops could be harvested during nesting and brood rearing season, resulting in significant bird kills.	Restricts harvesting of bioenergy crops until after bird nesting and brood rearing seasons, which generally end well before the first frost, the point in time when most bioenergy companies want to harvest biomass.

For additional information, contact:

Julie Sibbing,  
National Wildlife Federation  
Ph: 202-797-6832  
E-mail: [sibbing@nwf.org](mailto:sibbing@nwf.org)

Martha Noble, Senior Policy Associate  
Sustainable Agriculture Coalition  
Ph: 202-547-5754  
E-mail: [mnoble@sustainableagriculturecoalition.org](mailto:mnoble@sustainableagriculturecoalition.org)