



Conservation and climate in the Farm Bill

Michael Happ

Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy





What do USDA conservation programs do for farmers?

- **Help farmers pay for conservation practices;**
- **Assist with whole-farm conservation plans;**
- **Benefit watersheds and soil health while reducing greenhouse gas emissions and/or sequestering carbon;**
- **Examples include Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP).**



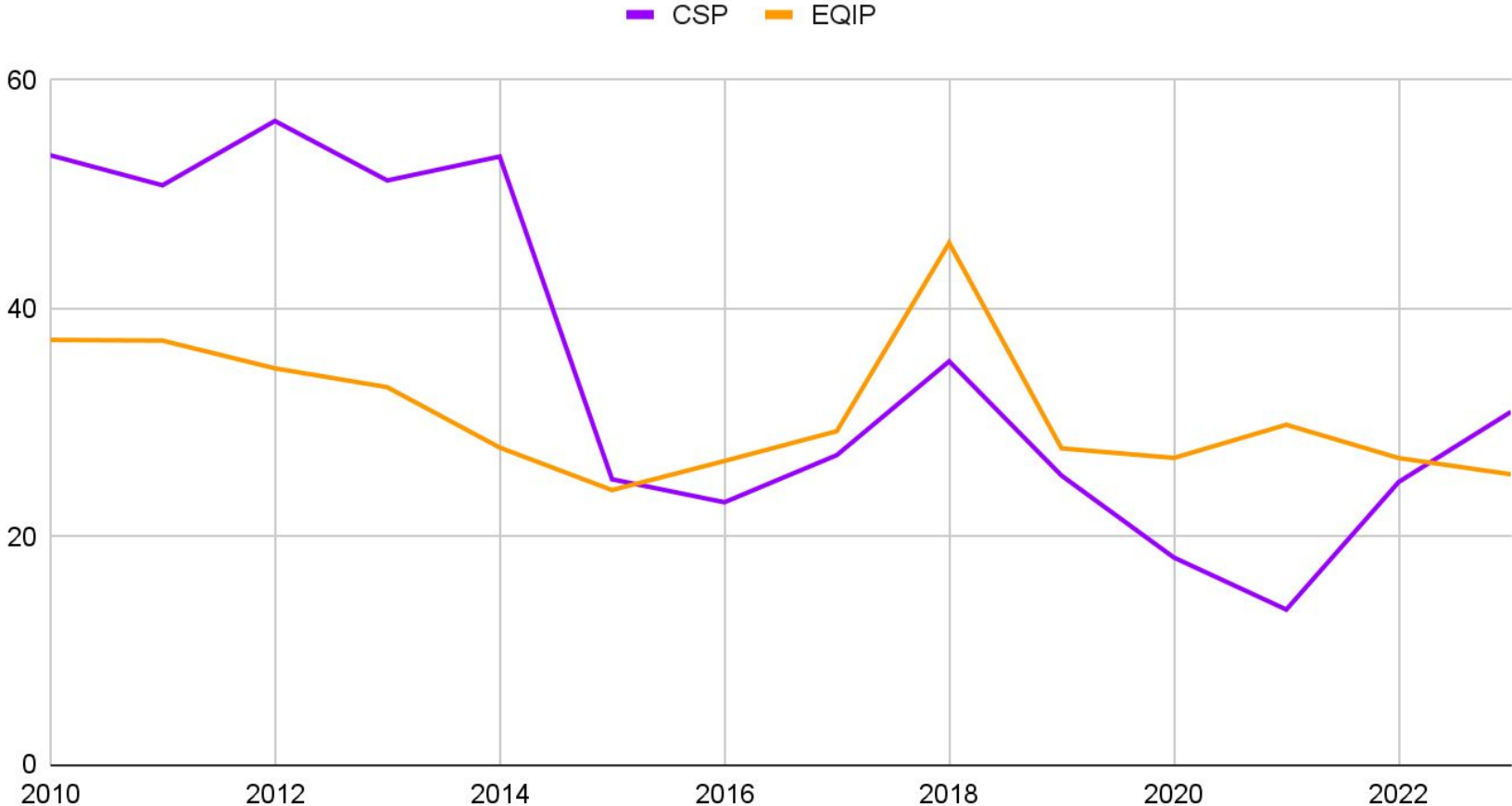
74.55%

The percentage of EQIP applicants nationwide who were denied contracts in 2023. **100,228 applicants were denied.** 34,222 were awarded contracts (\$1.66bn)

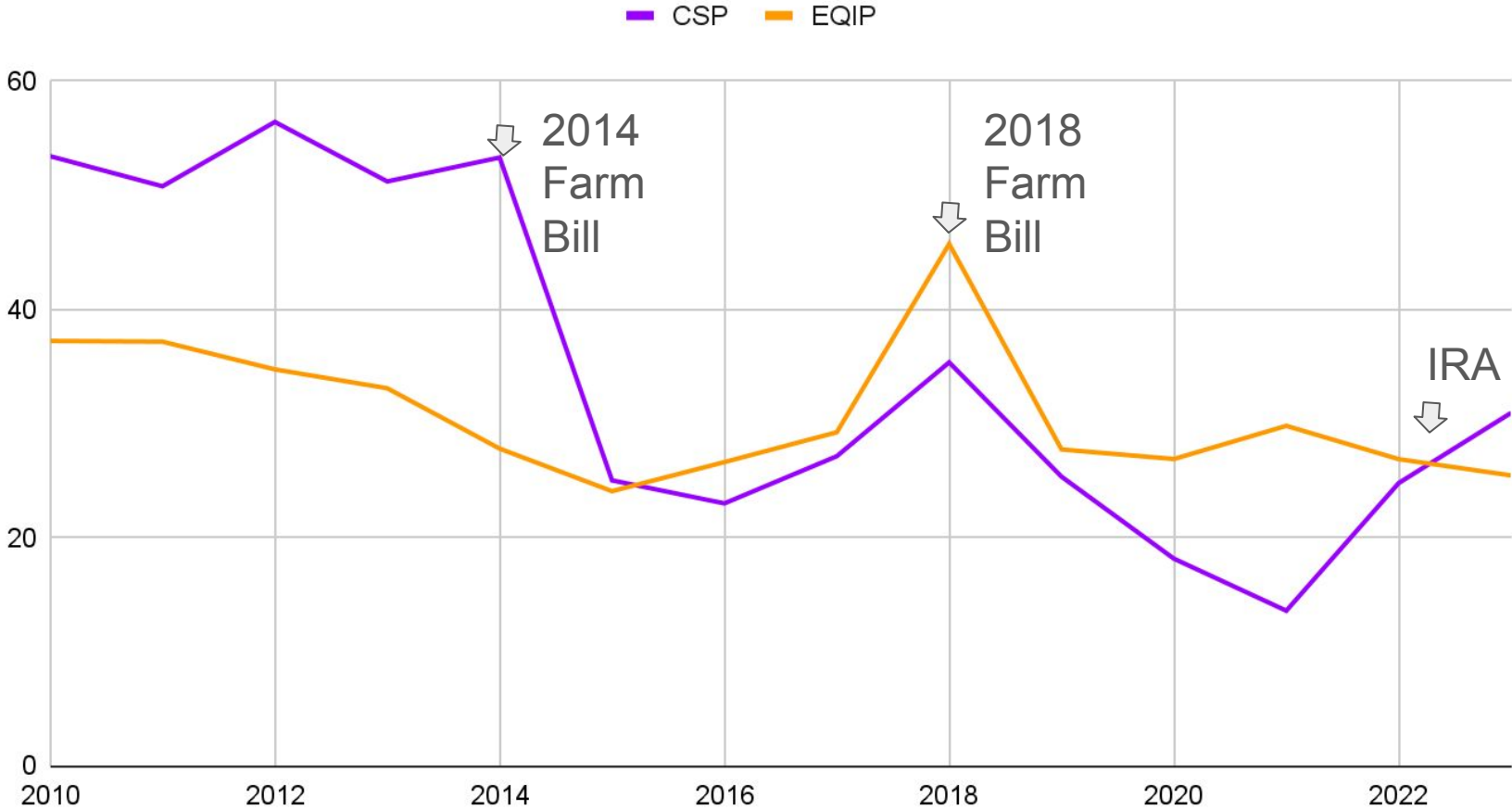
69.07%

The percentage of CSP applicants nationwide who were denied contracts in 2023.
24,645 applicants were denied. 11,038 were awarded (\$835m)

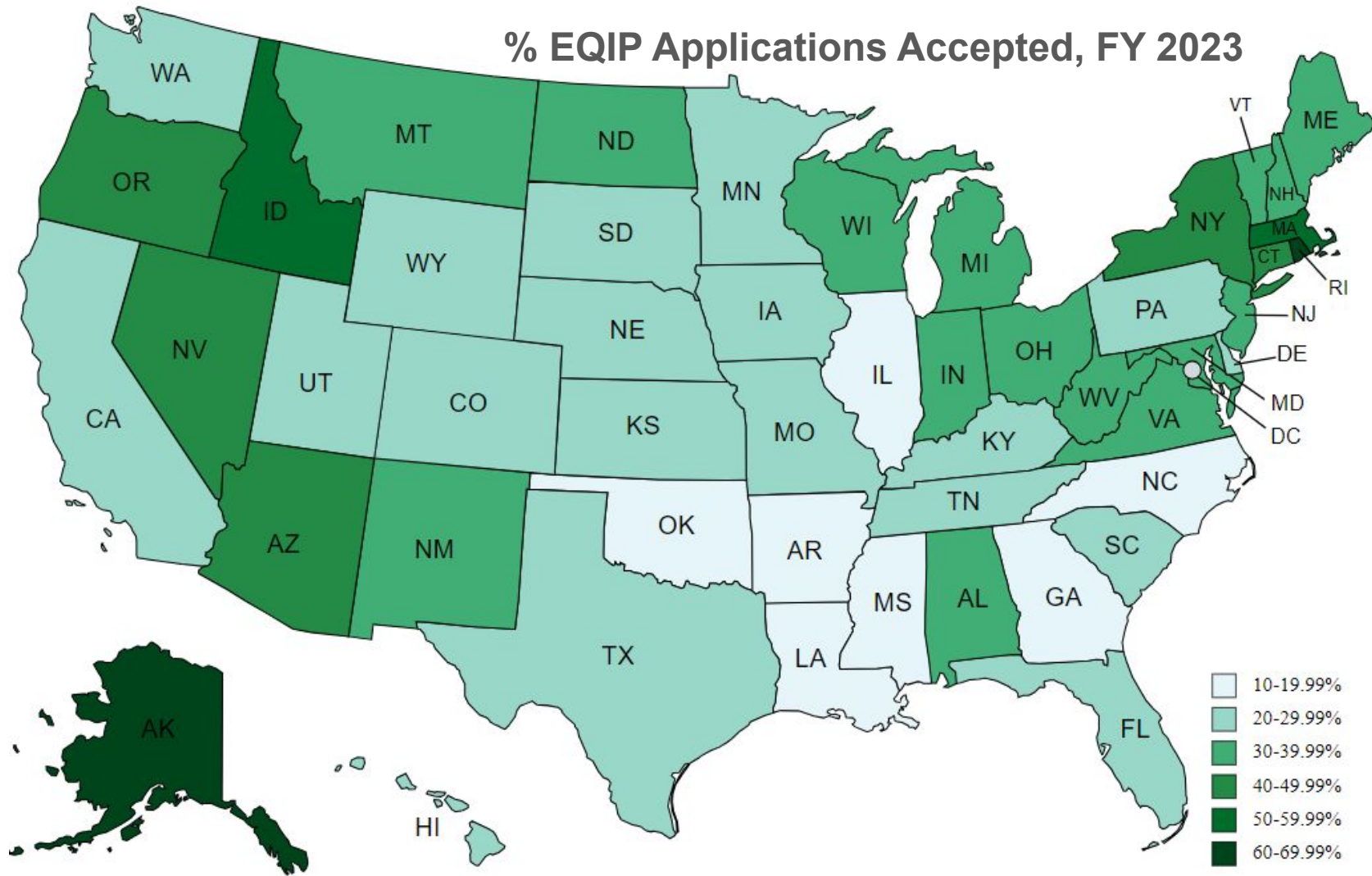
% of EQIP and CSP Applicants Awarded Contracts, 2010-2023, USA



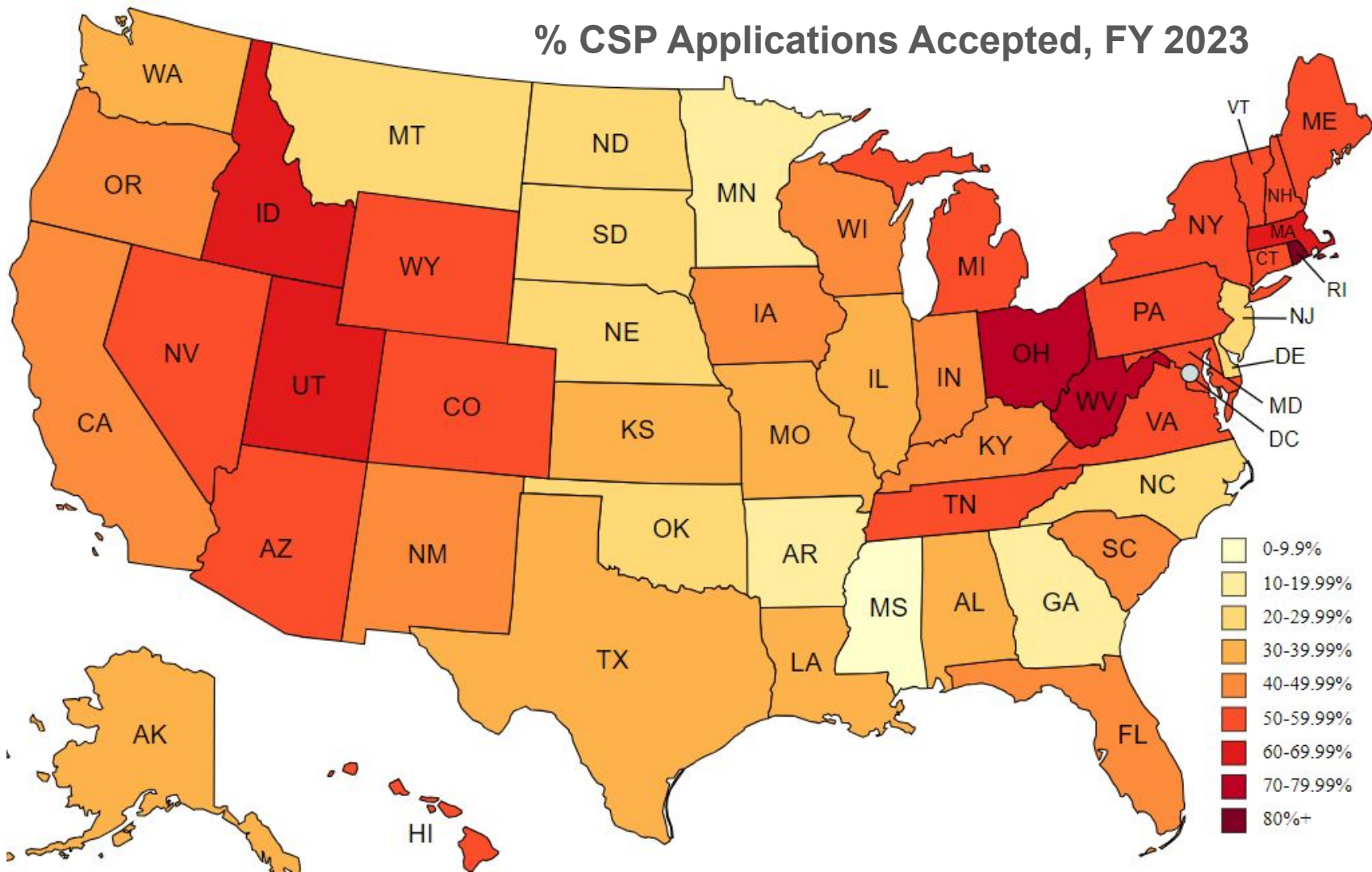
% of EQIP and CSP Applicants Awarded Contracts, 2010-2023, USA



% EQIP Applications Accepted, FY 2023



% CSP Applications Accepted, FY 2023





Comparing the Senate and House versions

Senate

- IRA funding keeps climate sideboards, goes to 4 main programs;
- No 50% livestock requirement for IRA;
- Includes precision agriculture practices;
- New 10% set-aside for small farms;
- New reporting on farm size;
- Lowers AGI limit from \$900k to \$700k;
- Permanent disaster program;
- Adds climate change adaptation/mitigation as a purpose of EQIP.
- Raises CSP minimum payment to \$4,000

House

- IRA funding loses climate sideboards, funds CRP, forest easements, feral swine;
- 50% livestock requirement for IRA back;
- Focuses on precision agriculture;
- No focus on small farms;
- Block grants and reforms for disaster;
- Eliminates AGI limit for many operations;
- No mention of climate change
- Raises CSP minimum payment to \$2,500

Other highlights and lowlights

- Senate bill includes Relief for Farmers Hit with PFAS Act;
- Animal confinements would be required to submit plans showing how they plan to reduce emissions and nutrient runoff before receiving payments;
- Senate bill better incorporates Tribes into state conservation planning;
- House bill includes direct hire authority for NRCS;
- Both bills could be stronger on increasing set-asides for farmers of color;
- Both bills need increased technical assistance provisions;
- Both bills increase maximum guaranteed loan amount for Rural Energy for America Program from \$25 million to \$50 million without guardrails for unproven technologies.

What about nutrition?



- Will likely be major sticking point in negotiations
- Senate bill makes targeted reforms to the program such as bringing Puerto Rico residents into SNAP, increasing transaction security, etc.
- House bill requires Thrifty Food Plan to be “cost-neutral” for 10 years, which the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities has identified as the equivalent of a 30% cut to SNAP.
- House Chair Thompson says his aim is to prevent an administration from unilaterally increasing or decreasing nutrition spending without Congress

What happens next?

- House releases its full Farm Bill text this week or next!
- House Ag Committee marks up their bill on May 23
- Senate likely moves next
- ???



Resources

Email Michael at michael@iatp.org

Read IATP's latest reports on EQIP and CSP

[Opening the Door for More Conservation](#)

[Costly vs. Cost Effective](#) and [Top 5 EQIP Practices per state](#)

House [section-by-section](#)

Senate [section-by-section](#)