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Bush Administration Announces Proposed Rule for First U.S. Green Payment Farm Program, Abandoning Its Stall Tactics

Statement by Ferd Hoefner, SAC Policy Director

WASHINGTON — This morning, USDA Secretary Ann Veneman announced the Bush Administration would issue a proposed rule to implement the 2002 Farm Bill's signature program, the Conservation Security Program. Below is a statement by Ferd Hoefner, Policy Director of the Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, a leading advocate for this first ever U.S. "green payments" farm program.

"After more than a year of stalling and delay, the Bush Administration presented American farmers and ranchers with a holiday gift in the form of a proposed rule for the Conservation Security Program. Until the present is unwrapped and examined, producers will not know for sure whether what's inside is the long-awaited comprehensive stewardship incentives program or damaged goods that need to be returned. One thing is certain -- sustainable farming associations from coast to coast, who fought long and hard to win this innovative program, will be ready to offer their comments to USDA on how to implement the CSP in a manner that will fulfill congressional intent and best serve the interests of family farmers, taxpayers, and the environment."

"The issuance of the proposed rule comes close on the heels of a decision by Congress, in the pending fiscal year 2004 spending bill, to restore the CSP to its full entitlement program status. We commend congressional negotiators for restoring over \$3 billion in cuts made earlier this year. Restoration of these funds will mean that all farmers and ranchers ready, willing and able to utilize farming systems that protect and enhance soil and natural resources and provide clean air and water will have the opportunity to participate. The proposed rule will be judged in large measure by how rigorously it promotes outstanding environmental performance and how consistent it is with the entitlement status granted by 2002 farm bill and now re-affirmed in the 2004 spending bill."

The Sustainable Agriculture Coalition represents farmer, rural and conservation organizations nationwide that advocate public policies supporting the long-term economic and environmental sustainability of agriculture, natural resources and rural communities.