



SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE COALITION

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Sustainable Agriculture Coalition

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The budget reconciliation deal reached on Sunday would cut the Conservation Security Program by \$1.062 billion and the Initiative for Future Agriculture and Food Systems by \$760 million over the next ten years. Combined, the cuts to these two programs, which represent less than 1% of agricultural spending, represent 40% of the total agriculture cuts in the bill. Subtracting the change in the advanced direct commodity payment formula, which is not a real cut but a temporary delay in payment, and subtracting the savings claimed in the bill from programs that have never in fact existed, the cut to these two programs represent 63% of the total.

"Decimating two forward-looking programs that together represent less than one percent of agriculture spending for the bulk of the cuts is unfair," said Ferd Hoefner. "These forward-looking "green box" conservation and agricultural research programs are critical to the long-term competitiveness of US agriculture. We are urging farm state Senators to reject the bill."

The budget bill, if passed, will also pass budgeting woes along from the Agriculture committees to the agricultural appropriations deliberations for the next two years. The bill passed by the House this morning and pending in the Senate cuts over \$1 billion in FY 07 from accounts that are regularly cut and then transferred to other spending priorities in the annual appropriations process. Some of that \$1 billion is accumulated savings from prior years, but counting just the savings claimed from FY 07 and FY 08 spending, the bill still strikes out \$498 million and \$336 million, respectively, from programs otherwise used by appropriators. Those sums will not be available to the appropriations bill if budget reconciliation passed. Total discretionary spending in the FY 06 annual agriculture spending bill totals \$17 billion in budget authority.

"In a \$17 billion annual appropriations bill that has been subject to level funding for several years, finding an extra half billion dollars will be extremely difficult," noted Hoefner. "The budget reconciliation bill negotiated by the Agriculture Committee chairman in reality is just passing the buck along to next year's appropriations bill."