

February 28, 2023

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
Chair
Senate Agriculture Committee
328A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John Boozman
Ranking Member
Senate Agriculture Committee
328A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chair Stabenow and Ranking Member Boozman:

Thank you for your leadership and collaboration to support our nation's farmers, ranchers, and foresters. We, the undersigned, represent land grant universities, farm organizations, corporations, researchers, and environmental and conservation organizations invested in agricultural sustainability and the science and systems needed for our food security.

We support Senators Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) and John Thune (R-SD) in their introduction of strong bipartisan legislation, the Agriculture Innovation Act (S.98), which enables USDA to:

- Improve technical assistance programs by employing data and research to better inform producer and agency decision making, enhance farm profitability, and create positive environmental outcomes benefiting water quality, quantity, soil health, fish and wildlife, and greenhouse gas reductions.
- Streamline USDA's data collection process to reduce the reporting burden on producers.
- Improve access to departmental datasets for qualified researchers in a manner that protects producer privacy.
- Improve data collection by USDA on the continuous use of conservation practices.

USDA manages a wealth of farmer data scattered across multiple internal agencies, making those data difficult to access, analyze, and produce useful information for all sizes and types of farming operations in addition to creating costly inefficiencies. The Agriculture Innovation Act aims to provide farmers with the information they need to make informed economic decisions regarding conservation practice implementation. By improving USDA's and other agricultural stakeholders' ability to securely access and analyze anonymous cross-agency USDA data, farmers will better understand the economic, environmental, and risk-management benefits of specific conservation and production practices and how to implement them in a way that maximizes their bottom line. The Act will also maximize taxpayer dollars by improving USDA's data systems, helping USDA utilize its data to run more effective and efficient programs, and make more informed investments.

Healthy, functioning landscapes and waters are made possible through hard work, partnership, and sound decision making. Providing land managers with access to the best available data enables risk- and science-based decision-making, positions USDA to deliver better technical assistance, and increases the use of key practices that deliver soil health and water quality while improving crop yields. We urge you to consider inclusion of this bill in the committee hearing schedule and thoughtful action to progress the bill's provisions.

Sincerely,

AGree Coalition
American Flood Coalition Action
American Fly Fishing Trade Association
American Sportfishing Association
Archery Trade Association
Backcountry Hunters & Anglers
Bonefish & Tarpon Trust
BPC Action
Danone North America
Ducks Unlimited
E2 (Environmental Entrepreneurs)
Environmental Defense Fund
Fly Fishers International
Indigo Ag
Izaak Walton League of America
Land Trust Alliance
National Center for Appropriate Technology
National Corn Growers Association
National Deer Association
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition
National Wildlife Federation
North American Falconers Association
Pheasants Forever
Quail Forever
Supporters of Agricultural Research Foundation
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership
Unilever United States

cc:

The Honorable Glenn Thompson, Chair, House Agriculture Committee
The Honorable David Scott, Ranking Member, House Agriculture Committee
The Honorable Michael Bennet, Chair, Senate Agriculture Subcommittee on Conservation, Climate, Forestry, and Natural Resources
The Honorable Roger Marshall, Ranking Member, Senate Agriculture Subcommittee on Conservation, Climate, Forestry, and Natural Resources
The Honorable Jim Baird, Chair, House Agriculture Subcommittee on Conservation, Research, and Biotechnology
The Honorable Abigail Spanberger, Ranking Member, House Agriculture Subcommittee on Conservation, Research, and Biotechnology