

June 25, 2012

**U.S. Heartland Farmers Value Conservation Programs and
Reject Cutting Farm Bill Conservation Funding
As Farm Bill Takes Shape, Farmers View Conservation Programs as
Critical to the Future and Their Bottom Line**

To: Interested Parties

From: Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research
Public Opinion Strategies

On behalf of the National Farmers Union and Cultivate Impact, Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research and Public Opinion Strategies conducted a survey of 502 American farmers across 13 states in America's Heartland¹. **At every turn, these farmers voice support for conservation funding in the next Farm Bill, and the issue can have an electoral impact:**

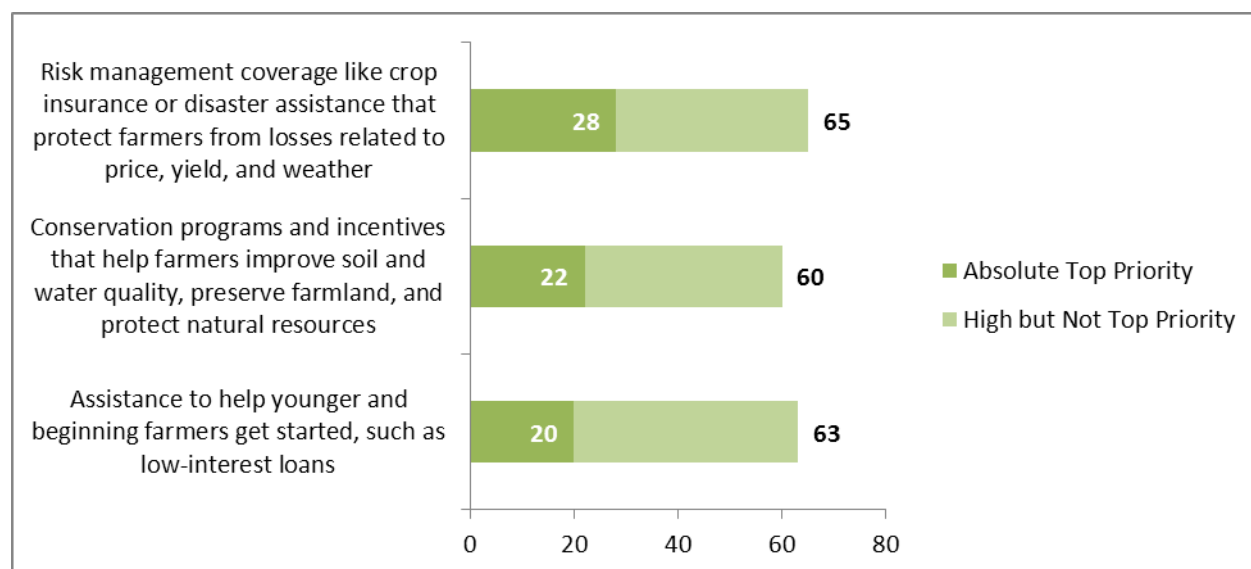
- Eighty-six percent of farmers say the level of conservation funding should be maintained or increased. **Nearly half would be less likely to support a member of Congress who voted to further cut conservation funding from the Farm Bill.**
- Conservation programs rank as the second-highest priority for inclusion in the Farm Bill, and farmers are not swayed by an argument that says conservation funding should be cut in order to prioritize risk management coverage.
- Nearly three-quarters of farmers say that conservation programs help their bottom line.
- Farmers believe that in order to receive federal subsidies including crop insurance, they should have to meet some environmental standards.

¹ Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research and Public Opinion Strategies conducted a survey among 502 farmers in IA, IL, IN, KS, MI, MN, MO, ND, NE, OH, OK, SD, and WI, with a minimum of \$50,000 in annual sales. The survey was conducted by live professional interviewers between June 7th and 13th, 2012. Demographic information from USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) and Census of Agriculture was used to ensure a representative sample. The full sample is subject to a margin of error of +/-4.37 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence interval; margin of error is higher among subgroups.

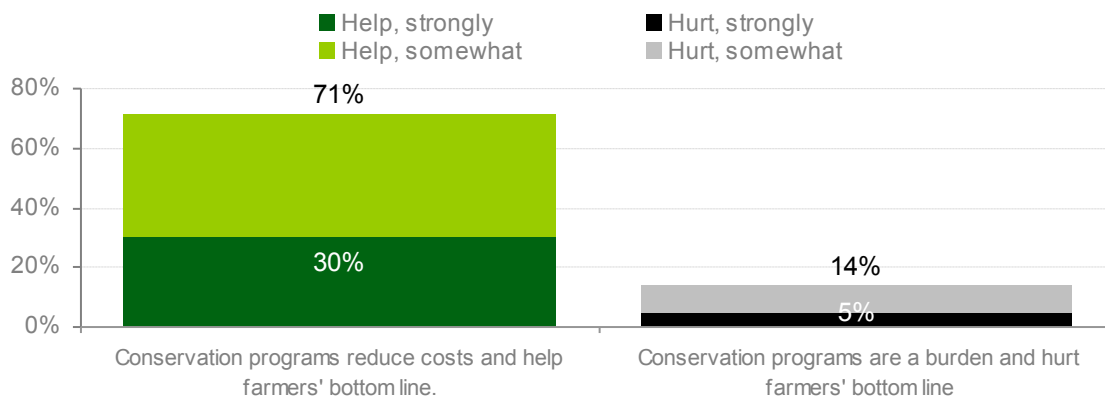
Key Findings

- Conservation programs rank as a top-tier priority for the Farm Bill.** The following table shows the top three Farm Bill policy priorities for farmers. Only risk management coverage outpaces conservation programs as the “absolute top” priority that farmers would like to see included in the Farm Bill.

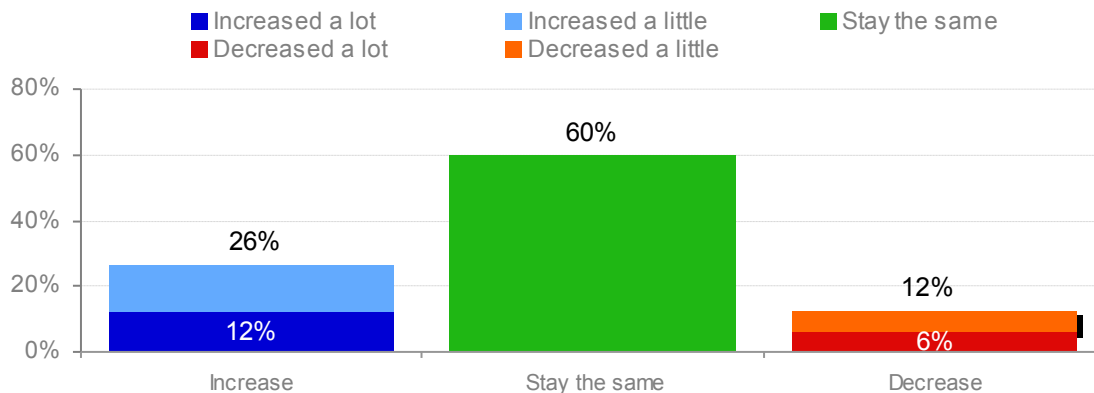
“I am going to read you a list of some programs and policies that have been or may be included in the Farm Bill. For each one, please tell me whether you think this program should be an absolute top priority to be included in the Farm Bill, a high but not top priority, a medium priority, a lower priority or do you think this should not be a priority for the Farm Bill. As you respond, please keep in mind that not every program can be a top priority.”



- Farmers overwhelmingly view conservation programs as beneficial to their bottom line.** Seventy-one percent agree that “conservation programs reduce costs and help farmers’ bottom line” against just 14 percent who believe “conservation programs are a burden and hurt farmers’ bottom line.”



- Farmers reject cutting conservation funding.** A nearly ubiquitous 86 percent say that federal funding for conservation programs should either stay at current levels or increase; the ratio of increase-to-decrease is better than two-to-one. This trend holds across major demographic groups, with at least 80 percent of small, medium, and large farmers, and grain, meat, and dairy producers who support at least maintaining funding. Sixty-four percent of these farmers self-identify as conservative; yet, even 84 percent of these conservative farmers favor maintaining or increasing conservation program funding.



“Do you think the level of funding for federal conservation programs for farmers should be increased, decreased, or should it stay about the same?”

- The plurality of these farmers would be less likely to support a member of Congress who voted to cut Farm Bill conservation funding by more than the \$6 billion already proposed.** And there is an intensity to the measure—nearly a quarter of farmers would be much less likely to support a member who voted to cut conservation.

44% **LESS** likely to support a member of Congress who voted to cut Farm Bill conservation funding (24% MUCH less likely)

38% **NO DIFFERENCE** in support for their reelection

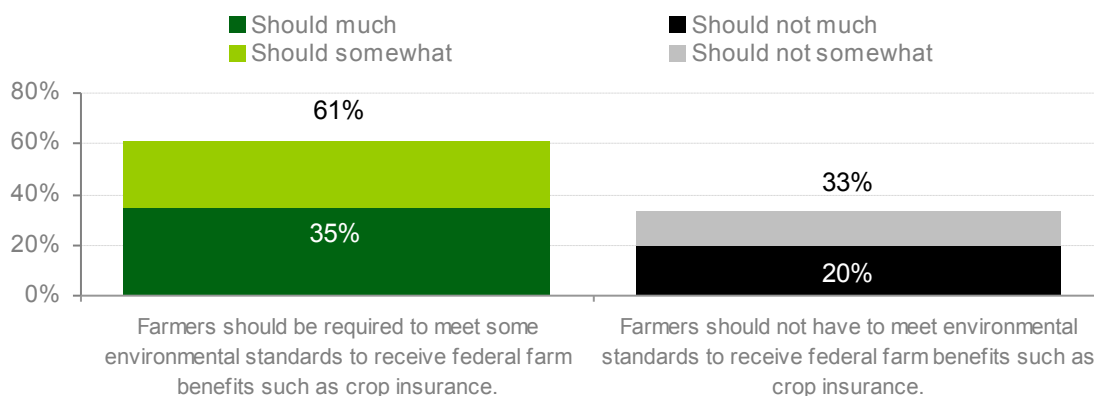
12% **MORE** likely to support a member of Congress who voted to cut Farm Bill conservation funding (6% MUCH more likely)

“As you may know, the current Farm Bill proposal cuts conservation funding by 6 billion dollars. Now thinking again about your representative in Congress, if your representative voted to cut funding for conservation programs by even more than the 6 billion dollars already proposed, would it make you more likely to support them for reelection this year, less likely to support them, or would it make no difference one way or the other in your support for their reelection?”

- Farmers are unmoved by an argument seeking to deprioritize conservation programs within the context of government spending and the deficit.** The following table shows that a message rooted in the importance of conservation programs to farmers' future economic security trumps the spending and priorities critique by 25 percentage points.



- By a nearly two-to-one margin, heartland farmers believe that farmers should be required to meet some environmental standards in order to receive federal benefits such as crop insurance.** The chart below shows that 61 percent of farmers agree with linking federal subsidies including crop insurance to environmental standards.



The Bottom Line

Farmers across these thirteen heartland states are steadfast in their support for funding for conservation programs in the Farm Bill. They view conservation as a priority that is vital to their long-term economic viability, and they oppose downgrades to these programs. Members of Congress who vote to further cut conservation funding from the Farm Bill may face a backlash at the ballot box from this important constituency.

About the Poll

Greenberg Quinlan Rosner specializes in political polling and campaign strategy, helping political candidates, parties, and ballot initiatives succeed across the country and around the world. GQR assists a wide range of organizations—academic institutions, foundations, professional associations, NGO's, issue advocacy organizations, and some of the world's leading businesses—navigate rapidly changing trends to answer their questions and meet their goals.

Public Opinion Strategies is a national political and public affairs research firm that works with numerous industry coalitions, trade associations, government entities and private companies on complex public policy battles. The company's political client base includes nineteen U.S. Senators, six Governors, over seventy Members of Congress, and numerous state legislative caucuses.

Cultivate Impact is a new non-profit project of the Trust for Conservation Innovation specializing in strategic research and program development to help build a future with healthy and profitable farms, plentiful and accessible good food for all, and strong urban and rural communities. Questions about this poll can be directed to Cultivate Impact's founder and director Jen Lamson, jenlamson@gmail.com or (206) 369-3122.

National Farmers Union has been working since 1902 to protect and enhance the economic well-being and quality of life for family farmers, ranchers and rural communities through advocating grassroots-driven policy positions adopted by its membership which includes farmers and ranchers in all states, with organized divisions in 33 states. National Farmers Union believes that good opportunities in production agriculture are the foundation of strong farm and ranch families, and strong farm and ranch families are the basis for thriving rural communities. Vibrant rural communities, in turn, are vital to the health, security and economic well-being of our entire national economy. For questions regarding this poll, please contact: Melisa Augusto, Director of Communications at maugusto@nfudc.org or 202-554-1600.