



## **The Conservation and Environment Committee's Priorities for 2006**

### **Major Priorities**

- **Conservation Security Program CSP** is a voluntary program that provides financial and technical assistance to promote the conservation and improvement of soil, water, air, energy, plant and animal life, and other conservation purposes on Tribal and private working lands. Working lands include cropland, grassland, prairie land, improved pasture, and range land, as well as forested land that is an incidental part of an agriculture operation. [www.nrcs.usda.gov/Programs/csp/](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/Programs/csp/)

#### ***SAC will work for:***

- Full funding and nationwide implementation
  - To ensure that any proposed rules support the true intent of the program
  - Promotion of the program so that sustainable agriculture practitioners take advantage of the program
  - Detail work on Resource Conserving Crop Rotation and Soil Management Assessment Framework.
- **Environmental Quality Incentive Program EQIP** is a voluntary conservation program for farmers and ranchers that promotes agricultural production and environmental quality as compatible national goals. EQIP offers financial and technical help to assist eligible participants install or implement structural and management practices on eligible agricultural land. [www.nrcs.usda.gov/PROGRAMS/EQIP/](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/PROGRAMS/EQIP/)

#### ***SAC will work on:***

- the state ranking criteria,
  - analysis of allocations between and within states,
  - the addition of incentives for organic, resource conserving crop rotations, pollinator protection, etc.
  - State Technical Committees participation
- **Conservation Program Funding**

### **Minor Priorities**

- **Confined Animal Feeding Operations CAFOs** are generally defined as the concentrated confined feeding or holding of animals in buildings, pens, or lots where the surface is prepared to support animals in wet weather, or where there are wastewater treatment facilities (e.g., manure lagoons). CAFO wastes include, but are not limited to, manure, silage pit drainage, wash down waters, contaminated runoff, milk wastewater, and bulk tank wastewater.

#### ***SAC will work on:***

- regulatory reforms to ensure that CAFOs are not allowed to

- externalize the full scope and cost of their negative social and environmental impacts, including but not limited to environmental pollution, unhealthy food and rural poverty.
  - pass the costs of mitigation and clean-up to the public in the form of Farm Bill conservation incentive and cost-share programs for new or expanding facilities, pollution controls, new technologies, re-siting, or mitigation of current failing systems.
- **World Trade Organizations (WTO) Negotiations and Green Box Issues** Trade rules increasingly factor into decisions about agriculture subsidies. The need to designate more agriculture programs in the Green Box (non-trade distorting) category is high. However, current WTO Green Box rules for agriculture conservation programs are based on out of date cost share programs or programs no longer in existence. Traditional cost share programs do not work well for today's conservation and environmental management challenges. The Conservation Security Program (CSP), Continuous Conservation Reserve Program (CCRP), Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), and the Partnerships and Cooperation Initiative all contain features that are not justified by the current Green Box criteria of cost-share payments or payments for loss of income. We are also concerned about the ultimate delineation of Green Box support and potential effects on other non-trade programs such as USDA research and education on organic and sustainable agricultural systems and support for farmers and ranchers during the transition period from conventional agriculture systems to more environmentally sound systems such as organic production.

***SAC will work on:***

- encouraging the modernization of Green Box rules
  - protecting effective US federal environmental and conservation programs
- **Renewable Energy** Many have embraced the potential for corn-grain ethanol and soy-diesel to reduce our reliance on foreign sources of oil. However the raising, refining and burning of these crops are not without significant environmental costs. A more sustainable option is the use of perennial crops such as switch grass, willow and alfalfa.

***SAC will work on:***

- making recommendations for amending current farm programs to make available "green" payments to encourage the cropping and production of bioindustrial crops that meet minimum sustainability criteria.
- developing sustainability criteria for bioindustrial crops