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FACA Recommends USDA Use Pilot Projects to Build Toward a Carbon Bank

Pilot projects will help reduce barriers to the use of climate-smart practices and fill gaps in voluntary carbon markets

WASHINGTON, May 3, 2021 - The Food and Agriculture Climate Alliance (FACA), now more than 70 members strong, has worked over the past three months to develop [specific recommendations](#) for how the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) should approach a potential carbon bank. FACA began sharing those recommendations with USDA and Congress today.

A voluntary, USDA-led carbon bank is one policy mechanism being considered to help reduce barriers that producers and landowners face to participating in voluntary carbon markets and adopting climate-smart practices.

FACA recommends that USDA lay the foundation for a potential carbon bank by first developing a series of pilot projects that would focus on the following four areas:

- **Scaling climate solutions:** Pilot projects should help increase adoption of climate-smart practices that reduce, directly capture or sequester greenhouse gas emissions, and/or increase climate resilience. Pilots should deploy “critical climate infrastructure” to increase the capacity of farmers, ranchers and forest owners to adapt to climate change, while ensuring food and economic security.
- **Removing barriers to adoption:** Pilot projects should encourage the widespread adoption of climate-smart practices and critical climate infrastructure by removing barriers and making it easier for producers and landowners to adopt these practices.
- **Improving carbon accounting standards:** USDA should develop consistent and credible criteria to account for the carbon sequestration and greenhouse gas reduction benefits of climate-smart agriculture and forestry projects and practices.
- **Ensuring equitable opportunities:** Pilot projects must be developed with and provide equitable opportunities for minority, socially disadvantaged and small-scale producers.

Information gained from the pilots will serve two critical purposes. First, it will help USDA build a durable foundation for a carbon bank that gains long-term bipartisan congressional support. Second, it will help USDA build confidence in how to verify the climate benefits delivered by specific practices and management approaches.

This approach will lay essential building blocks for a voluntary carbon bank that creates opportunities for all producers and landowners to participate in rapidly developing voluntary private markets and leverages private investment in agricultural and forestry climate solutions. As USDA develops a carbon bank, it must protect all existing funding for farm bill conservation and insurance programs, and it must ensure that a USDA-led carbon bank doesn't undermine voluntary private markets.

FACA included a portion of these [recommendations](#) in its [response](#) to USDA's recent request for information about the agency's climate strategy. The alliance is also actively working on additional in-depth tax credit policy recommendations to help ensure farmers, ranchers and forest owners have the tools and resources they need to contribute to climate solutions and benefit from doing so.

Read FACA's full carbon bank recommendations and see a full list of member organizations at agclimatealliance.com.

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