



## PRESS RELEASE

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## Iowa Groups Concerned Congressional Budget Will Harm Farmers, Lands

### *House Committee's Budget Follows President's Budget Outline: Large Farm Program Cuts Likely*

**(Des Moines)** A coalition of Iowa environmental, agricultural, and human needs groups charges that the House budget committee bill could lead to cuts in crucial agriculture conservation programs, harming the state's Iowa's environment and agricultural economy. The House Budget Committee its 2007 budget resolution yesterday, mostly following the president's budget, which would cut domestic spending, including farm programs.

Earlier this year, President Bush unveiled his budget recommendations that included severe cuts to many programs that had been promised funding under the 2002 Farm Bill, including the Conservation Security Program and the Farm and Ranch Land Protection Program.

"The land is the backbone of Iowa's economy – to cut funding that provides assistance to farmers and ranchers in caring for the land has a direct impact on our state's economy," said Chris Peterson, president of the Iowa Farmers Union. "Each year since 2002, funding has fallen short in a number of key Farm Bill programs. To continue this trend could result in long-term damage to our state's bottom line and the environment."

The president's 2007 budget recommendations would cut a number of critical farm programs. The House Budget Committee cut funding for domestic programs nearly as deeply as the president's budget. The Committee does not allocate cuts by program, so the president's budget remains the best indicator of which programs will be chopped. Farm programs that face deep cuts in funding include:

- **The Farm and Ranch Land Protection Program:** Helps working farms and ranches stay in production and provides direct relief to farmers and ranchers
- **The Environmental Quality Incentives Program:** Provides technical assistance and incentive funding to help crop and livestock producers with environmental and conservation improvements.
- **The Conservation Security Program:** The Conservation Security Program, CSP, rewards those who are farming clean and green with annual payments and financial incentives that will help keep them farming in a way that benefits soil, water, and air resources.

- **The Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program:** Assists farmers in improving and protecting wildlife habitat on their lands.

On March 16, the U.S. Senate passed their fiscal year 2007 budget resolution. While the Senate budget was modified on the Senate floor to raise appropriations levels to keep up with inflation, it calls for a number of President Bush's tax cuts to be made permanent, costing the country hundreds of billions of dollars. Since funding is not included to cover the cost of these tax cuts, they will result in further increases to the nation's deficit.

"With the Senate's decision to increase overall funding, there is a glimmer of hope that agriculture conservation programs could be off of the chopping block," Rich Leopold of the Iowa Environmental Council stated. "But we still have a long way to go. The House Budget Committee included deep agriculture funding cuts when they released their budget resolution yesterday, as well as unpaid-for tax cuts. Next week we'll see if the House agrees with those cuts."

"Protecting our working lands, our way of life and our fiscal health for future generations must be our top priority and we encourage Congress to keep that goal in sight throughout the budget process," Brother David Andrews, Executive Director of the National Catholic Rural Life Conference added.

Coalition members include the Iowa Environmental Council, the Iowa Farmers Union, and the National Catholic Rural Life Conference.

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*The Iowa Environmental Council is an alliance of diverse organizations and individuals working together to protect Iowa's natural environment.*

*Iowa Farmers Union is a non-profit advocacy group representing family farmers and consumers across the state. IFU also collaborates on legislative work and educational programming with Women, Food and Agriculture Network, NFO-Iowa, United Steelworkers Local 9310, and the Iowa Renewable Energy Association. IFU is a chapter of National Farmers Union, a general farm organization representing a quarter of a million family farmers and ranchers nationwide.*

*The National Catholic Rural Life Conference is a membership organization grounded in a spiritual tradition that brings together the Church, care of community and care of creation.*