De-Risking Adoption of Soil Carbon Practices

Recommendations for the upcoming Farm Bill

**TITLE II: CONSERVATION**

Agricultural soils remain an untapped opportunity to mitigate climate change and bolster the resilience of agricultural operations.

Farmers and ranchers lack critical information about the costs and benefits of soil carbon storage, so they often hesitate to adopt practices that can increase yields, improve resilience, and provide new revenue streams. By de-risking innovative agricultural practices that store carbon, real-world demonstration trials can build farmer and rancher confidence, demonstrate regionally relevant practices for soil carbon storage, facilitate peer-to-peer producer learning networks, and elevate the work of early adopters.

**SOIL CARBON DEMONSTRATION CHALLENGES**

- The costs and benefits of soil carbon practices have not been adequately conveyed to farmers and ranchers.
- Risks, both real and perceived, hinder soil carbon practice implementation.
- Producers often lack a knowledge-sharing community around soil carbon.

**THE FARM BILL OPPORTUNITY**

- Develop a network of soil carbon demonstration trials to help farmers and ranchers confidently adopt practices.
- Test soil carbon practices across the diversity of agricultural lands and operations.
- Highlight the innovative work of early adopters.

Establish a network of real-world demonstration trials to de-risk and facilitate adoption of practices that store carbon across the diversity of US agriculture.

Demonstration projects provide the on-the-ground proof farmers and ranchers need to comfortably implement new agricultural practices and maintain them long-term. These trials showcase which practices work best for different regions, empower farmers to make informed decisions, and spur early adoption of innovative agricultural practices.

Congress should develop existing USDA on-farm demonstration trials to fill knowledge gaps, recognize early adopters, and enable peer-to-peer learning of regional best practices.

**The CIG On-Farm Trials**

The Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) On-Farm Trials were authorized in the 2018 Farm Bill. Housed under the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, On-Farm Trials seek to expand innovative conservation practices. Specifically, they provide funding to partners who offer technical assistance to farmers and ranchers.
and financial assistance for producers who implement practices that are currently narrowly adopted. The 2018 Farm Bill also created the Soil Health Demonstration Trials (SHD) as part of the On-Farm Trials program to focus exclusively on conservation practices and systems that enhance soil health and increase soil carbon, but soil carbon has been an infrequent area of concentration.

- **Increase funding for CIG On-Farm Trials** gradually over five years to $100 million per year to develop an ambitious network of soil carbon demonstration trials.

- **Set aside 60% of CIG On-Farm Trials funding** for the SHD component.

- **Set aside 50% of SHD funding** for projects focused specifically on increasing soil carbon storage and developing soil carbon monitoring protocols.

**SARE**

The Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program offers farmer-driven grassroots grants and education programs. SARE has funded some on-farm soil carbon demonstration trials but requires further investments to expand its geographic reach and impact.

- **Increase SARE funding authorization by $12 million per year** to expand on-farm soil carbon demonstration trials.

- **Require participants in SARE-funded trials to follow USDA’s best practices** for soil carbon data collection, including using standard soil sampling protocols.

- **Share standardized, high-quality soil carbon data** from SARE-funded trials with other USDA programs to bolster analysis and predictive modeling capabilities.

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<tr>
<th>PROGRAM</th>
<th>2018 FARM BILL AUTHORIZATION</th>
<th>FY22 MANDATORY FUNDING</th>
<th>FY22 DISCRETIONARY FUNDING</th>
<th>RECOMMENDED ANNUAL FUNDING</th>
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<td>CIG On-Farm Trials</td>
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For more information on Carbon180’s Farm Bill platform, please visit our web page and let us know what you think at policy@carbon180.org.