



**Hillsborough
Soil & Water**
Conservation District
Florida



HSWCD Position Statement Pertaining to the 2023 U.S. Farm Bill

Climate disruptions, droughts, wildfires, invasive species, ravaging diseases, pollinator losses and increased input costs for virtually every aspect of production are just a few of the challenges faced by America's farmers, ranchers and growers on a daily basis. American agriculture serves to feed not only this country, but much of the world through technological advances and enhanced conservation programs. Food and water represent the ultimate in national security and must be protected and supported at all cost.

As the U.S. Farm Bill, up for adoption every five years, will be passed by the United States Congress in 2023, it is essential that critical conservation elements receive maximum attention and consideration within these deliberations. Funding for conservation programs must be increased to reflect growing agricultural concerns, as 2 of every 3 entities requesting assistance are currently denied because of inadequate funds.

Conservation projects are not cosmetic, but an essential element to help maintain maximum agricultural production and output. An investment of at least \$1.2 billion for conservation operations through NRCS is necessary to ensure the viability of programs such as conservation technical assistance, soil surveys, snow surveys, water supply forecasting and plant materials centers. Funds are also critical for watershed programs, the USDA's Forest Service and the Environmental Protection Agency.

Since its very inception, the conservation movement has been based on locally led, volunteer initiatives, with programs designed to meet the unique needs of America's almost 3,000 conservation districts. This approach, "rather than a "one size fits all", continues to be effective today.

The Hillsborough Soil and Water Conservation District operates under the belief that "Conservation is Everybody's Business" and hereby requests that all Florida Conservation Districts contact their Congressional delegation to implore their legislative leaders to provide maximum support for this legislation and the recommendations set forth on the following pages by the National Association of Conservation Districts.

The time to act is NOW. WAITING IS NOT AN OPTION. Failure to act could result in a Farm Bill that could cripple agriculture and conservation for the next five years. Eighty-three percent of the current Farm Bill provides funding for supplemental food assistance programs, with only 17 percent for agriculture and conservation. In addition to contacting governmental officials, we recommend that every district engage with other leaders within their community to seek the optimum support possible.

Adopted this twenty-ninth day of March, two thousand and twenty-three by the Hillsborough Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Supervisors.

Mark Proctor / Board Chair

Ryan Gill / Board Vice Chair

Robert "Myke" Morris / Treasurer

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