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## **25x'25 coalition spells out imperatives for climate legislation**

**By Agri-Pulse Staff**

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Agriculture and forestry have much to contribute in stemming climate change, and with the appropriate policies have much to gain, members of the 25x'25 Steering Committee said Wednesday.

The Steering Committee issued *Agriculture and Forestry in a Reduced Carbon Economy: Solutions from the Land*, a set of "policy principles and imperatives that can help stakeholders and policy makers guide the nation's transition to a reduced carbon economy," said Nathan Rudgers, a member of the Steering Committee. The principles were issued at a media teleconference held during the 5th National 25x'25 Renewable Energy Summit held at the Sheraton Crystal City, Arlington, VA.

"A new energy future is unfolding; one that will maximize reliance on clean renewable forms of energy," Rudgers said. "Climate legislation will be a part of that future. It is no longer a question of 'If?' It is now a question of 'When?' and 'How?' America's farms, ranches and forests can provide cost effective and value added greenhouse gas emission reduction services and it's time for the solution sets they can provide to be integrated into the nation's overall climate change strategy."

Rudgers is also the chairman of the Steering Committee's Carbon Work Group, a special panel of more than 50 nationally recognized producers, economists, conservationists, and academic and business leaders that authored *Solutions from the Land*. He said agriculture and forestry are well positioned to provide solutions to climate change, and with the correct enabling policy, the two sectors have much to gain. "We can reduce, sequester and convert greenhouse gases, and in doing so maximize land-based solutions to climate change," he said.

However, to insure the active participation of agriculture and forestry in any new climate change regulatory system, "policymakers need to understand the benefits and challenges these sectors will face in addressing climate change, and this will only happen if agricultural interests have a seat at the table," Rudgers said. "There are still many unknowns around how the new greenhouse gas regulatory system will be structured, but agriculture and forestry leaders are prepared to do their part to help address this growing global challenge."

As articulated in the principles released Wednesday, the 25x'25 National Steering Committee believes that :

- The environmental impacts, such as the increasing frequency of wildfires, insect outbreaks and rising sea levels, and the economic cost of inaction warrant action.
- Sufficient science and political momentum exist to warrant action now.
- Adaptation and mitigation must be pursued simultaneously.
- Sustainability must be considered in all policy decisions.
- The requirements of the global as well as national communities must be considered simultaneously.

Preceding the recommended principles and imperatives in *Solutions from the Land* is a discussion guide that concludes there are a number of ways in which agriculture and forestry can join in the fight against climate change. “Congress and the White House have made clear their intention to address global warming and a national climate change policy is expected soon,” said Bart Ruth, chairman of the 25x'25 Policy Committee and a member of the Carbon Work Group. “The time for agriculture and forestry to get in the game is now.”

Ruth, a former president of the American Soybean Association, cites EPA figures that show agriculture contributes some seven percent of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs), but can also provide a reduction of U.S. GHGs of anywhere from 10 to 25 percent. The sector’s ability to reduce GHGs can lead to significant environmental improvements as well as new revenue streams. “But the net gains will depend on the costs agriculture and forestry may incur under a new regulatory scheme,” he said. “Some operations will be required to change practices, like planting vegetative buffers to achieve carbon sequestration, or acquire technology like anaerobic digestion to reduce methane emissions. There are also likely higher costs for fuel and fertilizer to be considered.”

“To gain the full participation of agriculture and forestry, any new climate change regulatory system adopted by Congress and implemented by the administration - be it cap-and-trade, a carbon tax, or a combination of those programs - must create a market that can sustain robust carbon prices,” Ruth said. He added that if a cap-and-trade system is ultimately adopted, qualified offsets - those that are based upon good science and provide legitimate, long-term reductions in GHGs - must be allowed.

“These policy principles and imperatives were developed following discussions and input from a wide cross-section of 25x'25 partners,” said Fred Yoder, chairman of the Carbon Work Group’s Communication Committee. The former president of the National Corn Growers Association said the result “is an evolving collection of recommendations regarding climate change policy, its implementation, and what must happen for the agriculture and forestry sectors to maximize their potential to deliver greenhouse gas emissions reductions.”

To read and download a copy of an executive summary of *Agriculture and Forestry in a Reduced Carbon Economy: Solutions from the Land*, which includes a complete list of 25x'25 Carbon Work Group members and other important indices, go to <http://www.25x25.org/carbonexecsummary>. The complete document can be found at <http://www.25x25.org/carbondiscussionguide>.