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## **EPA's Jackson urges Corn Growers to support climate bill**

**By Jon H. Harsch**

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Speaking to a National Corn Growers Association (NCGA) meeting in Washington July 16<sup>th</sup>, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lisa Jackson warned that "One way or another we'll be forced to deal with climate change – either by reaping the benefits of clean energy, or by coping with the consequences of inaction."

Jackson told delegates to the NCGA's semiannual Corn Congress that agriculture is already suffering from climate change – and that inaction would guarantee worse to come. She spelled out the grim forecast:

- "Scientists broadly agree that droughts and other extreme weather events will continue to intensify as a result of the changing climate. And those changes will continue to affect the lives and livelihoods of American farmers.
- "Droughts have hit farming communities in the West, Southwest and Southeast in recent years. They've caused extreme hardship to growers and their families.
- "The US Global Change Research Program reports that if we fail to act on climate change, then over the course of this century the Great Plains would experience more sustained droughts, and new infestations of insect pests.
- "The Southeast – along with droughts – would experience coastal inundation, declines in livestock production due to heat stress, and more frequent and intense forest wildfires.
- "The Midwest would experience reductions in water levels in the Great Lakes, more frequent spring flooding, and more severe summer drought.
- "The effects on farm operations have been, and will be, devastating."

Jackson also pointed out the cost of dependence on foreign oil, saying that a year ago "\$4 and \$5-a-gallon diesel prices, as well as high prices for fertilizer, drove up the cost of almost everything you do." She said that to deal with climate change and volatile petroleum prices, the "first step" is the climate change legislation that the House has passed and the Senate is working on. She said the House's clean energy/climate change legislation offers "significant opportunities for agriculture and rural economies" and that "Under the House bill, American farmers, foresters, and ranchers would be the beneficiaries of a new, voluntary offsets program. Through the use of things like afforestation, no-till farming, and capture of methane emissions from manure, EPA

projects that American farmers, foresters, and ranchers would receive nearly \$3 billion through the program in 2020 alone. That amount would increase every year.”

Acknowledging ag impacts, Jackson said the bill includes provisions to “ensure a smooth transition to sustainability.” She explained that “Nitrogen fertilizer manufacturers who use natural gas as a feedstock would receive free allocations of allowances to energy-intensive manufacturers. Wet corn milling would also receive a free allocation under the same program for energy-intensive manufacturing. Phosphate fertilizer and pesticides are subject to international competition that would prevent domestic suppliers from sharply raising prices. And the House bill includes a substantial allocation of free allowances to consumers of propane.”

Calling on the NCGA delegates to support the proposed legislation, Jackson said “rather than gearing up for battle, it’s important that we work towards partnership – for our sake and yours.” Recognizing political reality, she said “farm-state representatives fought for and won a series of very significant benefits for corn growers in the House bill. There is competition from other stakeholders for certain of those benefits, and outright opposition to certain others. If you want farm-state Senators to preserve those benefits in the Senate bill, then they need to know that corn growers will recognize and appreciate those benefits, and not attack farm-state Senators who vote in favor of a bill containing them.”

Jackson said another reality that farmers need to accept is that Congress will pass a climate bill: “Delay is not in your favor. It took many years and several Congresses to pass the 1990 Clean Air Act Amendments. But that law did eventually become law. And with every delay and every new version of the bill the legislation got more stringent. That trend is even more pronounced when it comes to climate legislation. The longer we wait to start curbing global warming, the deeper the emissions reductions needed to curb global warming. The Waxman-Markey bill calls for deeper reductions than the Lieberman-Warner bill of 2007, which in turn called for deeper reductions than the McCain-Lieberman bill of 2005.”

Following Jackson’s remarks, NCGA President Bob Dickey told *Agri-Pulse* that “we’re concerned what the final bill is going to look like” but that “we’d rather be at the table than on the table and so we’ve tried to be active and be a part of the discussions, because it doesn’t do any good to be out of the circle. You need to be in the circle so you can have some input. . . Politics is the art of compromise.”

On ethanol, Jackson said that EPA’s proposed new Renewable Fuels Standard rule (RFS2) provides for “significant expansion for corn ethanol” and “would grandfather in all 15 billion gallons of corn ethanol.” She said EPA “will be working with the Department of Agriculture and others on a rigorous peer-review system to ensure that the analysis of indirect impacts on land-use changes abroad is scientifically sound.”