
IOWA SOYBEAN ASSOCIATION
1255 SW Prairie Trail Pkwy. Ankeny, IA 50023



February 3, 2025

The Honorable Joni Ernst
260 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Ernst,

I am writing to express appreciation for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) investment in Iowa-led conservation efforts and emphasize the critical importance of continued funding for our program administered via the department's Partnership for Climate Smart Commodities initiative.

Announced in 2022, the Iowa Soybean Association's (ISA) Midwest Climate-Smart Commodity Program received an award of \$95 million, matched by over \$60 million from the private sector, to build new markets and generate new revenue streams for producing commodities using voluntary, farmer-led conservation practices. The program supports farmers in twelve midwestern states with the greatest participation coming from Iowa. The program is led by the ISA, a farmer-led organization, and delivered through the Soil and Water Outcomes Fund, a subsidiary of ISA.

Over the last two weeks, despite a signed five-year agreement between ISA and USDA, USDA has suspended all farmer and program reimbursements. This suspension puts the program and its participating farmers at risk. Without reimbursement, participating farmers, who are contractually owed \$11 million for practices implemented in 2024, will lose the investment they made in equipment and operations to implement new practices. Lack of timely reimbursement jeopardizes ISA's ability to meet its program obligations and fulfill its goal of building new long-term, viable revenue opportunities for Midwestern farms.

In its first two years, the Midwest Climate Smart Commodity Program has proven to be one of the most effective and efficient public-private partnerships for delivering material economic and agronomic benefits to Midwestern farmers. The program has exceeded every goal to date, including:

- Nearly 900,000 acres enrolled across Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Nebraska, Kansas, Missouri and North and South Dakota, including nearly 300,000 acres enrolled in Iowa.
- Over 1,000 participating farms producing corn, soybeans, wheat, and sugar beets.
- Average farmer payment of \$33 per acre.
- 95+% reenrollment rate from 2023 to 2024.
- Quantified co-benefits including reductions in soil erosion, improvements in soil health and organic matter, improvements in water retention and drainage, and reductions in nitrogen and phosphorus runoff.

The farmer impact of this program is clear. 66% of participating farmers feel more confident in their long-term profitability, and with an excellent Net Promoter Score, farmers overwhelmingly recommend the program to their peers.

The program has succeeded in developing new revenue streams for farmers, securing \$62 million in farmer payments from ten major companies sourcing commodities from Iowa and the eleven other program states. These market-based revenue streams, which align with company supply sheds and sourcing volumes, support farmer adoption of voluntary practices that improve the economic health and long-term viability of Midwestern farms.

This program is a model for efficiency and leveraging federal investment to drive private-sector engagement—for every \$1 contributed by USDA, the program pays farmers \$1.20, demonstrating a strong return on public investment.

We appreciate the need for fiscal discipline and efficiency. To these aims, we strongly believe our program has proven a new cost-effective, public-private partnership approach to support farmer investment in voluntary practices that generate long-term economic and agronomic benefits. **We ask for your support in advocating USDA honor its contractual obligation to ISA and its commitment to Midwestern farmers.**

We appreciate your leadership and commitment to Iowa's agricultural community and welcome the opportunity to discuss how we can work together to secure ongoing USDA support for this critical program.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please let us know how we can support your efforts in championing this important work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brent Swart". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Brent Swart
President
Iowa Soybean Association