

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 23, 2021

The Honorable David Scott
Chairman
House Committee on Agriculture
1300 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Scott:

As you know, the Growing Climate Solutions Act (S.1251) was recently passed by the Senate on June 24, 2021. This legislation directs the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to create a duplicative and unnecessary certification regime. I write to express concerns with this legislation and request further review by the House Committee on Agriculture.

For generations, our nation's farmers, ranchers, and forest owners have provided important environmental and climate benefits through voluntary conservation and active management practices. Through Title II of the Farm Bill, our federal system of voluntary conservation is a proven model that works and benefits both the environment and our agricultural producers. As such, by utilizing the existing conservation delivery system, I believe further benefits can be realized for both the climate and our producers. To complement these existing mechanisms, a number of proposals have been introduced by House Republicans within the jurisdiction of our Committee. If enacted, these proposals would encourage more carbon sequestration and deliver climate benefits through new private funding for conservation activities (H.R. 2606), expanded precision agriculture (H.R. 2518), increased rural broadband access (H.R. 3369), and improved soil health (H.R. 2508).¹ All of these bills are designed to reduce our carbon footprint while avoiding unknown and potentially harmful consequences of federal intrusion in the private marketplace, as prescribed under S. 1251.

While I support carbon credit trading in the private sector, I have serious reservations with governmental intrusion into these emerging markets. I implore the Committee not to rush to pass S. 1251 without substantial review by this Committee. I think this legislation is a solution in search of a problem, and not only does it need significantly more vetting before consideration on the House floor, but our Members deserve a fulsome understanding of environmental service markets by way of education.

There are legitimate questions with not only the impacts of this legislation but the text of the bill itself that have yet to be answered and the Committee must do its due diligence to fully examine the intended and unintended impacts. The language is imprecise and disjointed, leaving questions related to how to interpret certain requirements and policy goals. There are also unanswered questions on how USDA would implement such a program, the feasibility of the timelines, and how the legislation could stifle—not foster—innovation. Finally, and most importantly, the Committee must ensure our farmers and ranchers are the primary beneficiaries of these markets if we are implicitly endorsing them through government intervention.

¹ <https://republicans-agriculture.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=6863>

I am requesting the House Agriculture Committee follow regular order by holding additional Member education sessions and hearings to better understand the complexities of the agriculture carbon markets generally, a legislative hearing on S. 1251 specifically, and a markup session before bringing the bill to the House floor for a vote, if the bill is reported favorably. Furthermore, I respectfully request the Committee allow for consideration of the additional legislation mentioned above.

I believe the federal government's role must be carefully considered and vetted before Congress legislates on carbon trading markets, and more technical feedback is essential at this time. Should the Committee move forward with this legislation, we should also welcome and consider alternative proposals under our jurisdiction which generate greater and more direct benefits to both our producers and the environment.

I look forward to continuing to work with you to best serve our Nation's farmers, ranchers, landowners, and rural America.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Glenn Thompson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Glenn "GT" Thompson
Ranking Member