



BALANCING FOOD, FARM, AND ENVIRONMENT ACT OF 2013

SECTION BY SECTION

Congressman Earl Blumenauer ■ Third District of Oregon ■ www.blumenauer.house.gov

The Balancing Food, Farm, and Environment Act of 2013 (the “Balancing Act”) modernizes the Farm Bill’s conservation title to reflect America’s changing agricultural system and taxpayer priorities. The legislation streamlines twenty-three overlapping conservation programs into eleven and prioritizes long-term outcomes to use taxpayer dollars most effectively. The Balancing Act encourages local and regional partnerships to tackle local conservation needs and allows them to implement performance-based standards rather than process-based standards. It increases access to conservation programs for small and midsize farmers, and limits the amount of money large agribusinesses can monopolize. The Balancing Act also helps farmers address the pressing conservation needs of the 21st century: climate change, farmland protection, and water quality, while also providing them with resources to take actions that make their harvests more appealing to American consumers, such as reducing antibiotic use and pesticide use.

Section One: Definitions

- Consolidates definitions so that applicable programs reference the same set of definitions

Section Two: Highly Erodible Land Conservation

- Amends the Federal Crop Insurance Act to limit premium subsidy insurance payments for crops grown on land converted to crop production from sodgrass.

Section Three: Wetland Conservation

- Amends the Federal Crop Insurance Act to limit premium subsidy insurance payments under the Farm Bill for crops grown on land converted to crop production from sensitive wetlands.

Section Four: Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

- Devotes more CRP acres to special initiatives that protect the most environmentally sensitive lands; and sets aside 600,000 acres each year for the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program and to protect land adjacent to streams and wetlands to improve water quality and wildlife habitat;
- Provides options for landowners to sell long-term or permanent easements to provide more durable protection of critical natural resources; landowners will still be able to stay with short-term rental contracts if they prefer;
- Streamlines the program by allowing for grasslands enrollment in CRP.

Section Five: Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

- Prioritizes applications that will produce significant results for water quality, nutrient protection, and soil conservation;
- Raises the bar on the conservation effort needed to be eligible to participate in CSP;
- Increases the goal for protection of natural resources and the environment that must be achieved during the course of a five-year CSP contract;



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- Provides new support for ranchers using intensive rotational grazing techniques, implementing practices to reduce antibiotic use, and for producers using or making a transition to organic production systems;
- Encourages sustainable farming practices, livestock production practices that reduce antibiotic use, and pest control methods that use fewer pesticides.

Section Six: Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

- Prioritizes EQIP projects that focus on managing farmland and habitat, not building expensive structures or buying high-priced equipment. Seventy percent of EQIP dollars have been used since 1997 to build structures to store manure, lay irrigation pipeline, purchase sprinkler systems and other equipment;
- Increases access for farmers, particularly small and mid-size farmers, by lowering the total payment cap to \$30,000 per year, thus increasing the availability of grants. In 2010 such a cap would have affected only 15 percent of EQIP contracts but would have freed up \$237 million to help more farmers to put in place less costly but highly effective measures to protect natural resources on thousands more acres;
- Maintains EQIP's short-term assistance mission by clarifying that producers are eligible for six years, and encouraging long-term practices to transition to the Conservation Stewardship Program;
- Provides new options to help livestock producers reduce their use of non-therapeutic antibiotics and improving the health of their animals;
- Provides greater support for farmers transitioning to organic farming practices and more environmentally-friendly pest management practices;
- Sets aside 10% of the funding for wildlife-focused projects.

Section Seven: Conservation Innovation Grants Program

- Supports innovative, cutting edge conservation projects;
- Incorporates ecosystem services principles in order to encourage a payment-for-performance model.

Section Eight: Funding and Administration

- Conservation Loan Program: Creates a low interest loan program to help farmers finance larger, structural conservation projects;
- Funds remaining programs at current level funding.

Section Nine: Agricultural Conservation Easement Program

- Consolidates the Wetlands Reserve Program, Grasslands Reserve Program, and the Farm and Ranchland Protection Program into one program;
- Protects farmers by prioritizing working lands that have a comprehensive conservation plan.

Section Ten: Regional Cooperative Conservation Plan (RCCP)

- Supports local and regional conservation projects that bring together producers, local partners, and non-governmental organizations to address local conservation needs;

For more information on Congressman Blumenauer's agenda for agricultural reform, please visit his website at www.blumenauer.house.gov or contact Tyler Frisbee at (202) 225-4811.



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- Focuses resources on protecting water quality and water supplies including “critical conservation areas” designated to protect regionally, nationally or internationally significant bodies of water or sources of municipal or irrigation water;
- Provides funding to local partners to carry out critical activities such as doing the planning needed to identify the best way to achieve the goals of the project, reach out to farmers and landowners to encourage them to participate, monitor the success of the project and help producers plan and implement conservation practices;
- Designates eight percent of the funding provided for all conservation programs as funding that should be used to support RCPP projects, and provides an additional \$100 million a year for projects.

Section Eleven: Crop Insurance Compliance

- Requires compliance with basic conservation standards for all commodity, conservation, loan, and crop insurance programs;
- Modernizes existing soil conservation plans;
- Increases funding for technical assistance to help farmers address conservation concerns.

Section Twelve: Repeals and Transitional Provisions

- Incorporates the following programs into the programs mentioned above
 - Emergency Forestry Conservation Program (addressed in ACEP)
 - Farm Viability Program (incorporated into ACEP)
 - Grasslands Reserve Program (incorporated into CRP)
 - Agriculture Water Enhancement Program (incorporated into CRP and RCPP)
 - Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (incorporated into EQIP)
 - Small Watershed Rehabilitation Program (watershed issues addressed in RCPP and CIG)
 - Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Program (watershed issues addressed in CCPI, CSP, and CIG)
 - Terminal Lakes Assistance Program (addressed in RCPP)