

USDA Announces Steps on Climate Change

Calling it “one of the greatest threats facing our planet,” Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack on Thursday announced that USDA is taking action to meet the challenge of climate change. Speaking at the United Nations Climate Change Conference, Vilsack said USDA will demonstrate ways landowners can reduce greenhouse gas emissions and increase carbon sequestration while improving their financial bottom line. The effort includes providing opportunities to leverage private sector demand for GHG mitigation services and evaluating how emerging greenhouse gas markets can work in concert with USDA programs to protect the environment.

USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service will provide \$15 million in Conservation Innovation Grant funds and other assistance to support large-scale demonstration projects to accelerate the adoption of new approaches to reduce GHG emissions and promote carbon sequestration on private lands. As part of this, NRCS will provide financial assistance to support eligible producers as they implement conservation practices. The Farm Service Agency will implement a project to provide information to landowners who enroll in certain tree planting conservation practices under the Conservation Reserve Program and who voluntarily request an estimate of the amount of carbon stored as a result of these practices.

Vilsack also announced the release of USDA’s Climate Change Science Plan, which will incorporate management of the challenges created by climate change into the scientific missions of USDA. Also on Thursday, institutions in seven states were awarded federal funding for research on the economics of reducing agricultural GHG emissions. USDA will fund studies to examine the economics of agricultural participation in proposed greenhouse gas markets, including the potential impacts on GHG reduction.

[USDA news release](#)