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Voluntary Conservation

The 2014 Farm Bill (Agricultural Act of 2014) includes conservation programs that provide financial and technical assistance for farmers to adopt conservation practices on their agricultural operations. Programs such as the Conservation Reserve Program, the Conservation Stewardship Program and the Environmental Quality Incentives Program offer conservation activities to help wheat growers address soil erosion, water quality and quantity, habitat and other natural resources.

Wheat growers are having a positive impact on the environment, as new traits and crop protection tools are introduced, production practices change. According to the latest *National Indicators Report from Field to Market*, over the last 35 years, US wheat producers have increased resource efficiency in land use, soil conservation, irrigation water use, energy use and greenhouse gas emissions. We are also producing more bushels per acre. These production efficiencies are important to feed a growing population.

The conservation activities growers implement on their farm can be costly, sometimes requiring new equipment and changes in farming practices with uncertain impact on a producers' crop yield and bottom line. Growers work through USDA conservation programs to implement conservation practices, but even with financial assistance, growers pay a portion of the cost to implement the conservation practice. Natural resource concerns, cropping rotations, pest pressures, and climate vary across the wheat growing regions of the U.S., and conservation programs must recognize these differences and provide assistance to all types of growers in all types of growing conditions. A one size fit's all approach doesn't work for agriculture, and that flexibility in working with growers to address their specific operation is key.

Growers are on their land every day and know more than anyone else what it takes to be a good steward of their land to ensure that it will be productive today, tomorrow and years in the future. Farm Bill conservation programs are an important part of helping growers continue to address natural resource concerns on their farms and these program must be continued.

NAWG Talking Points

- Support voluntary conservation programs that aid growers to undertake conservation practices on their operations.
- Support continued funding for conservation cost-share programs and technical assistance to implement those programs
- Conservation programs must continue to address the natural resource needs of growers in different regions of the country and cropping systems

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