



BIPARTISAN POLICY CENTER

The Honorable Tom Vilsack  
Secretary of Agriculture  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250

April 27, 2021

RE: Notice of Request for Public Comment on the Executive Order on Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad, Docket Number: USDA-2021-0003

Dear Secretary Vilsack,

We are writing to you in response to the Department's request for input in our capacity as the current co-chairs of the Bipartisan Policy Center's Farm & Forest Carbon Solutions Task Force. The BPC actively fosters bipartisanship by combining the best ideas from both parties to promote health, security, and opportunity for all Americans through informed deliberations by former elected and appointed officials, business and labor leaders, and academics and advocates who represent all sides of the political spectrum.

America's natural and working lands underpin the national economy—sustaining food supply, generating timber, and providing wildlife habitat, recreation resources, and environmental benefits. Yet there is growing recognition that these lands can further deliver natural climate solutions, including carbon sequestration and greenhouse gas emissions reductions in agriculture and forests. Moreover, as more and more corporations set net zero greenhouse gas emission pledges, they will become consumers of billions of dollars of carbon credits per year, potentially creating a significant new revenue stream for producers. Helping forestland owners and farmers understand this opportunity and the practices they can employ to sequester carbon and generate credits, will empower them to participate in this rapidly growing market.

During March 2021, we convened the first meeting of the Farm & Forest Carbon Solutions Task Force, which will explore federal policy options to respond to these opportunities and will deliver a final report of recommendations. Our hope is that the report will provide members of Congress, agency officials, and other policymakers with a roadmap for expanding farm and forest carbon solutions as part of broader economic and environmental strategies.

The 18-member Task Force is comprised of former agency officials; conservation and environmental nonprofits; trade associations; and distinguished leaders from across the food, agriculture, and forestry sectors. Already we have identified a common set of guiding principles for our work that we hope will align with the Department's continued efforts to respond to climate change. The principles include pursuing strategies that are voluntary and incentive based, that align with the economic and environmental goals of working lands, that are flexible to the needs of diverse production systems and producers, that foster partnerships with the private sector, and that are based on a commitment to delivering measurable results. While the Task Force will complete its work after the Department's request for input concludes, BPC staff are providing an initial response to the supplemental questions



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that we believe is indicative of the range of issues and policy options the Task Force will discuss over the coming months.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment and to make you and members of the Department aware of the Task Force's work. As the Task Force pursues its deliberations and recommendations, we look forward to a productive dialogue and partnership with the administration and with Congress to inform your work positioning America's farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners to continue to deliver climate solutions.

Sincerely,

Senator Heidi Heitkamp  
Co-chair

Senator Saxby Chambliss  
Co-chair