

Agriculture Principles for a National Climate Change Program

June 2010

1. Agricultural producers should have the opportunity to voluntarily participate in a national climate change program

- a. Any national climate change mitigation program should recognize the wide range of GHG mitigation and carbon sequestration benefits that agriculture can provide.
- b. A mix of agricultural performance-based incentives and offsets should be used to lower the overall cost of compliance to the economy and to speed adoption of practices and technologies that lead to GHG reductions.
- c. National climate change adaptation strategies should reflect the important role that agricultural lands and their stewards can play in the adaptation of both nature and people to a changing climate.
- d. Funding for existing USDA conservation programs should be augmented to include climate change mitigation and adaptation activities.

2. Both USDA and EPA should play a role in developing an offsets program for agriculture

- a. USDA is well positioned to participate in the development of technical standards and protocols through its extensive network of scientists and researchers focused on agronomy and soil science.
- b. Rules for all tradable offsets must be consistent in terms of stringency and coverage in order to maintain the integrity of the offsets market and avoid disparate and inconsistent rules and definitions across different offset project types.
- c. A reputable authority (agencies could collaborate on this) is needed to establish the economy-wide comparability of emissions reductions.

3. A domestic offsets program should encourage innovation in uncapped sectors like agriculture

- a. The goal of any offset program should be to generate high-quality GHG reductions as quickly as possible. To support this objective, eligible project types should not be limited provided they can meet the environmental integrity criteria, including life cycle analysis of the operation to avoid the unintended consequences of increasing greenhouse gas emissions and fully consider environmental co-benefits.

- b. Regulations governing the eligibility of different project types should include appropriate safeguards to protect against negative impacts on public health and/or the environment, including the destruction or temporary conversion of native habitats.
- c. Methodologies for measuring and verifying carbon sequestration and GHG mitigation rates must be based on the best available science.
- d. Offsets should be measurable, verifiable and additional above and beyond an established baseline. Standardized and agreed upon protocols for each offset-eligible project type should be created to establish the quality of offsets being created and sold, conservatively adjusting for measurement, permanence and other uncertainties.
- e. A federal climate change program should be fully compatible with California's Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006 to avoid double compliance requirements of the regulated sector.

4. National climate change legislation should include provisions to recognize and reward early actions that are determined to be above and beyond an established baseline as defined in the regulatory process

- a. Early adopters of technologies and improved practices above and beyond the established baseline that reduce GHG emissions or enhance carbon sequestration should be rewarded for the additional, measurable and verifiable climate benefits they deliver.

5. Practices generating multiple environmental benefits should not be precluded from qualifying for multiple streams of compensation

- a. Many practices undertaken to sequester carbon and reduce GHG emissions are linked to other environmental benefits, such as reduced soil erosion, improved air and water quality, increased renewable energy production and wildlife habitat. Highest priority should be given to projects and activities that provide multiple environmental benefits.
- b. Opportunities to separately value these benefits should be encouraged.
- c. The accounting system must have integrity, seek to avoid double counting of benefits, and ensure consistency with additionality requirements.

6. Recognizing a domestic food supply as a strategic national asset, provisions should be made for food production systems in the event that carbon mitigation technology is not readily available.