American producers are hardworking people. Every day they face myriad economic and environmental obstacles and challenges (e.g., extreme weather, soil and plant health issues, and pests) and work to overcome them. Empowering farmers with the skills, resources, and training to take on the challenges that come with stewardship is critical for ensuring our farms and food supply are resilient and healthy. The benefits of on-farm conservation are widespread and far reaching — they help to ensure cleaner drinking water for our urban and rural communities, more robust habitats for wildlife, and farm operations that are sustainable long-term.

For decades, voluntary conservation programs offered by USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) have helped to produce lasting results for farmers and the public, but today many farmers find it increasingly difficult to access this support. Funding shortages, insufficient emphasis on high-impact practices, and a lack of program coordination keep tens of thousands of farmers from achieving their resource conservation goals every year.

Conservation is a win-win investment that protects and enhances our shared natural resources and bolsters farmers’ bottom line. We must ensure that federal policies incentivize, encourage, and reward stewardship efforts, and that federal programs like the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), and Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) are funded to meet farmers’ needs for conservation assistance.

THE 2018 FARM BILL CAN PROTECT OUR SHARED NATURAL RESOURCES AND SUPPORT FARMERS’ STEWARDSHIP EFFORTS BY:

- **Expanding access**: to serve farmers of all types, sizes, and geography
- **Enhancing impact**: by targeting dollars to the most effective conservation activities
- **Improving support**: for conservation outreach, planning, and implementation support
- **Increasing effectiveness**: through better measurement, evaluation, and reporting