



Locally Grown  
and  
GROWING STRONG

**Senate Committee on Energy & Environment  
OFB Testimony on SJM 5  
February 25, 2021**

Chair Beyer and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today on SJM 5. By way of background, the Oregon Farm Bureau (OFB) is the state's largest agricultural trade association, representing nearly 7,000 farm and ranch families from across the state.

America's farmers and ranchers play a leading role in promoting soil health, conserving water, enhancing wildlife, efficiently using nutrients, and caring for their animals. For decades they have embraced innovation thanks to investments in agricultural research and adopted climate-smart practices to improve productivity, enhance sustainability, and provide clean and renewable energy.

Livestock and crop production are the heart of American agriculture, providing the food we enjoy every day. The daily choices we make on our farm and ranches are driven by our commitment to sustainability. Farmers have embraced technologies that reduce emissions and increase efficiency, making U.S. agriculture a leader in sustainability. Building upon the strong foundation of voluntary stewardship investments and practices, including those in the Farm Bill, we advocated at the national level to advance successful sustainable practices in U.S. agriculture. Throughout this process, we have urged lawmakers must ensure that any governmental analysis characterizing U.S. crop and livestock systems reflects U.S. agriculture's leadership globally in sustainable farming practices.

All told, agriculture accounts for approximately 10% of total U.S. greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, far less than transportation, electricity generation, and industry sectors. Farmers continue to produce more with greater efficiency. In fact, U.S. agriculture would have needed nearly 100 million more acres in 1990 to match 2018 production levels.

Carbon sequestration, achieved through the management of forestry, grasslands, wetlands, cropland and settlements contributed to GHG removals equivalent to 12% of total U.S. emissions. With increased investment in agricultural research we can develop the new frontier technologies to capture even more carbon in our croplands, our forests and our grasslands. With cutting-edge science, we may be able to achieve net zero emissions in some sectors of agriculture.

U.S. farmers and ranchers have long been at the forefront of climate-smart farming, utilizing scientific solutions, technology, and innovations to raise crops and care for livestock. These efforts are designed to protect soil and water, efficiently manage manure, produce clean and renewable energy, capture carbon, and improve sustainability. Over two generations, we've been able to increase productivity by 287 percent, while using the same resources. To say we're doing more with less is an understatement.

Total carbon sink efforts from forestland management, land converted to forestry, grasslands, and wetland management more than offset agriculture's contribution to total emissions. However, many of agriculture's carbon sequestration efforts are not directly assigned to the agriculture sector. It is certain that if the carbon sequestration efforts of U.S. farmers and ranchers were assigned to agriculture, especially our forests, our contributions to GHG emissions would be lower. It is worth noting that U.S. farmers have enrolled more than 140 million acres in federal conservation programs--that's equal to the total land area of California and New York combined. Millions more acres are dedicated to nonfederal conservation programs.

More productive livestock operations allow ranchers, pork producers, and dairy farmers to maintain their total contribution to GHG emissions at less than 3%. Innovation plays an important role, from methane digesters to advances in nutritional balance that lead to lower per-unit GHG emissions. In fact, we have seen a 25% reduction in per unit of GHG emission for our dairy industry, an 18% reduction in swine and close to a 10% drop for our beef cattle producers.

U.S. farmers and ranchers contribute significantly fewer GHG emissions than their counterparts around the world. EPA data shows agriculture's global contribution to GHG emissions was 24% in 2010, more than double U.S. farmers' and ranchers' contributions to total U.S. emissions in 2019. This significant difference is largely driven by U.S. farmers' enthusiastic adoption of technology. American farmers and ranchers are pioneers of sustainability, and any policy debate should recognize their contributions, efficiency gains, and the considerable impact of their carbon sequestration efforts.

With trade challenges and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, America's farmers and ranchers are facing difficult headwinds. As we continue to work with Congress, we must explore new markets and opportunities for agriculture. We also recommend working with our international trade partners to make certain that national sustainability standards do not become trade barriers to our agricultural exports.

Our national affiliate, the American Farm Bureau, recognizes the value of a voluntary, market-based system of incentives for planting crops or adopting farming practices that keep carbon in the soil. That is why we welcome opportunities for farmers and ranchers to participate in emerging carbon markets.

To further promote and expand these opportunities, the American Farm Bureau felt it was important to convene a wide group of stakeholders to further explore policy options for farmers, ranchers and rural communities. What came out of that effort is now known as the Food and Agriculture Climate Alliance which consists of organizations representing a cross-section of

farmers, ranchers, forest owners, the food sector, state governments and environmental advocates that are working together to develop and promote shared climate policy priorities.

The alliance united around three principles that guide our 40 recommendations: Support voluntary, market- and incentive-based policies; advance science-based outcomes; promote resilience and help rural economies better adapt to changes in the climate. We hope the work and recommendations of the alliance ensure farmers and ranchers will be respected and supported as society pushes for more climate-smart practices. The American Farm Bureau is also a founding member of US Farmers and Ranchers in Action and Farmers for a Sustainable Future, both of which are working to proactively engage in climate policy that impacts agriculture. Advocating for the right policies – voluntary, market- and incentive-based solutions – will allow us to build on our sustainability advances and recognize farmers as partners in this effort, while helping to prevent a move toward the punitive policies discussed a decade ago.

Farm Bureau will continue to work to ensure that farm families maintain their ability to respond and adapt to climatic events and that public policies do not threaten the long-term resiliency of our rural communities. Congress must protect American agriculture and production practices from undue burden, and respect farmers' and ranchers' ability to innovate and solve problems.

**With the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress convening earlier this year, we strongly encourage the Oregon Legislature to wait and see what legislation is introduced during this Congress around climate change instead of supporting legislation that is no longer pending in front of Congress.** Once we know what legislation will be put forward in the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress, we encourage the legislature to evaluate that legislation to determine its benefit and impact on Oregon, and support only voluntary, market- and incentive-based solutions that are proposed by this Congress.

Contact: Mary Anne Cooper, [maryanne@oregonfb.org](mailto:maryanne@oregonfb.org), 541-740-4062