

97

**McKay, David**

**From:** Elizabeth J. Smith [esmith6@emich.edu]  
**Sent:** Monday, February 02, 2004 1:30 PM  
**To:** McKay, David  
**Subject:** concerned citizen writing about the Conservation Security Program

To: OMB

Dear David McKay,

I am writing as a concerned citizen of Barry County, Michigan. My family has farmed in Woodland Township for four generations. As a young person hoping to take over where my parents and grandparents left off, I am interested in switching our farm to more sustainable and organic practices that will produce little or no environmental waste to harm the local soil, air or watershed, in using non-GMO seeds which will produce healthier food, and in exploring value-added techniques of an entrepreneurial nature that will increase the amount of money that goes into our farms' pockets. I also value a farm-to-consumer direct marketing plan, which would help people in our local area have access to fresh, healthy food via farmer's markets, food cooperatives and other local stores.

I have a vested interest in this Conservation Security Program, which would have helped farms like ours get the support they need to begin ventures such as the ones that I mentioned above. The slogan "get big, or get out" of farming is antithetical to American democracy. In my U.S.A., growing food is not only a family and community tradition, but a fundamental human right. To have to "sell out" to big agribusiness to "compete in the market" is a sickening idea created by people who do not understand what it means to live on, or in harmony with, the land.

I have been alarmed to find out that this Conservation Security Program has been gutted by the Secretary of Agriculture. Small independent farmers cannot survive in this country without financial support such as this bill would have lent to them. If the government can spend \$200 billion on the defense of our country, why can't we spend a bit of that to ensure a safe and secure food base for our nation? By supporting sustainable and entrepreneurial farmers, and giving them the help they need to compete with big agribusiness, the bill would be helping to fight against methods that threaten not only the environment, but our economic and physical health as a nation. No one is benefiting from big agribusiness but the elite. Everyone benefits from supporting small farmers, and they are the ones who really need the money. By supporting small, sustainable farms, people can get their food from more secure, local sources, the environment will be cleaner, farmland will stay farmland instead of being eaten up by strip malls and subdivisions, and the American tradition of family farming will be revitalized for the next generations. It is a shame that those in power in the United States have allowed our food system to become so reliant on international, and even interstate trade. Food is not just a commodity. It is a human right to eat and grow food. This right is in jeopardy, as I see it, and if we're going to fight a "war on terror," we should start with the fact that our food supply is already in the hands of so few companies whose values are driven by a single bottom line of monetary profit. That's terrifying.

I am a young person, 26 years of age. I am an avid voter, and I care deeply about this country and the directions it will go during my lifetime. It is time for the government to stop stepping on the hands that feed them. Small farmers deserve a chance, and that is what this bill gave them. A few government officials who are here today and gone tomorrow do not have the ethical right to choose for the present and future generations of America whether or not citizens can afford to continue to farm their land.

Please consider revising the guidelines of this bill that have strangled it from its original intention. Please stick to what was originally intended by congress: a bill to support those farmers and their families who wish to own and operate environmentally friendly, entrepreneurial farms. We need your help, Mr. McKay. Don't let those who are in the pocket of big agribusiness buy out this bill.

Very sincerely,

Elizabeth J. Smith  
2663 Woodland Rd.  
Woodland, MI 48897



January 24, 2004

David McKay  
NRCS Conservation Operations Division  
P.O. Box 2890  
Washington, D.C. 20013

Re: Comments on CSP Proposed Rules

Dear Mr. McKay,

We are beef farmers in Vernon County in Southwest Wisconsin. We farm our own place and a rented farm. Both farms are on sloping land with most crop acres classified as HEL by NRCS. Over the last 15-20 years we have converted both places from cropland to pasture and forage. We have been expanding but find the government programs coming out of the 2002 farm bill make this economically difficult because they strongly favor land being used for grain versus pasture. Our hope was that the CSP would help out but the proposed rules USDA/NRCS has come up with continue to be a large disincentive.

The grain portion of the bill was put in place in a "heart-beat" but the CSP part has been dragged out for two years. This made it economically possible for grain farmers to spring up in this area and take rental land away from graziers and traditional dairy and beef farmers. Basically the US government put animal farmers at a disadvantage economically versus grain farmers. That's on the business side.

On the environmental side: The way the government has handled this program has subsidized land use on many Wisconsin farms that put that land at greater risk of erosion and depletion than it was previously. University research shows that land in managed grazing systems is less erodible than land in any crop system. Further, there is a greatly reduced chance of harmful nutrient migration out of grazed land versus cropland. That's a big issue for water quality in Wisconsin—for environmental reasons and for tourist business reasons.

Certified Organic Farm

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Now USDA is finally moving ahead on CSP; but our understanding of the proposed rules is that we grazing-based beef farmers are still discriminated against. And conservation land use is still discriminated against. Two areas:

- Payments for using conservation-friendly practices do not match in any way the subsidies for cropping of erodible land. They need to be larger by a factor of ten. The proposal is for base payments to be set at 1% of land rent values. Rent values in Vernon Co. went up here by 25-30% after implementation of the grain portions of the 2002 bill.
- While good government science (and even the technicians in the NRCS in Wisconsin) says that managed grazing is a conservation practice, the proposed rules exclude this as a practice to be rewarded.

Bottom line: I still can't compete against the combination of a grain farmer plus his partner - the federal government. One solution is for USDA to get out of the grain business. The other is for the USDA to treat both farmers the same and be able to say to the public that it is also protecting the country's land and water.



Jim Munsch

Cc: Russ Feingold  
U.S. Senator

Ron Kind  
Representative, US House of Representatives

JAN. 22, 2004

To: DAVID MCKAY,

I would like to see the Conservation Security Program provide a substantial financial incentive to farmers to convert the sloping erodible hillsides to a grass crop which could be grazed by livestock.

From Michael Phillips, Farmer

MICHAEL PHILLIPS  
9089 NW. 56TH ST.  
WASECA, MN 56093

Phone 507 835-4027

1-24-03

TO NRCS Chief Bruce Knight  
NRCS Midwest Regional Conservationist  
Charles Whitmore  
NRCS Michigan State Conservationist  
Ron Williams

In the 50<sup>s</sup> and early 60<sup>s</sup> my dad and I  
cleared a few acres of wood lot. The clay  
soil was very easy to till. In less than  
10 years the superb tilth and quality of  
the (clay) soil had disappeared.

Time and nature can improve the land.

Leave it Lay

Land with grass cover will take in heavy  
rains, virtually stop erosion, and stop the  
release of between 200<sup>+</sup> to 2000<sup>+</sup> of carbon dioxide  
per year.

Let's compensate our soil cover minded  
small farmers.

My wife and I live and farm 450 Acres in  
south east Lanawee Co. I have been the chairman  
of our soil conservation District for over 10 years.  
Clean water is one of our many goals.

thanks for your time!

William J. Bierman

14917 Fike Rd.

Rt 7 Mi 49276

Please call if you  
ever have any