

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 28, 2022

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack,

We write regarding your September 14, 2022, announcement that USDA awarded \$2.8 billion in funding from the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) to Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities with plans for an expected second tranche that would bring total funding for this program to \$3.5 billion in 2022 alone. We are dismayed at the lack of transparency and congressional consultation throughout the development of this process. In no way can \$3.5 billion dollars be considered a “pilot program,” and there must be direct congressional involvement before a program of this magnitude is implemented.

While we are sure there are a number of projects worthy of being funded, this \$3.5 billion is largely going to partner organization rather than going directly to aid farmers or ranchers in this difficult farm economy when many are struggling with rising input costs, drought, and an ongoing supply chain crisis. Rather, this \$3.5 billion is being allocated to partner organizations with no direction or oversight from Congress. The findings from these projects *may* help farmers and ranchers years down the road – USDA itself acknowledged in its press release that it is only a “potential for meaningful opportunities to benefit producers” – but to spend \$3.5 billion of taxpayer dollars on a potential benefit without congressional involvement is unacceptable. USDA’s unilateral move has raised questions about current and future congressional oversight of CCC funding.

Given the lack of input and direction from Congress on this pilot program, please provide answers to the following questions:

1. How does USDA define a “pilot program”? At what level of funding does a program exceed the definition of a pilot program?
2. How did USDA weigh the submitted proposals to ensure that this funding would most directly assist farmers?
3. What is USDA doing to ensure that this funding is not displacing private sector funding that would have otherwise been invested in similar projects if there were not federal funding available?

4. How many of the projects that USDA approved are going to private sector businesses (or have businesses as major partners) that made pledges to their shareholders to invest in similar projects?
- a. What discussions were had, if any, with those businesses to ensure that they would provide matching funds or continue their own projects?
 - b. How much in total are those businesses providing in matching funds?

We look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,



Dan Newhouse
Member of Congress



Andy Harris, M.D.
Member of Congress



Tom McClintock
Member of Congress



Jay Obernolte
Member of Congress



David G. Valadao
Member of Congress



Connie Conway
Member of Congress



Cliff Bentz
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Doug LaMalfa
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Andy Biggs
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John R. Moolenaar
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