



Michigan Agri-Business Association

1501 North Shore Drive, Suite A
East Lansing, Michigan 48823

www.miagbiz.org

Telephone (517) 336-0223

Fax (517) 336-0227

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Friday, May 5, 2017

CONTACT: Chuck Lippstreu, Byrum & Fisk Communications, 517-333-1606

Michigan Agri-Business Association: Farm Bill must target conservation efforts, maintain productive farmland

LANSING – The **Michigan Agri-Business Association (MABA)** today reiterated support for the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), while calling on Congressional leaders to ensure the program is targeted to sensitive lands and lands with practices dedicated to improving water quality – avoiding a wholesale approach that enrolls highly productive land. **MABA** joined many other state and national groups in calling for maintaining the current 24 million acre cap on Conservation Reserve Program acreage, while enrolling acres where the greatest conservation results can be achieved.

“Dedicating the right farmland to conservation programs that protect water quality and sensitive lands makes sense, but we need to carve those acres out with a scalpel, not an axe,” said **Jim Byrum**, president of the **Michigan Agri-Business Association**. “Recent farm bills have moved toward a targeted conservation approach that makes real progress to protect sensitive lands. CRP cannot be considered a ‘silver bullet’ for low commodity prices and used as an acreage-idling program, because that strategy won’t achieve meaningful conservation benefits or have a significant impact on prices.”

The 2014 Farm Bill reduced CRP acreage from 32 million acres to 24 million acres. **Byrum** said instead of increasing the CRP cap, investment should be steered toward targeted programs like the Conservation Stewardship Program and Environmental Quality Incentives Program, true working-land programs that help farmers, and practices that protect soil and water.

“MABA fully supports the original conservation objectives of CRP and recommends all conservation programs be targeted to the most sensitive lands where they deliver the greatest conservation value,” said **Byrum**. “Any attempt to correct low prices by moving highly productive land into CRP will only hurt rural economies by taking good farmland out of production and needlessly driving up rental rates.”

“By targeting scarce conservation dollars, the result is good for farmers, good for taxpayers, and good for the overall conservation goal,” he said.

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