

Adams, McGovern, Booker Intro Climate-Smart Farm Conversion Bill



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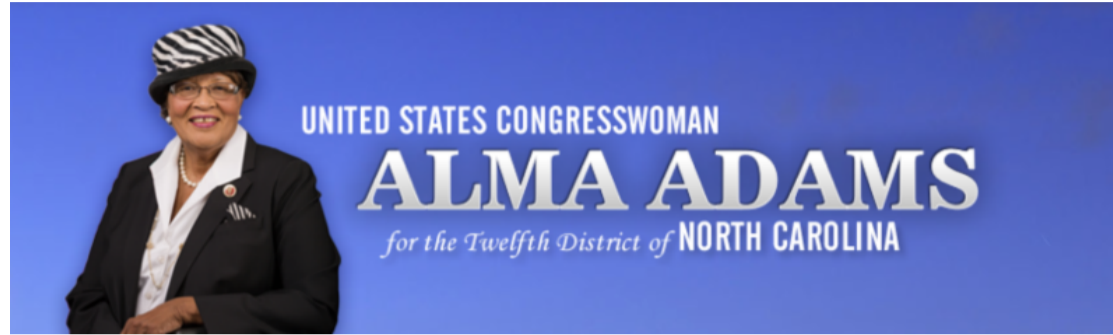
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Reps. Adams, McGovern; Sen. Booker Introduce Climate-Smart Farm Conversion Bill

*Bicameral legislation would enable producers to transition away from
factory farming model using conservation dollars*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, U.S. Representative Alma S. Adams, Ph.D. (NC-12), Representative Jim McGovern (MA-02), and U.S. Senator Cory Booker (D-NJ) introduced the Industrial Agriculture Conversion Act (IACA), which would allow farmers to voluntarily convert their on-farm infrastructure toward more climate-friendly uses with USDA conservation dollars.

The IACA would use existing agricultural conservation funds to support farmers transitioning from concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) to more sustainable and humane production systems. Reps. Adams and McGovern are leading the bill in the House, and Sen. Booker introduced companion legislation in the Senate.

“Farmers want to produce food in ways that are good for people and the planet, but aren’t always empowered to do so in a consolidated food system like ours. I’m thrilled to introduce the Industrial Agriculture Conversion Act, which unlocks climate-forward conservation dollars to assist producers who want to transition out of the factory farm model,” **said Congresswoman Adams**. “Whether pasture-based or plant-based, farmers want to farm sustainably, humanely, and resiliently. I’m glad to support them in partnership with Representative McGovern, Senator Booker, and dozens of organizations on the ground.”

“We need a food system that feeds everyone while doing right by the people, the planet, and animals” **said Congressman McGovern**. “Farmers are at the center of that vision, and we need to do everything we can to support them. I’m proud to co-lead this bill with Representative Adams and Senator Booker so that we can empower farmers to break free from a broken system and thrive as independent producers.”

“Corporate meatpackers use their market power to trap producers in the factory farm system with terrible profit margins and unsustainable debt,” **said Senator Booker**. “Their practices contribute to climate change and destroy rural communities. This legislation leverages conservation funding to give farmers a completely voluntary new path forward by providing them with the resources they need to transition to a more climate-friendly and humane production system that is good for people, animals, and the planet.”

The IACA is the first stand-alone federal legislation to assist producers who want to make the move from intensive animal agriculture to pasture-based animal agriculture or specialty crop production. It would allow the USDA to create a grant program for eligible climate-smart conversion projects, funded by the Inflation Reduction Act’s pathbreaking investments in agricultural conservation. Earlier this year, Congresswoman Adams, Congressman McGovern, and Senator Booker all signed a letter cautioning against the use of IRA conservation money towards industrial agriculture; the IACA would ensure the integrity and effectiveness of these funds.

“Factory farming is not just a nightmare for animals—contract farmers who were promised easy profits and the chance to ‘feed the world’ find themselves taking on seemingly endless debt to raise animals in this cruel industrial model, threatening the security of their families and farms,” **said Kara Shannon, director of farm animal welfare policy for the ASPCA**. “The Industrial Agriculture Conversion Act offers resources to support farmers who are climbing the ladder out of the pit of factory farming and want to transition to more humane and economically sustainable practices. We commend Representatives

Adams and McGovern, and Senator Booker for introducing this groundbreaking legislation to create a more compassionate food system that respects animals, farmers, rural communities and our environment.”

“The factory farming industry preys on our nation’s farmers by trapping them in exploitative contracts and depriving them of meaningful autonomy. The Industrial Agriculture Conversion Act seeks to promote competition in our food system by creating a program for farmers who wish to transition from the highly consolidated factory farming model to climate-smart practices, such as specialty crop production,” **said Frances Chrzan, senior federal policy manager, the Transformation Project of Mercy For Animals.** “We applaud Rep. Alma Adams, Rep. McGovern, and Sen. Cory Booker for introducing legislation to create kinder and more sustainable pathways for farmers, which will benefit not only farmers and our economy but human health, the environment, and farmed animals.”

“I know firsthand the difficulty both financially and socially in transitioning from a confinement animal system to a regenerative farming system, having transitioned our farm in 1996,” **said Ron Holter of Holterholm Farms.** “Financially there is often a lag time from the beginning of what can be an expensive transition to eventually achieving an improved income while the land heals and the livestock become accustomed to a healthier, happier lifestyle. Transitional funds like those provided in the Industrial Agriculture Conversion Act would be a blessing to farmers attempting to move to more regenerative, livestock friendly systems.”

“We took on over \$400,000 in debt to become contract chicken farmers and came close to foreclosure when we decided to get out of industrial animal agriculture. When we cancelled our contract, the integrator came out to our farm, picked up their \$20 sign and drove away without another thought,” **said Paula Boles, co-owner of JB Farms.** “We know too many farmers have similar stories of being exploited by integrators and left with few options to keep their farms going. The Industrial Agriculture Conversion Act would help support farmers like us across the country who want to transition to more sustainable and economically viable farming systems.”

“In North Carolina’s Duplin and Sampson counties, hogs outnumber people by approximately 30-to-1. The vast majority of these industrial agricultural operations use an outdated cesspit and spray field system in which hog feces and urine are flushed into open-air pits and sprayed onto nearby fields, causing higher rates of anemia, kidney disease, and infant mortality among local communities,” **said Dr. Rania Masri, Co-Director of the NC Environmental Justice Network.** “NCEJN applauds Rep. Alma Adams, from North Carolina, for introducing the Industrial Agriculture Conversion Act and speaking up for the contract farmers, trapped as serfs on their own land, and the communities who are struggling against this polluting industry.”

“Too many farmers have been exploited and trapped in the factory farm system for too long, which is why Farm Aid applauds the introduction of the Industrial Agriculture Conversion Act,” **said Hannah Tremblay, Policy and Advocacy Manager of Farm Aid.** “We’re especially excited that livestock farmers will have an opportunity to be a part of the solution to climate change through the funding for climate-smart conversion projects.”

“The Industrial Agriculture Conversion Act will release farmers ensnared in the highly flawed industrial animal agriculture model and

usher in much-needed sustainable food and farm system reform. 'Get Big or Get Out' has failed farmers, rural communities, and our country. The IACA will help farmers and rural America get out from under CAFOs and thrive," **said Harry Manin, deputy legislative director of the Sierra Club.**

"The factory farm system that traps farmers under mountains of debt and damages rural communities, public health and the environment didn't happen by accident," **said Patty Lovera of the Campaign for Family Farms and the Environment.** "Factory farms are the result of decades of failed enforcement, bad farm policy and direct government support, including federally-guaranteed loans for new factory farms. The Industrial Agriculture Conversion Act would be a critical first step in the transition away from factory farms to a system based on independent, family farm livestock production."

"Today's factory farm system stacks the cards against farmers, workers, consumers, and the environment while letting Big Ag corporations reap all the rewards. The Industrial Agricultural Conversion Act is an important opportunity to transition our food and agriculture sector away from factory farms and an important lifeline for those squeezed by corporate consolidation," **said Rebecca Wolf, senior food policy analyst for Food and Water Watch.**

"This bill would give small farmers more control over their operations to not have the larger corporations controlling what they do on their own farms. Factory farms put a strain on our health. This gives those farmers an opportunity to create a better product for our communities and consumers and improve our food system as a whole," **said Philip Barker, farmer and co-founder/co-project director of Operation Spring Plant, Inc.**

"More than ever before, consumers want the assurance that the products they buy are aligned with their values. The data shows us that 80% of U.S. consumers are concerned about the environmental impact of the products they buy," **said David Levine, Co-founder and President of the American Sustainable Business Network.** "In just the last few years, the sale of meat with labels boasting environmental and labor benefits increased 18% compared to conventionally labeled meat products. In addition, the sustainable fashion industry market is expected to more than double to \$15 billion by 2030. Sustainable business is no longer just about doing the right thing, it's also a wise investment and makes good business sense. Once farmers can move out of the industrial model, they will see higher profits and more resiliency to extreme weather and volatile markets, the Industrial Agriculture Conservation Act will begin to provide the needed support to take that first step to transition."

"Over a decade ago I began to transition away from conventional cattle production to more sustainable, humane and regenerative practices and I've seen more benefits than I can name in the health of my animals and land. But without the kind of support this legislation offers, doing the right thing has been a slow and extremely risky process for myself and farmers like me across the country," **said Don Jackson, owner of Pompey's Rest Farm.** "The Industrial Agriculture Conversion Act gives farmers a way out of a destructive system that's squeezing them dry, and that's a wonderful thing."

Specifically, the IACA would:

- Create a new grant program within the existing USDA Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), using funds provided for climate-smart conservation practices by the IRA

- Provide grants for on-farm infrastructure improvements to convert medium or large CAFOs to either crop production or pasture-based livestock operations
- Require that grant recipients permanently cease operation of a CAFO within 180 days
- Prevent grant funds from being misused for new unsustainable facilities, such as methane digesters or manure lagoons
- Require 10% non-federal cost-sharing, with the option of lower cost-sharing amounts for socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers
- Protect grant applicants from retaliation under the Packers and Stockyards Act

The text of the Industrial Agriculture Conversion Act is available [here](#).

A section-by-section of the IACA is available [here](#).

A list of endorsers of the IACA at the time of publication is available [here](#).

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Congresswoman Alma S. Adams, Ph.D. represents North Carolina's 12th Congressional District (Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, Cabarrus County) and serves on the House Committee on Agriculture and the House Committee on Education & the Workforce, where she serves as ranking member of the Workforce Protections Subcommittee.

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