

Sustainable agriculture act introduced in U.S.

A bill designed to remove commodity program barriers to crop rotations was introduced in the U.S. House of Representative on October 31 by Congressman Jim Jontz of Indiana. Inflexibility in current farm programs "hurts the environment by requiring greater use of manufactured chemicals and fertilizers," Jontz said in introducing the bill. For example, according to Jontz, a farmer with a 100-acre corn base that yielded 120 bushels per acre would receive \$4,000 less per year from federal commodity programs if he switched from continuous corn cropping to a lower-input rotation of clover/corn/ soybeans.

The Sustainable Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1989 (HR 3552) provides the opportunity for farmers to develop five-year farm management plans that include crop rotations and other chemical-reduction methods. In return, the producer will have his crop base protected and receive deficiency payments on acreage planted in resource-conserving crops. Jontz emphasized the voluntary nature of the program.

The bill also calls for an Extension Service program to assist producers in adopting sustainable agriculture production systems. This effort should be coordinated with the USDA Low-Input Sustainable Agriculture (LISA) program, the bill says. It directs the Soil Conservation Service to revise its technical guides to include the range of sustainable practices and asks USDA to establish a training program in sustainable agriculture practices for agency staff.

The Institute for Alternative Agriculture joined 21 other national, regional, and state organizations in support of the general principles of the Act. For more information on the bill, contact the office of Congressman Jontz, 1039 Longworth House Office Building, Washington, DC 20515 (202-225-5037).

Reprinted from IAA Newsletter

Copyright © 1990 *REAP Canada*