

Climate-friendly ag practices need \$30 billion, Democrats told

More than 60 groups are urging Democratic congressional leaders to prioritize climate-friendly agriculture, food systems and equity in their \$3.5 trillion domestic spending package.

About \$89 billion in the budget reconciliation measure will be designated for agriculture and forestry in the package, and groups including the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, American Sustainable Business Council, Earthjustice and the National Family Farm Coalition want to see \$30 billion of that allocated to conservation programs. The 2018 farm bill provided about \$60 billion for conservation programs over 10 years.

Those farm bill programs include the Conservation Stewardship Program, Environmental Quality Incentives Program and Conservation Reserve Program.

In a letter to Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, Senate Agriculture Committee Chairwoman Debbie Stabenow, and House Agriculture Committee Chairman David Scott, the groups also called for \$5 billion for sustainable and organic agriculture research programs; \$3 billion for resilient rural development, and \$10 billion for debt relief “to stabilize the operations of producers who have not received a fair share of aid from recent federal support programs.”

On a call Wednesday to discuss a dairy donation program, Stabenow said she has been working with Scott and “we will have robust investments for both what we call climate-smart agriculture and forestry.” She did not get into specific spending numbers.

House committees, including Agriculture, are expected to vote on their respective portions of the spending package during the first two weeks of September.