

Congress of the United States
Washington, D.C.

April 8th, 2021

Terry Cosby
Acting Chief, Natural Resource Conservation Service
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave SW
Washington, DC
20250

Dear Acting Chief Cosby,

We write to you regarding the USDA's recently published CPS 340 Cover Crop standard. This decision poses significant challenges for our farmers who have long implemented cover cropping techniques on their farms.


As you know, growing and harvesting cover crops for forage can provide all of the benefits of growing an unharvested cover crop, if done appropriately. Harvesting these crops allows farmers to improve farm viability, soil health, nutrient management, water quality, greenhouse gas mitigation, and adaptation to climate change. Farmers are currently able to partner with state and federal cost-share programs to test and fine tune their cover crop management options with the goal of long-term adoption.


Allowing cover crops to be mechanically harvested as winter forage crops within CPS 340 would maintain a key management option for achieving long-term adoption of these practices without farmer reliance on the cost-share program. This would also extend the limited state and federal funds to allow more farmers to try the program and adopt cover crop techniques as a regular part of their crop rotations.

The NRCS' decision to add language no longer allowing farmers to mechanically harvest cover crops is very concerning for many of the farmers in our districts. Our producers rely heavily on cover crops to control soil erosion and utilize the crops as a feed source for their animals. Maintaining this language would have a severe negative impact on our farmers, affecting their profitability and their ability to maintain their reputation as responsible stewards of the land. We are concerned this change will hurt the overall goal of the program and will dissuade farmers in our districts from adopting cover crops.

As the Representatives for agricultural districts in New York, we request that USDA and NRCS allow the use of mechanical harvest practices to meet the cover crop standard. We look forward to working with you on this issue.


Sincerely,


ELISE M. STEFANIK
Member of Congress


ANTONIO DELGADO
Member of Congress


CHRIS JACOBS
Member of Congress


SEAN PATRICK MALONEY
Member of Congress


CLAUDIA TENNEY
Member of Congress M.C.