

**From:** "Barrettwalker@mac.com%inter2" <Barrettwalker@mac.com>  
**Subject:** Farm Bill 2007 Official Comments - 10/12/2005 09:09 PM CDT  
**Date Sent:** 10/12/2005 09:09:49 CDT  
**Date Received:** 10/12/2005 09:11:11 CDT

---

Email: Barrettwalker@mac.com

FirstName: Barrett

LastName: Walker

Address1:

Address2:

City:

State:

zipcode:

Question1: Current price supports and subsidies encourage farmers to grow crops when they do not have a true competitive advantage compared to foreign competition. Farming is by nature a risky business, but farming marginal land that is unprofitable without the support of subsidies only increases the long-term risk. When entrepreneurs see a business opportunity they generally respond. With energy prices rising, USDA should focus research on three areas: 1) Growing biomass fuels that produce net energy and environmental benefits 2) Creating markets for environmental services and 3) Paying farmers to restore land so that it produces measurable and marketable environmental benefits.

For example, in the arid West ranchers purchase grazing rights on public land at below market rates. This lowers the price that ranchers owning high quality land can charge for forage because they are competing with subsidized grazing. At the same time grazing livestock on arid, or easily eroded, public lands competes with wildlife and damages watersheds. USDA should end environmentally damaging subsidies like below cost grazing. These subsidies have the unintended consequence of harming farmers who own the best quality land. The result is that farmers on some of the best bottom land can not make a decent living and sell to developers. This bids up the price of high quality land.

Question2: Because trade negotiations and growing budget deficits will force a reduction in current subsidies, USDA should shift its research into determining ways farmers can provide environmental benefits. In the U.S. food is relatively abundant while environmental services are becoming increasingly scarce. The problem is that environmental services are seldom priced in the marketplace, but this is changing. USDA research could lead to programs that pay landowners for measurable benefits, such as recovery of endangered species, carbon sequestration, and watershed protection. Payment for environmental services is allowed under trade rules.

Question3: Shift from paying for the production of food to paying for the provision of environmental benefits.

Question4: Agricultural subsidies and price supports should be rapidly phased out in favor of payments for providing measurable environmental benefits such as: ecosystem services and habitat for endangered species.

To be effective and attract public support the program will need to compensate landowners based on scientific measurements of environmental benefits. With objective performance measurements, the Dept. of Agriculture will be able to show how payments for environmental protection produce benefits. For example, in order to reduce damage from flooding it may be more effective to restore wetlands than build levees or other engineered structures.

Question5:

Question6: