Science Societies

Advancing resilient agriculture

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Photo by Paramveer Singh.

Over the past several years, there has been a rapidly increasing focus on agriculture as a climate solution. Uniquely positioned at the interface of climate, agriculture, and the environment, ASA, CSSA, and SSSA members have significant expertise and experience that can help shape climate-smart policies. In the spring of 2021, the science policy committees of ASA, CSSA, and SSSA formed a Climate Task Force. Over the next several months, the Task Force and Science Policy Office staff worked to develop a climate change position statement that would reflect the Societies' goals, recognize members' scientific contributions, and acknowledge the unique perspectives of certified professional advisers like CCAs.

With input and review from the science policy committees, the resulting position statement, *Advancing Resilient Agriculture: Recommendations to Address Climate Change*, was approved by all three Society boards of directors in July. The statement outlines concrete actions that policymakers can take right now to help U.S. agriculture mitigate climate change and adapt to its effects.

"Our recommendations are an important contribution to the ongoing climate policy discussion," says ASA, CSSA, and SSSA Director of Government Relations, Karl Anderson. "They highlight the importance of science and data to drive ecosystem services and connect the dots to professional agronomists and extension specialists who ultimately can help producers implement science-based strategies."

Our recommendations are an important contribution to the ongoing climate policy discussion

The statement provides recommendations under seven categories: agricultural practices, data, research, food system resilience, communication and outreach, diversity, and collaboration. The document emphasizes that while science provides proven strategies to bring balance and resilience to agricultural ecosystems, there is no single practice, no magic bullet, that applies to every farm. What is needed are collections of practices tailored for each region, climate, soil type, and farming system.

An Important Tool

“Agricultural systems are an important tool in addressing climate change,” says Dr. Diane Rowland, CSSA member and dean of College of Natural Sciences, Forestry, and Agriculture at the University of Maine. “Agricultural lands directly interface with and impact natural systems, both positively and negatively. It’s a continuum. Certainly, natural systems are important, but agricultural systems provide a unique opportunity to purposely manage for enhanced climate mitigation and adaptation,” she says.

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The statement is intended to inform the Societies' work with policymakers in Congress, the administration, and federal agencies. It will also be a valuable tool when partnering with organizations and agricultural stakeholders who are engaging in climate action.

As a CCA, Betsy Bower points out that science will only get us part of the way there. "As this document describes, communication is central," she says. "As Certified Crop Advisers advise farmers and other customers on climate-smart crop production practices, we will need to know what has been learned and what is on the horizon, and we will need to [work with] with federal partners and non-governmental organizations like The Nature Conservancy and local Soil and Water Conservation Districts to translate research to practice."

Continued Engagement from Members Needed

While this statement is an important step to make sure the Societies are at the climate table, it is by no means all encompassing. To facilitate continued dialogue, the Societies are asking for your input on issues that are not included in the statement but should be addressed. See the thread in the Grand Challenge Discussion Board to provide input.

There is still considerable work to be done in this area, and we will need continued engagement from Society members like you to make meaningful policy changes. ASA, CSSA, and SSSA members and certified professionals have a critical role to play in formulating policies that will drive climate solutions. Read the full statement on p. 38 of this issue or online at **www.agronomy.org/science-policy/issues/climate-change**.

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