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**Letter In Science Urges Support for Unleashing the Power of Ag Data**  
Diverse Leaders Recommend Passage of Farm Bill with Ag Data Provisions

*Washington, DC, Oct. 29, 2018* – Agricultural data has the power to unlock solutions to conserve natural resources and improve farmer success, 16 diverse agriculture leaders asserted in a [Letter](#) published in *Science*.

“Pollution mitigation and economic growth are not mutually exclusive, but better data analytics and the use of existing data are necessary to bridge the gap,” the Letter states.

The authors are urging the passage of the Agriculture Data Act of 2018. The bill, introduced by Senators John Thune (R-SD) and Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), directs the U.S. Department of Agriculture to strengthen agricultural data management to improve data interoperability and better enable research, while protecting data privacy. The key provisions are included in the Senate-passed farm bill.

“This would unlock enormous opportunities for data-driven scientific discovery that will eventually lead to better conservation outcomes,” the Letter states.

Momentum is building behind the bipartisan effort to utilize ag data to benefit farmers and the environment. Earlier this year, 23 producers, national and state commodity groups, supply chain companies, and environmental and conservation groups signed a [letter](#) to U.S. Senate Agriculture Committee Chairman Pat Roberts (R-KS) and Ranking Member Debbie Stabenow (D-MI), and U.S. House Agriculture Committee Chairman Michael Conaway (R-TX) and Ranking Member Collin Peterson (D-MN) urging them to pass the Ag Data Act.

The *Science* Letter states that the legislation would address problems with fragmented data collection and management by USDA. It would also increase understanding about how on-farm conservation practices impact farm and ranch profitability, soil health, water quality, crop yields and risk. The bill allows USDA to utilize existing data to support research and analysis to strengthen the crop insurance program.

AGree has hosted a discussion series this fall to highlight the potential for big data to help small farmers, among other topics. A webinar recording of the latest discussion can be viewed [here](#). A discussion series event on November 8 will explore innovations in agriculture data collection, management, and analysis. More information and registration can be found [here](#).

“The proposed Agriculture Data Act of 2018 ensures the protection of private data while unleashing the power of data that is currently siloed by the federal government. We encourage its passage,” the 16 signers of the Letter in *Science* stated. They are: Joshua D. Woodard, Associate Professor at Cornell University; Bruce J. Sherrick, Professor at University of Illinois at Urbana, Champaign; Deborah M. Atwood, Executive Director of AGree; Robert Blair, Owner of Three Canyon Farms, Idaho; Greg Fogel, Policy Director for the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition; Nicholas Goeser, Vice President of Production and Sustainability for the National Corn Growers Association; Barry Gold, Director of the Environment Program at the Walton Family Foundation; Josette Lewis, Associate Vice President for Ecosystems at Environmental Defense Fund; Carl Mattson, Owner at George Mattson Farms, Montana; Jim Moseley, Co-Chair of AGree; Collin O’Mara, CEO of the National Wildlife Federation; John Piotti, President of American Farmland Trust; Bill Salas, President of Applied GeoSolutions; Lynn Scarlett, Co-Chief External Affairs Officer at The Nature Conservancy; Kristin Weeks Duncanson, Owner of Highland Family Farms, Minnesota; and Fred Yoder, Co-Chair of the North American Climate Smart Agriculture Alliance.

The Agriculture Data Act of 2018 builds upon recommendations developed by AGree’s [Conservation and Crop Insurance Task Force](#) (Task Force), a group of leading researchers, academics, former USDA leaders, producers, and representatives from farm-based and environmental NGOs. The task force has worked since 2013 to develop innovative strategies to remove roadblocks and increase adoption of conservation practices through federal crop insurance and conservation programs.

*More information about the Task Force can be found [here](#).*

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