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## ENVIRONMENTAL AND ENERGY STUDY INSTITUTE

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# BRIEFING NOTICE

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### **Bioenergy in the Farm Bill: Policy Options for Conservation** **3:00pm-4:30pm, March 8, 2007** **538 Dirksen Senate Office Building**

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The Environmental and Energy Study Institute invites you to join us for *Bioenergy in the Farm Bill: Policy Options for Conservation* a briefing on the environmentally sound production of bioenergy feedstocks. The current challenge is to ensure that clean, sustainable renewable energy from biomass becomes an integral part of agriculture policy, to decrease U.S. reliance on oil, protect the climate, create economic development, enhance public health, and improve air and water quality. The rapid increase in production of biomass for renewable energy has many stakeholders concerned that this growing industry could have unintended consequences – possibly damaging water, air, soil quality and wildlife habitat. How will the next farm bill shape energy and conservation policy to optimize all of the possible benefits?

Existing conservation programs, such as the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and the Conservation Security Program (CSP), as well as the possibility of new conservation programs, have been suggested as opportunities to further the production of bioenergy feedstocks. If biomass for energy is included in any conservation program, advocates argue that it is essential that such a program employ sustainable agriculture practices.

#### **Speakers:**

- **Brendan Jordan**, Biomass Program Manager at the Great Plains Institute
- **Loni Kemp**, Senior Policy Analyst at The Minnesota Project
- **Julie Sibbing**, Senior Program Manager for Agriculture and Wetlands Policy at the National Wildlife Federation

Bioenergy policy will be influenced by fundamental agriculture issues including competition for land and natural resource protection. Competition for land is a complicated issue that stems from the different uses of land for food, feed, fiber and now fuel. The ability for biomass to add value to traditionally undervalued crops and the land on which they grow may be where energy production has the biggest impact, because in many areas, the threat of encroachment by housing developments and strip malls on agriculture land is the prevailing concern. The opportunity for biomass production to enhance soil quality and to contribute to wildlife habitat is much greater than compared with conventional agriculture, fossil fuel production and consumption, or urban sprawl.

After years of static agriculture policy, energy production provides a great opportunity to change the face of the agriculture industry. The inclusion of renewable energy from biomass in this industry could not have come at a better time. Significant budget restraints, pressures to encourage free trade, climate protection and calls to reduce our imports of foreign oil prove to be huge challenges to overcome – but agriculture and renewable energy policy could turn challenges into opportunities.

**This briefing is open to the public and no reservations are required. Please feel free to forward this notice.**

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