



Exploring integrated solutions from the land for addressing food and energy production, economic development, biological diversity and climate change challenges.



## Gaesser, Shea Share Growth of Climate Smart Ag During Panel at COP 25

Farmers have always been actively engaged in the effort to proactively address climate change challenges. But the climate solutions and other steps the sector has taken to meet [sustainable development goals](#) (SDGs) remain undervalued, Solutions from the Land (SfL) leaders said during a [panel](#) at the UN climate talks in Madrid Saturday.

SfL Steering Committee member Ray Gaesser, an Iowa corn and soybean producer, and SfL President Ernie Shea appeared on the panel, which focused on climate change and the agriculture sector. They spoke of the role farmers are playing in addressing climate change, sharing with those attending the U.S. Climate Action forum the climate smart agriculture (CSA) initiatives being undertaken at the state and national level.



SfL leaders Ray Gaesser (second from left) and Ernie Shea (second from right) share CSA strategies during panel at global talks in Madrid.

American farmers, ranchers and forestland owners are innovators, continually adapting to the increasing challenges of climate change impacts, like droughts, floods, record high temperatures,

and wildfires, the SfL leaders said. Those who work the land are also uniquely positioned to lead on climate solutions by providing renewable energy, keeping our water clean, storing carbon in the ground, and feeding a growing population.

Shea shared the work being done by SfL to promote the role of CSA in statewide projects around the United States. Efforts in Ohio, Florida and Iowa, among others, aim to ensure farms, ranches and forestlands sustainably produce food, feed, fiber, energy and ecosystems services; enhance climate resilience; reduce and sequester greenhouse gas emissions; and contribute high value solutions to sustainable development goals.

However, Shea warned that enabling policies are needed to incentivize the solutions that the sector can deliver.

Shea also made clear that enabling policies must be developed in a way that recognizes there is no "silver bullet" solution to the challenges a changing climate can pose and that they reflect the reality that working lands are complex natural systems that cannot be managed "in silos."

"No one size policy solution can fit all of the challenges we face," he told the panel audience.

Gaesser noted the significance of the topic of the panel discussion, recalling that in previous years, agriculture has been cited as a problem contributing to climate change. But the conversation now, he says, is focused on the solutions the sector can bring to meeting the challenge.

Farmers, he said, are well aware of the changes the climate is undergoing, and have used the tools they have had available to meet those challenge. But those tools must be constantly widened and improved to remain effective.

Gaesser cited his own operation's efforts to retain soil quality for more than 20 years through no-till practices. But he said recent years have brought with them deluges that have often dropped more than four inches of rain in less than an hour, wiping out terracing and other steps taken to hold the soil in place. Those torrential experiences have now prompted him and other farmers to grow cover crops to better hold the integrity of the soil.

"We create new and better (climate mitigation) tools all of the time," Gaesser said.

Shea told the panel audience that SfL seeks to achieve "by 2030 farms, ranches and forests across the world are going to be recognized, valued and compensated for all of the goods and services they deliver."

The SfL president said that in addition to food and fiber, these landscapes also produce clean energy (biofuels and wind- and solar-generated power, as examples), they filter and store water, and they enhance biodiversity.

"What's really exciting," Shea said, "is that when we farm with economically viable and sustainable practices, we're also providing solutions to the climate crisis. We're sinking carbon in

the ground. We're producing clean, alternative transportation fuels," including regeneratively produced, low-carbon biofuels that are 39-70 percent less greenhouse-gas intensive than petroleum-based gasoline

Both SfL speakers acknowledged the political sensitivity in the U.S. agriculture sector about climate change, but they say it is important to engage the issue of the increasingly unpredictable weather and growing conditions through the lens of sustainability.

They said promoting climate smart agriculture has been key to conveying to farmers that they are at the forefront in making all climate-related decisions.

Shea said his organization works with farmers to develop the most economically viable systems that meet their needs to make a living and provide for their families, but at the same time, provide the very important, climate-related benefits.

In response to a question by an audience member, Gaesser defended the efficacy of ethanol in combating a changing climate and went on to cite the "circle of life" that characterizes his operation.

"All of our corn goes to creating ethanol, which is a much cleaner fuel than what we take up from the ground," he said. "It's about producing from the air and the water and the sun that we have. We're taking that corn to our ethanol plant to produce the cleaner fuel that you use."

Furthermore, "the proteins that come from that distilling process is brought back to feed the animals in our area. We use the waste from those animals to feed the new crop. It's a great circle of life," Gaesser said.

The panel also featured Tim Dwight, of the Iowa Solar Energy Trade Association; Noah Walker, of Indigo Carbon; and Lauren Wolahan, who is with the panel's host, Climate Nexus, a non-profit organization formed to promote solutions to climate change.

The farmer panel was among a series being held in Madrid by the U.S. Climate Action Center, an alliance of U.S. cities, states, tribes, businesses, faith groups, universities and others operating under the premise "We Are Still In" and intent on preserving a U.S. role in finding solutions to the growing threat of a changing climate.

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*For additional information, contact SfL President Ernie Shea at 410-952-0123.*

***Solutions from the Land (SfL)*** is a non-profit entity focused on land-based solutions to global challenges. SfL identifies and facilitates the implementation of integrated policies, practices and projects at a landscape scale that will result in land being sustainably managed to produce food, feed, fiber and energy, while enhancing biodiversity, protecting and improving critical environmental resources and delivering high value solutions to combat climate change. For more on ***Solutions from the Land***, click [HERE](#).