
F.L.O.R.A. - Forest Life Organic Rejuvenation Act

A policy designed to re-plant native trees and grasses to improve our climate

ISSUE

Deforestation directly impacts global warming. Nearly every day forests are destroyed by burning or cutting them down for reasons like logging, agriculture, and other human activity; an estimated 1 billion acres of forest have disappeared since 1990. This form of man-made destruction releases large quantities of Co^2 into the atmosphere, not only through the trees, but through the transportation they use to haul logs/cut down trees. The United States is leading in the world by far, on Co^2 emissions due to transportation. For the past 3 years the U.S. has emitted roughly 4 to 6 billion metric tons of carbon dioxide.

In nearly every state the natural ecosystem, like the Missouri grasslands/prairies have been diminished, only a glimpse of what was native remains. This is due to deforestation as well as a process called desertification, which over time has made this previously fertile land into a desert like state. Desertification is a hard process to reverse, however, the restoration of these native trees and grasses would greatly alleviate Co^2 emission. In fact, C-4 grasses, and trees that are broad-leaved like maple, oak, and beech attract and sequester (or remove) Co^2 emissions from the environment. This means that an acre of trees can absorb 2.6 tons of Co^2 , which is about 48 pounds per tree, per year.

POLICY SOLUTION

Acres of land owned by farmers around the United States have the potential to help slow down global warming, climate change and reduce Co^2 emissions. FLORA will allow farmers around the country access and funding to work with their state conservation to plant trees and grasses native to their area, along with other diverse native species. Working with state conservation agencies will help to avoid the implementation of invasive species. FLORA is focused mainly on planting a large number of trees in the East and West, as well as native grasses in the Midwest, where they are needed the most.

FLORA and the partnerships between farmers, the states, and the federal government could turn United States farmland and unusable barren acres into a type of Agroforestry Farming System. This may sound like a lot of work to implement, however, in the long run agroforestry has many outstanding benefits. Silvopastoral agroforestry involves planting trees, grasses and

grazing livestock on the same land, which creates the potential to turn barren unusable land into working farm land, through fertilization and the resulting reversal of desertification. Forests and grasslands will be slowly rejuvenated, helping not only humans but also other wildlife and even the water quality.

To implement FLORA, the U.S. government would have to re-prioritize funding by taking part of the existing federal annual budget and granting it to the efforts of the policy, or by modernizing the Reforestation Trust Fund used to fund the REPLANT Act. The rough estimate of the budget needed to fund 500,000 acres would be 125 million US dollars. This would allow 50 trees or native grasses to be sown per acre, so for 500,000 acres, 25 million trees or native grasses would be implemented. FLORA, as a bipartisan policy, not only helps the environment reduce carbon emissions, but it will also create a lot of jobs, especially in the agricultural industry, similar to the jobs created by the REPLANT Act of 2021.