

Farm Bill Update July 31, 2007

House Passes Farm Bill 231-191

THANK YOU to everyone who has supported healthy food and communities during the House Farm Bill process! After less than 24 hours of debate and amendments, the “Farm, Nutrition and Energy Act of 2007” (H.R. 2419), also known as the Farm Bill, passed the House on Friday July 27, with a vote of 231 to 191 more or less on party lines. Although we did not achieve all we had hoped for out of the House bill, there were a number of important wins in the form of new provisions included. The House Agriculture Appropriations bill will be hitting the floor this morning, July 31. Our next update will include information for advocacy needed in states and districts during the August Recess as the Farm Bill continues to move forward into the fall.

CFSC Top Priorities in the House Farm Bill:

- **Community Food Projects-** An amendment for mandatory funding for Community Food Projects submitted by Blumenauer (D-OR) was not accepted by the Rules Committee and was not allowed to be offered on the floor, and mandatory funding did not make it into the version of the Farm Bill that passed the House. This is unfortunate, but means that we will need to work harder to push for funding in the Senate and in the House and Senate Appropriations Bills, coming up tomorrow and next month, respectively.
- **Healthy Food (Urban) Enterprise Development Program (HFUED):** The loan portion of what was formerly called the Healthy Food Enterprise Development was adopted as an amendment (by Rep. Gillibrand (D-NY) to the Rural Development Title in the Agriculture Committee's Farm Bill and was included in the bill that passed in the House. The grant portion of the program was included in the Horticulture & Organic Title of the "Manager's Amendment," an amendment by the Chairperson of the Committee (which almost always passes), as the "Healthy Food Urban Enterprise Development" Program (HFUED).
- **Geographic Preference/Local Procurement:** An amendment offered by Rep. Steve Kagen (D-WI) to clarify previous language allowing schools to use a geographic preference to request local food in all federally-funded child nutrition programs was adopted by the House Agriculture Committee in its bill and included in the bill passed in the House.

Summary of House Farm Bill: Despite what the House Agriculture Committee and Democratic Leadership have said, meaningful commodity reform was not included in the House Farm Bill, with only token changes to Title I (Commodity Title). As the main story turned from commodity reform to a partisan battle over tax-based funding for increases in the Nutrition title (mainly for food stamp and emergency food provisions), Rep. Kind (D-WI) introduced the Fairness in Farm and Food Policy Amendment, which was defeated 117-309. Reps. Ryan (R-WI) and Blumenauer (D-OR) submitted an amendment for meaningful payment limits similar to the Dorgan-Grassley bill in the Senate, but it was rejected by the Rules Committee and couldn't be offered on the House floor. A more in-depth analysis about the nature of changes that were made to the Commodity Title can be found in the following blog posts: <http://www.cfra.org/blog/2007/07/17/not-reform> or <http://www.cfra.org/node/563> or at the Sustainable Agriculture Coalitions weekly updates (www.sustainableagriculturecoalition.org <<http://www.sustainableagriculturecoalition.org>>), in their Legislative Action section.

The partisan nature of the debate and final vote were due to the closing of a tax loophole for foreign-owned companies, which funded the needed \$4 billion increase in food stamp provisions by increasing the deductions and the minimum benefits. Needed increases in funding for the Conservation Security Program (CSP) were not included in the House Farm Bill, which is expected to be the source of tension between this House Bill and that crafted by Senate Ag Committee Chairman Tom Harkin (D-IA), considered by many as the champion of CSP.

Other Healthy Food and Communities Provisions:

- **Urban Agriculture-** An amendment by Rep. William Lacy Clay (D-MO), which would create a grant program to assist in purchasing operating organic gardens or greenhouses in urban areas for growing fruits and vegetables, was adopted via Peterson's en bloc amendment on the floor and included in the bill that passed the House.
- **Farmers Market Promotion Program-** received \$25 million over the next 5 years -- \$5 million for each of the first 3 years, and then \$10 million the last 2 years, in mandatory money with 10% to be used for EBT promotion and technology. It was also renamed the Farmers Marketing Assistance Program and the activities under it were outlined more specifically.
- **Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program** – received \$15 million annual mandatory funds and additional discretionary funds increasing each year of the bill up to \$75 million in 2012.
- **FSNE (Food Stamp Nutrition Education Program)-** a “Sense of the Congress” in support of public health approaches being used as part of FSNE was adopted in the Committee bill and maintained in the bill that passed the House. An additional amendment by Jean Schmidt (R-OH) was adopted, that would require the USDA to create uniform standards for evaluation of FSNE programs across states, and remained in the bill that passed in the House.
- **Fruit and Vegetable Snack program-**In the Manager's amendment, the mandatory funding for the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable (Snack) Program was increased to \$70 million per year and to include 35 schools in each of 50 states.
- **Organic Research-** In the Managers Amendment, organic research was extended at \$25 million in mandatory funding per year.
- **Country of Origin Labeling (COOL)** for meat and fresh produce was included in the Farm Bill with a compromise 3-tier system to account for products of mixed origin.
- **State-Inspected Meat-** A provision allowing the interstate shipment of state-inspected meat if the state inspection meets or exceeds USDA standards was included in the final bill that passed in the House.
- **Pre-emption Provision** – A provision included earlier in the Livestock title, that would have prohibited states and localities from banning the commercial use of USDA-inspected or non-regulated products, and thus effectively could have acted as a preemption for many local and state prohibitions (on GMOs, for example), was removed from the final Bill.
- **Local Procurement-** An amendment by Jack Welch (D-VT) to encourage schools to create plans for procurement of local foods for the Fruit and Vegetable Program was adopted via Peterson's en bloc amendment on the floor and included in the bill that passed the House.
- **Pigford Claims-** The manager's amendment includes a provision that would allow people who met criteria in this case (black farmers who were discriminated against by USDA) but were denied a way to appeal their status in this case.
- **Diversity Provisions** – Several other diversity provisions were included in the final version of the Bill, including a Farmworker Coordinator, an oversight office regarding Civil rights, and other provisions for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers included in the FFRP and other conservation programs.

- **Food Deserts and Food Access:** The Manager's Amendment Includes a "Sense of Congress Regarding Food Deserts, Geographically Isolated Neighborhoods and Communities with Limited or No Access to Major Chain Grocery Stores"- The "Manager's Amendment" includes a provision recommending that the NIH, CDC, IOM and faith-based organizations assess the existence of food deserts and develop recommendations to eliminate them.

Senate Outlook

- **Timing for the Senate:** The Senate Agriculture Committee is not expected to release its draft of the Farm Bill until after August Recess and Labor Day. We will be communicating about new target offices in the Senate and pressure needed on Senators and Members of Congress with whom we already have strong connections.
- Last week, Senators Dick Durbin (D-IL) and Sherrod Brown (D-OH) proposed a major change to the Commodity Title that would replace current price-support programs and ad hoc disaster programs with a permanent revenue protection system.

Media

Dunn County News Op-ed by Senator Russ Feingold (D-WI) link:

<http://www.dunnconnect.com/articles/2007/07/16/agriculture/ag01.txt?tr=y&auid=2860095>

Denver Post Editorial link: http://www.denverpost.com/opinion/ci_6463816

Kalamazoo Gazette link: <http://www.mlive.com/kalamazoo/stories/index.ssf?/base/columns-3/1185078280232600.xml&coll=7>

Thanks for all of your support thus far and as we continue to move forward.

Warmly,
Steph & Aliza