

Farm Bill Update 07.16.07
Contact Your Members of Congress-
Money Needed for Healthy Food in the Farm Bill

As Farm Bill debate heats up, we urge you to contact your Representative and Senators and recommend that they support a Farm Bill with increased funding for healthy food and communities provisions. For many of the issues, the target is funding, and Members of Congress on the Ways & Means (House) and Finance (Senate) Committees as well as Democratic Leadership (Speaker, Majority Leaders) are key to ensuring that funding is found for healthy food and farm provisions in the Farm Bill.

The debate has become increasingly polarized over the past 6 months. The “reformers” want moderate to extreme reductions in payments for specific farm commodities (corn, rice, wheat, cotton, soy and several others) in order to pay for increases in nutrition and conservation. The “extenders” who want to maintain the status quo for these payments. An extension of the 2002 Farm Bill would mean everyone—low-income communities, environment and small farmers—taking a hit. While those pushing for commodity reform may have an important message, the cost in votes to the nutrition, conservation and rural development parts of the Farm Bill may be too great if no consensus on the Farm Bill is reached by the deadline –Sept 30, 2007.

The next three weeks are critical as both houses of Congress work to craft and fund the next 5+ years of U.S. food and farm policy. Congress has heard from many constituent groups but needs more input from citizens the health of our communities and small, sustainable farms. **Your legislators need to hear YOUR VOICE! Please call them TODAY, below are some talking points to use.** If you don't know your legislator's number, call the Capital Switchboard at 202-224-3121.

Requests for CFSC Priorities

- For **Community Food Projects**, Members of Congress, on and off the Ag Committee, are urged to support the \$30 million funding level **in MANDATORY** spending.
- Though the jurisdictional issue with the House Education & Labor Committee has been resolved, members of the House Agriculture Committee should be urged to support an **amendment**, to be offered by Congressman Kagen (D-WI), inserting brief language, **clarifying the local procurement issue**, into the House draft bill.
- Members of Congress, on and off the Ag Committee, should be urged to support the no-cost request for the **Healthy Food Enterprise Development Program** language to be included in the House & Senate draft bills.

Timing Update

- House Agriculture begins debating and amending Draft Bill: July 17
- House Floor Farm Bill debate and vote may be as early as July 30
- House Agriculture Appropriations meets July 18 on draft fiscal year '08 bill
- Senate likely to postpone Agriculture Committee vote until September

Food Security in the Media

- **Sacramento Bee link:** <http://www.sacbee.com/110/story/272049.html>
- **San Jose Mercury News link:** http://www.mercurynews.com/opinion/ci_6355675

Other Media:

- **Washington Post link:** <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/07/13/AR2007071301930.html>

Other Farm Bill News

- Timing in the Senate is not firm because Chairman Harkin and Senate offices have expressed that the full Committee draft of the bill will likely not be released in July if there isn't time for floor debate until September. In both the House and Senate, Ag committee offices have expressed a reluctance to let the Committee draft sit in public for a month before going to the floor, since this greater amount of time would allow critics to find more changes to make to the Committee draft.
- Since neither Agriculture Committee has expressed an interest in funding increases in nutrition or conservation through commodity reform, the debate has moved to the search for offsets, or sources of funding outside of the Agriculture committee. Both Agriculture Committees have begun requesting offset sources for the nutrition, conservation and fruit and vegetable provisions in the "En Bloc Amendment" or Farm Bill 2, from the Ways & Means and Finance Committee Chairmen Rangel (D-NY) and Baucus (D-MT), in the House and Senate respectively.
- Speaker Pelosi and other members of the House Democratic Leadership have joined forces with Peterson and Ag Committee Democrats to find funding for these common priorities. In order to avoid an ugly situation on the House floor with many amendments and disagreements, Pelosi has told Peterson that a moderate amount of commodity reform is necessary in order to craft a politically acceptable bill. Peterson has sent several small measures of commodity reform to the Congressional Budget Office, that would close several of a larger number of loopholes that farmers can use to increase individual commodity payments.
- Meanwhile, in response to Republican announcements that an extension of the 2002 Farm Bill seems likely, in Friday's Congress Daily, Chairman Peterson stated that this may be simply a strategy by Republicans to prevent any bills from passing this Congress.
- Congressmen Pomeroy (D-ND) and Berry (D-AS) have been drafted as Farm Bill whips for when the bill reaches the floor.
- Despite the fact that most House Ag Committees have banded together to support the maintenance of most farm subsidy policy, in order to prevent increases in support for Rep. Kind (D-WI)'s reform bill when it's proposed on the floor, there remains disagreement within the Committee. According to Congress Daily on July 12, Rep. Cardoza (D-CA) is not satisfied with the \$685 million for specialty crops included in the House draft bill, and has stated he won't vote for the bill without increases for specialty crops, conservation and research that are based in real money rather than reserve funds, causing a rift between him and Chairman Peterson.
- Chairman Harkin has also discussed plans to write a 6 or 7 year Farm Bill, which would allow for greater offsets from savings to fund other Farm Bill priorities. Other potential strategies for saving money expressed by both Chairmen include delaying advance payments to farmers and finding minor savings from crop insurance.
- This afternoon, Congress Daily reported that Senators on the Agriculture Committee are reluctant to suggest specific offsets until after Harkin releases his commodity title, which is the only section of the unofficial Senate bill draft that has not been released to anyone.

If you are receiving this update from another list and would like to be added to the CFSC Farm Bill update list, please go to www.foodsecurity.org <<http://www.foodsecurity.org>> and submit your name.

Thanks for your support and for contacting your members of Congress!

Take care,
Steph & Aliza