

2018 Farm Bill Wins



Farm Safety Net

The Farm Bill makes a number of moderate improvements to the farm safety net. While it maintains Price Loss Coverage (PLC) reference prices, it establishes an “effective reference price” that would strengthen PLC and Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) if a commodity’s price remains high for multiple years. The bill also makes improvements to smooth county disparities in ARC, allows farmers to update their payment yields, and provides the opportunity to make an annual election for ARC and PLC.

Dairy Safety Net

The Farm Bill replaces the Dairy Margin Protection Program (MPP) with the similar Dairy Margin Coverage Program (DMC) and makes a number of improvements to make the dairy safety net more attractive for small and medium-sized dairies. The bill allows producers to use DMC and the Livestock Gross Margin Program (LGM) on the same production. Additionally, it allows producers to cover margins up to \$9.50 on their first five million pounds and it allows for the repayment of a portion of premiums paid for MPP over 2014-2017.

Conservation

The bill increases Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acreage to 27 million by 2023 and places common sense limits on rental payments. It also clarifies emergency haying and grazing designations, providing more consistency for farmers and ranchers in drought-stricken areas. It also establishes a Soil Health and Income Protection Program pilot, giving farmers and ranchers a short-term, flexible land idling option.

Working Lands

While the final bill reduces overall funding for the Environment Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), it maintains and improves each program. The bill authorizes a supplemental payment for advanced grazing management within CSP and ensures that supplemental payments for grazing management and resource-conserving crop rotations pay at least 150% of the practice cost. It also authorizes a conservation planning assessment within EQIP, creating a gateway to conservation.

Climate Change

The bill expands the purposes of CSP and EQIP to include weather volatility mitigation and adaptation, leveraging both programs in farmers’ and ranchers’ fight against the effects of a changing climate. It also establishes a Carbon Utilization Education Program that aims to expand opportunities for family farmers and ranchers to divert on-farm wastes into renewable energy production.



Diverse Markets

The Farm Bill preserves the funding and structure of existing programs that expand access to local and value-added markets. It preserves the Farmers Market Promotion Program (FMPP), the Local Foods Promotion Program (LFPP) and the Value Added Producer Grants program (VAPG) under the new Local Agricultural Markets Program (LAMP). LAMP has permanent baseline funding and provides additional funding for food safety cost share and regional initiatives.

Organics

The Farm Bill preserves the National Organic Certification Cost-Share Program (NOCCSP), providing \$24 million in new funding and rolling over another \$16.5 million from the previous farm bill. It also reauthorizes the Agricultural Management Assistance program, which, among other purposes, provides organic certification cost-share.

Farm Stress

As the declining farm economy drives increasing stress in farm country, the Farm Bill reauthorizes the Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network (FRSAN). FRSAN will provide funding for helplines and websites, training for farm advocates, support groups, outreach, and home delivery of assistance in an effort to better support farmers, ranchers, and farm-workers in tough times. The bill also reauthorizes the State Agricultural Mediation Program and expands its uses to include farm transitions, farmer-neighbor disputes and organic disputes.

Opioid Misuse

The Farm Bill leverages existing Rural Development programs to help rural communities better address the challenges associated with the opioid epidemic. It establishes a set-aside within the Distance Learning and Telemedicine (DLT) program for opioid treatment services. Additionally, the bill grants priority to opioid prevention, treatment and recovery within the Community Facilities Direct Loan and Grant program and the Rural Health and Safety Education Competitive Grants program.

New Farmers

The bill provides permanent funding for the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BFRDP) and the “2501” program for socially disadvantaged, veteran, and beginning farmers and ranchers through the new Farming Opportunities Training and Outreach (FOTO) program. It also establishes a Beginning Farmer and Rancher Coordinator at the national level and in each state.