

Farm Bill Clears U.S. House; Senate Could Discuss, Vote Next Week

Friday, June 22, 2018

By Mary Jane Buerkle

The U.S. House of Representatives narrowly passed their version of the Farm Bill – H.R. 2, the Agriculture and Nutrition Act of 2018 – on Thursday by a vote of 213-211.

“This Farm Bill helps preserve the future of not only our family farms, but our entire industry,” PCG President Stacy Smith, a grower from New Home, said. “Our cotton producers know what it’s like to operate without that safety net, and we need that stability and for our nation’s agriculture to be strong and viable so we can continue to produce food, fiber and fuel for the future.”

Smith noted that every Republican Member of the House from Texas voted for the bill, and he expressed gratitude to them and to everyone who helped develop and support the legislation. He conveyed PCG’s appreciation to the House Agriculture Committee, Chairman Mike Conaway, House Rules Committee Chairman Pete Sessions, and PCG-area members Rep. Jodey Arrington and Rep. Mac Thornberry.

“We appreciate our friends in Congress, especially the House Agriculture Committee, who have been steadfast in their support and understanding of our needs,” Smith said.

HAC Chairman Conaway said in a news release, “Today’s vote was about keeping faith with the men and women of rural America and about the enduring promise of the dignity of a day’s work. It was about providing certainty to farmers and ranchers who have been struggling under the weight of a five-year recession and about providing our neighbors in need with more than just a hand out, but a hand up. I’m proud of what this body has accomplished, and now look forward to working with the Senate and the president to deliver a farm bill on time to the American people.”

Now all eyes turn toward the Senate, whose Agriculture Committee passed their version of the Farm Bill last week. The bill could see floor time as early as next week, although there are several harmful amendments that PCG will oppose and target for defeat. Should the Senate pass their bill, the next stop is a conference committee where the House and Senate will work toward an agreement on the final version. If all goes smoothly, a vote on final passage could happen before the 2014 Farm Bill’s expiration at the end of September, but some political observers say a vote could come after the November elections.

“We look forward to continuing our work with the Senate, defeating harmful amendments, and moving this bill across the finish line,” PCG’s Smith said.

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Our View: They’re Baaaack...and They’re Still Wrong

Friday, June 8, 2018

From Farm Policy Facts

It’s been a lively Farm Bill season, with a slew of anti-farmer amendments going down in flames. But one of farm policy’s most vocal opponents has been conspicuously quiet...until now.

The Environmental Working Group came roaring back this week with a new “study” that – true to form – breaks no new ground and is largely a recycling of old irrelevant data.

EWG essentially re-released their “farm subsidy database,” which is designed to publicly shame farmers for using farm policy to manage the unique risks they face. And EWG’s big conclusion is that farmers receive aid from the USDA, and some have seen farm policy benefits for 32 years.

That’s not news. It’s the law, and it has been the law since the 1860s when USDA came into existence.

And as a result, the U.S. is home to the most diverse and most dynamic agricultural sector in the world. Its support of farm families is minuscule compared to other developed countries. And U.S. consumers enjoy the most affordable food supply in the history of the world.

No one should be surprised that some multi-generational farms have received assistance of varying degrees for the last 32 years – including the conservation assistance that EWG favors.

And it shouldn’t be a point of criticism. That farms have survived the natural disasters and down markets of the past three decades is a testament to the endurance of farm families and the benefits of stable farm policy.

Instead of applauding this endurance, EWG throws out big, misleading numbers to try to shade the impressions of non-farm audiences (that’s why they added up more than 30 years of data). However, even EWG’s numbers are small in comparison to the amount of money these farmers put at risk each year to make a crop.

Based on USDA data over the same 32 years, for every \$1 in assistance a farmer received, he or she spent \$18 of their own money to make a crop, generating \$23 in sales.

To see how that really translates, let’s take a closer look at one farm that EWG attacked for seeing \$11 million in assistance over 32 years – that is \$344,000 per year and apparently was the biggest number EWG could find.

This same farm family would have put \$198 million of their own money on the line – that is \$6.2 million per year at risk in each crop. And, the new crops and economic activity out of this investment would’ve equaled \$256 million, or \$8 million per year on average.

Is that bad policy? We don’t think so, and clearly our nation’s leaders, since our country’s beginnings, have not thought so either.

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House Agriculture Committee Chairman Mike Conaway (R-TX) eloquently summed up the problem with EWG's analysis in an email to Farm Policy Facts:

"EWG likes to aggregate data to confuse the facts, but we all know that farm policy looks vastly different today than it did in 1985. After significant reforms made in 2014, farm policy now only kicks in when commodity prices are in the tank and farmers are losing significant amounts of money. Let's put things in perspective, farmers are expected to spend \$360 billion in production expenses this year alone to raise their crops and livestock. The \$5 billion in commodity program payments estimated this year is a pretty good investment for that kind of economic activity in rural America especially considering how far commodity prices have fallen."

The Chairman's point about farm policy changes is an important one. And EWG conveniently ignores the fact that farm policy costs are trending down as a result of these changes.

A good measure of this is the same model used above. As noted, over the 32-year period EWG cited, for every \$1 in taxpayer investment, farmers spent \$18 and generated \$23 of new crop sales. Over the last 10 years, that ratio has improved to \$1 of assistance for every \$28 in farmer expenses and \$35 in sales. And over the last 5 years, every dollar has yielded \$32 in farmer investment and \$41 worth of crops.

It's our view that farm critics like EWG should spend less time attacking rural America and more time figuring out how to achieve this kind of ROI on other federal programs.

Research & Promotion Program, also are encouraged to contact Verett at the PCG office in Lubbock to request additional information. PCG's telephone number is 806-792-4904.

To be a qualified producer nominee for the Cotton Board, an individual should be actively engaged in cotton production at the time of nomination, be committed to the mission of the Cotton Board and the Cotton Research and Promotion Program and have demonstrated leadership skills and experience.

"Whether it is a nomination to serve on the Cotton Board or appointment to a leadership position within the National Cotton Council or Cotton Incorporated, the membership of Plains Cotton Growers has proven to be fertile ground for leaders within our industry," Verett said. "Our industry owes much to the dedicated men and women who step forward to serve their fellow producers. We look forward to extending that tradition of leadership in the years ahead."

Editor's Note: The Cotton Board seeks to promote diversity and ensure equal opportunity and inclusion for all those who qualify for nomination and appointment to the Cotton Board regardless of race, ethnicity, sex, disability, socio-economic status, religion or sexual orientation.

Enrollment Open for Texas International Cotton School

Friday, June 22, 2018 From Texas International Cotton School
 Registration remains open through mid-July for the 38th session of the Texas International Cotton School, scheduled for August 6-16, 2018, in Lubbock.

The Texas International Cotton School (TICS) is uniquely structured to provide an integrated understanding of the Texas cotton industry and how it interacts with the global cotton/textile complex. Since its inception, the school has been a collaboration between the Texas cotton merchants who make up the Lubbock Cotton Exchange and the faculty and staff of the Fiber and Biopolymer Research Institute of Texas Tech University.

"Our planning committee works diligently to ensure that our curriculum not only includes the fundamentals of the cotton industry, but also examines the latest issues and advancements," Lubbock Cotton Exchange President John Aldinger said.

During the two weeks of the school, more than 30 experts from across the United States teach the students, who learn about the cotton marketing chain – including seed breeding, farm production, harvesting, ginning, warehousing, merchandising, and textile manufacturing. All aspects of U.S. and global trade of cotton are covered, so the students obtain an understanding of what is required to successfully participate in the U.S. cotton market and to deliver the cottons needed in diverse export markets. They learn about the important quality attributes of cotton fibers and how these translate into processing efficiency and textile product quality. Throughout the program, students have repeated opportunities to interact with the cotton merchants of the Lubbock Cotton Exchange and the fiber and textile experts of Texas Tech University.

For more information, including tuition and curriculum, visit <http://www.texasintl cottonschool.com>.

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Cotton Industry Seeks Volunteer Leaders

Friday, June 22, 2018

By Shawn Wade

The success of the High Plains cotton industry, like any group effort, is directly tied to the willingness of qualified individuals to volunteer to serve in various leadership positions. To identify these volunteers, the High Plains cotton industry caucuses each year with other cotton groups within Texas to identify producers interested in serving as a volunteer leader.

PCG encourages all qualified individuals interested in representing the High Plains as a representative to the Cotton Board, National Cotton Council, or Cotton Incorporated to contact PCG Executive Vice President Steve Verett for more information.

Each year, a variety of volunteer positions within the NCC and Cotton Incorporated are filled directly through the industry's caucus process. In addition to naming representatives to the NCC and Cotton Incorporated, PCG and the Texas cotton industry also work together to identify and nominate qualified individuals to the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture for possible appointment as a Member or Alternate on the Cotton Board.

Qualified individuals interested in serving on the Cotton Board, which oversees the highly successful U.S. Cotton

Editor's Note:

"Cotton News", a weekly service of Plains Cotton Growers to the cotton industry and news media in the 41-county High Plains area, is mailed from Lubbock each Friday. Its contents are confined to news items and comments pertaining to the High Plains cotton industry which is so vital to U.S. all. Anyone interested in making comments about the contents of this column can call 806-792-4904 or Email PCG at: editor@plainscotton.org