

AN OPEN LETTER TO CONGRESS ON THE FARM BILL

December 11, 2018

Dear Representatives and Senators,

We write on behalf of the millions of Americans we represent in all 50 states to urge you to reject a Farm Bill agreement that combines the worst elements of each bill while jettisoning the few incremental reforms that would have eliminated favors to special groups and industries. If lawmakers fail to come together to support meaningful reforms, especially to agricultural price support programs that are little more than corporate welfare masquerading as necessary aid, they should instead pass a one-year, clean extension and use such time to draft a new package.

The Farm Bill consistently stands out as one of Washington's worst offenders when it comes to overspending and corporate welfare. This year is no different, as it is filled with wasteful, duplicative, and unnecessary spending. The lack of much-needed reforms only reinforces the perception that Congress has no interest in restoring fiscal responsibility to Washington.

To be clear, there were efforts to make substantive reforms to farm business subsidies, and those efforts deserve recognition. Several champions stepped forward with amendments to significantly improve both the House and Senate bills, from reforming the sugar program to including common sense reforms recommended by the Trump administration. Indeed, until now, every bill since 2002 has moved incrementally toward a more market-based approach to the farm safety-net that better protects taxpayers and is more responsive toward the needs of farmers. This year, conferees refused to take the principled stands necessary to rein in spending and redefine the Farm Bill as a vehicle for true safety nets instead of a tool for parochial handouts.

We, the signatories, find the below provisions to be especially objectionable:

- Failing to focus farm programs on actual farmers. The agreement continues the practice of allowing so-called family farms to designate an unlimited number of individuals to receive subsidies for “actively managing” operations with no requirement they live or work on the farm.
- Dramatically expanding the pool of potential abusers of the active management loophole by adding all first cousins, nieces, and nephews to the farm subsidy family tree.
- Rejecting the Senate's common-sense step of prohibiting agricultural businesses achieving an adjusted gross income exceeding \$700K from receiving taxpayer subsidies
- Allowing agribusinesses to game the subsidy system by annually switching between the already vastly over budget ARC and PLC programs.
- Planting dozens of parochial provisions from grants to the National Sheep Industry Improvement Center, to failed biofuels programs, to an agricultural checkoff program for natural stone.
- Failing to implement reasonable reforms to the SNAP program, the most expensive part of the Farm Bill, that would have focused resources on those who most need them while helping put more Americans on the path to self-sufficiency.

To this point, the 2018 Farm Bill has been a huge missed opportunity. We urge lawmakers to consider the interest of Americans footing the bill and vote down the conference agreement in its current form. Absent these reforms, we urge you to pass a one-year, clean extension of the Farm Bill and go back to the drawing board to root out the waste and corporate welfare that has become ingrained in this legislation. We stand ready to work with any lawmaker who will champion such reforms.



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