



# AGRICULTURE & ENERGY COMMITTEE— 2012 FARM BILL REAUTHORIZATION PASSES SENATE AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE

May 2, 2012

On April 26, the Senate Agriculture Committee approved the “[Agriculture Reform, Food, and Jobs Act of 2012](#),” – also known as the 2012 “Farm Bill” reauthorization - by a vote of 16 to 5. Both House and Senate Agriculture Committee chairs have expressed their intent to have a final “farm bill” on the President’s desk by September 30. However, the House Agriculture Committee has not yet drafted its companion bill and recently began its series of “[farm bill](#)” [hearings](#).

## **Commodities**

Overall, the legislation would reduce total “farm bill” spending by \$24.7 billion over ten years, [according to the Congressional Budget Office \(CBO\)](#), mainly through reforms to commodity subsidies. The Senate Agriculture Committee chose to eliminate direct payments, counter-cyclical payments, and the Average Crop Revenue Election (ACRE) program, opting to replace the three payment programs with a single program that caps payments at \$50,000 for individuals and \$100,000 for married couples. Chairwoman Debbie Stabenow (Mich.) highlighted that these reforms are the most stringent payment limits ever included in a “farm bill.”

## **Renewable Energy**

The legislation also includes \$800 million in mandatory funding for the energy title via a [bipartisan amendment](#) from Senator Kent Conrad (N.D.) and Senator Richard Lugar (Ind.). The amendment allocates the following for energy title programs:

<i>Renewable Energy Programs (in millions)</i>	
Biomass Crop Assistance Program (BCAP)	\$193
Renewable Energy for America Program (REAP)	\$241
Bio-refinery Assistance Program	\$216
Bio-mass Research and Development Program	\$130
Bio-based Markets Program	\$15
Bio-diesel Education Program	\$5
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$800</b>

## **Conservation**

As for conservation programs, the 2012 “Farm Bill” streamlines 23 duplicative, unfunded, or under-utilized conservation programs into 13 programs. The reforms to conservation programs highlight the committee’s commitment to trimming the budget over the next decade, with the proposed consolidation of the programs potentially saving \$6.4 billion. One key reform, the tying of conservation requirements to the crop insurance, did not make it into the legislation.

## **Rural Development**

While touted as a “job’s bill,” some committee members had concerns with the decision not to include mandatory funding for the rural development title, as such funds support jobs in rural communities through infrastructure projects, investments in beginner, low-income and/or minority farmers and ranchers, and other economic development initiatives. Amendments were offered to support remaining and/or revised programs. For example, Senator Leahy (Vt.) offered an amendment in support of agricultural viability for beginning farmers and ranchers for the revamped Farm and Ranch Land Program (FRPP), which was consolidated with other conservation easement programs to create the new Agricultural Land Easements Program.

## **Nutrition**

Finally, \$4 billion in cuts – out of the total \$24.7 billion cuts to the 2012 Senate “Farm Bill” - came from the nutrition title. In response, NCSL sent a [letter to the Senate Agriculture Committee](#), signed by Senator Tom Hansen from South Dakota and Representative Barbara Ballard of Kansas (Co-Chairs of the NCSL Human Services and Welfare Committee). The letter praised the bipartisan effort and urged members of the Senate Agriculture Committee to oppose amendments that would eliminate or limit state flexibility to use categorical eligibility for SNAP, repeal or change federal match for the SNAP employment and training program (E and T), or end state bonuses for performance.

## **Additional Information on 2012 Farm Bill Reauthorization**

[Comparison of the Manager's Amendment and the Committee Print of the 2012 "Farm Bill"](#)

[NCSL Human Services and Welfare Committee Update on the Nutrition Provisions within the 2012 "Farm Bill"](#)

### **For More Information, Please Contact:**

For more information on the agriculture, energy, rural development, and conservation provisions within the 2012 "Farm Bill," please contact Ben Husch ([ben.husch@ncsl.org](mailto:ben.husch@ncsl.org)) or Marcus Peterson ([marcus.peterson@ncsl.org](mailto:marcus.peterson@ncsl.org)).

For more information regarding nutrition programs found within the 2012 "Farm Bill," please contact Sheri Steisel ([sheri.steisel@ncsl.org](mailto:sheri.steisel@ncsl.org)) or Emily Wengrovius ([emily.wengrovius@ncsl.org](mailto:emily.wengrovius@ncsl.org)).