



NFFC Update on House Farm Bill:

After a 15-hour marathon markup in the House Agriculture Committee on Wednesday, July 11, members reported out the Farm Bill (H.R. 6308) by a vote of 35-11 early on July 12. The pressure by the committee chairs to complete the markup was based on the threat that a lengthy markup would make it impossible for them to get the bill to the House floor before the August 3 recess; the current farm bill expires October 1, 2012. As of Monday, July 16, the bill including the approved amendments has not yet been filed and is not yet scheduled for floor action.

One of the final actions by the Committee was the debate and approval on a voice vote of a Costa (D-CA)/Conaway (R-TX) amendment to strike the 2008 provisions that required USDA to issue the GIPSA rule. In addition to striking this language, it requires USDA to rescind the already issued poultry and contract fairness provisions based on the language included in the House Agriculture Appropriations bill reported out of Committee. Reps. Peterson (D-MN) and Boswell (D-Iowa) argued against the amendment and stated publicly that the Senate would not be supportive of this provision.

Of the 11 votes against the bill, seven were cast by Democratic members who argued eloquently during markup against the outrageous nature of debating and passing a bill that cut more than \$16 billion from food assistance programs (SNAP) at a time of increased public need for basic access to food. Leading this debate was Rep. Jim McGovern (D-MA) and Rep. David Scott (D-GA). In addition to the SNAP cuts, the underlying bill had many problems not addressed during markup, including an illogical dairy proposal based on the interests of National Milk Producers Federation and large dairy cooperatives, a dependence on crop insurance with no price stability, and elimination of funding for many rural development programs and the cost-share for organic certification.

Beginning, Socially Disadvantaged, Veteran Farmers – see LSP website

An amendment offered by Reps. Fudge (D-OH) and Fortenberry (R-NE) to authorize microloans for beginning, young and small farmers, as well as a community-based intermediary micro farm lending program, passed by a voice vote.

Most Rural Development amendments did not pass.

Rep. Lucas wielded a club, so to speak, to defeat an amendment that would have excluded Texas and Oklahoma from the Sod-Saver amendment. Conservation programs were cut but crop insurance programs were enhanced.

Inclusion of 'Farmer Safety Provision'

A few bright spots in the House bill:

- 1) Inclusion of \$50 million in mandatory funding for Section 2501, Outreach and Education Programs, at \$10 million per year with an increased authorization of \$20 million per year. This is in contrast to the \$25 million in the Senate bill. Both bills expand eligibility to include Veterans and reflect a major cut from the current \$75 million in mandatory funds for Section 2501.
- 2) Rep Pingree (D-ME) introduced and won two amendments based on provisions in the Local Food, Jobs bill: one allows SNAP participants to use benefits towards participation in CSA's (Community Supported Agriculture) and the other requires USDA to prepare and publish a report on the availability of processing/slaughter facilities in rural areas.
- 3) Expansion of the Community Food Projects (CFP) to \$10 million per year (currently \$5 million per year) and an additional \$5 million per year to expand SNAP participation in local foods. There are concerns, however, with the changes to the Farmers Market Nutrition Program and the Senior Program regarding the inclusion of dried, frozen, and other types of processed foods.

Rural Coalition is preparing an assessment of the amendments we supported, which we'll route as soon as available.

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