

From: "Louella_Hill@brown.edu%inter2" <Louella_Hill@brown.edu>
Subject: Comments on the Farm Bill
Date Sent: 10/14/2005 08:36:26 CDT
Date Received: 10/14/2005 08:37:55 CDT

To Whom It May Concern:

I am unable to make the Farm Bill forum this morning in Narragansett, Rhode Island due to previous engagements. I would, however, like to offer my opinion on some issues concerning the U.S. Farm Bill.

Several points to make:

Competitiveness in the Global Market: With regards to "U.S. competitiveness in the global market for agricultural products" I feel it is important that we clarify our priorities: The United States must focus on building a food system which prioritizes the nutritional needs of it's citizens and the health of it's soils BEFORE we put dollars towards increasing our competitiveness in the global market. This means encouraging a more localized and diversified network of food producers.

Rhode Island is the world's lead exporter of turf grass to Saudi Arabia. While the production of turf grass in our state may appear to contribute to farm viability and increase U.S. competitiveness in the global market for agricultural products, the truth is that turf grass production means the loss of valuable top soil (through the harvesting process). It also creates a type of agricultural which is disconnected from the human community which surrounds it. Unlike an apple orchard or a roadside stand filled with fresh eggs and mixed vegetables, turf grass farms do not call out to the tourist, the school child or the Providence family taking a weekend drive in South County.

Encouraging small scale, diversified production of food crops will offer benefits in terms of community health and economic development. Moreover, diversified local agricultural systems will do more to increase our national security than all other efforts made to date.

Large-Scale Subsidies: I highly recommend the eradication of price supports and subsidies which encourage industrial scale, more mechanized production over smaller scale, family-oriented production. The distribution of USDA resources should be decided according to the potential of the grower to practice good stewardship of the land as well as increase the community food security of his or her geographic region. Agricultural subsidies for corn, wheat and soybeans have created a false sense of the true cost of food. The mis-conception that food is cheap (primarily because it is filled with corn and soy products) is not only an injustice to the small-scale American family farmer, it is a injustice to the American consumer.

Conservation and Environmental Goals: Again, the focus of U.S. agricultural policy needs to be building more localized and more diversified agricultural systems- systems which work more harmoniously with the natural environments in which they exist. A move toward environmentally-integrated agricultural systems will dramatically reduce the amount of negative impact caused by our current model.

Product development, Marketing and Research-related Issues in the next Farm Bill: The most progress I have seen take place with regards to agriculture in Rhode Island in the last 4 years has been the expansion of direct marketing options for local growers. I would like to see resources which encourage and enable direct marketing made possible

through the next Farm Bill. To be specific: every farmer in Rhode Island needs to be on-line and posting the agricultural products he and she has available. Every school cafeteria needs to have several close relationships (for both educational oppertunities AND direct food purchasing) with regional farmers. Every urban citizen needs to have the opertunity to visit and participate in local agriculture (through farm visits and farmers' markets). Programs and funding made possible through the US Farm Bill will help to make these things happen.

The last and most important thing I would like to mention is the purchase of development rights. Funding allocations which encourage this practice are highly, highly recommended.

Thank you.

Louella Hill

Director

Farm Fresh Rhode Island
Box 1943
Providence, RI, 02912
Ph: 401.301.7690

www.farmfreshri.org