



Farm Bill Comment Sheet

The 2002 Farm Bill (officially entitled the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002) authorizes many USDA programs, including farm price and income support programs. New legislation will need to be enacted prior to the bill's expiration in 2007.

USDA intends to develop recommendations for the new farm bill and believes that public input is essential to this process. To comment, please respond to the questions below by December 30, 2005.

Farm Bill Comments may be provided to any of the following:

- Submit comments electronically via the internet at the USDA home page – <http://www.usda.gov>, by selecting "Farm Bill Forums"
- Email comments to: FarmBill@usda.gov
- In Writing-mail to: Secretary of Agriculture Mike Johanns, Farm Bill, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-3355
- Hand Deliver to: Room 116A at the above address.

NOTE: All comments, including names and addresses, provided by respondents are a matter of public record. Comments may be viewed at the Department of Agriculture. To make arrangements to view comments, please contact the Office of the Executive Secretariat, Room 116A, Jamie L. Whitten Federal Building, 1400 Independence Avenue SW., Washington, DC 20250-3355.

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Question 1: The challenges facing new farmers and ranchers as they enter agriculture.

Some observers note that while farm policy has served agriculture and the country well in the past, there are "unintended consequences" that should be addressed, such as the capitalization of program benefits into land prices. These higher land prices are cited as a barrier to entry into agriculture for new farmers; a factor in reduced profit for existing farmers; and a cause of weakened competitive position on the part of U.S. farmers compared with farmers in countries with lower-priced land.

How should farm policy address any unintended consequences and ensure that such consequences do not discourage new farmers and the next generation of farmers from entering production agriculture?

Comment:

Increase monies for the ^{and Ranch Land} Farm ~~Land~~ ^{Protection} Conservation Program in order to purchase more conservation easements.

I assume that "capitalization of program benefits into land prices" means that land values rise due to Farm Bill subsidies that are provided to landowners (such as purchase of development rights). For example, land values of properties are enhanced due to purchase of conservation easements by the government on adjacent properties and even on ^{the} properties ^{where the} easements. The Farm Bill should address these issues when developing ^{the} formulae for determining the purchase price for conservation easements.

have been purchased.

Question 2: The competitiveness of U.S. agriculture in global and domestic markets.

As bilateral, regional, and multilateral trade negotiations continue to result in reduced barriers to international trade, exports and imports of agricultural products are expected to become increasingly important factors in U.S. and global agriculture. Obtaining ever-greater access to growing foreign markets and being increasingly competitive in these and in domestic markets is essential for farm economic growth. One key factor in our ability to be competitive depends on the types of products demanded around the world in the next 10 to 20 years and our ability to produce products that meet this world demand.

How should farm policy be designed to maximize U.S. competitiveness and our country's ability to effectively compete in global markets?

Comment:

Support renewable resource product development
such as biomass, biofuels, ethanol, etc.
This is even more critical with the increased
price of fossil fuel energy =

Question 4: The achievement of conservation and environmental goals.

While producing food and fiber are essential functions, agriculture also plays a major role in natural resource stewardship. Some have suggested that future farm policy might be anchored around the provision of tangible benefits such as cleaner water and air. Such an approach may be consistent with future World Trade Organization obligations on domestic support to agriculture, while also expanding farm programs to extend more broadly across agriculture, including private forest lands

How can farm policy best achieve conservation and environmental goals?

e.g. (clean air, clean water, wildlife, biodiversity)

Comment:

I believe that we should ^{assist} (pay) landowners for the environmental services that their lands provide for the public good. Without this assistance, I believe, more and more of our forests and farms will be sold for subdivisions.

I support the bill offered by Senator Collins of Maine to provide \$50 million for purchase of easement rights of open space (forests & farms) in areas experiencing intensive urban sprawl. I also support additional funding for the Forest Legacy Program.

I fully support the Forest Land Enhancement Program and the assistance it provides to landowners to better steward their lands.

I fully support the use of EQIP funds for forest management activities which was authorized under the 2002 Farm Bill.

Forest land is not eligible under the Conservation Security Program. They should be eligible, and

I hope the 2007 Farm Bill will take this into account.

I support cost share for "up-front" costs (e.g. surveying, costs, legal fees) to landowners who want to sell their development rights for conservation to the Federal government.

Question 5: The enhancement of rural economic growth.

Farming and rural America once were almost synonymous. Over the years, the demographic and economic characteristics of rural areas have changed, as has farming's role in the rural economy. This raises the issue of whether more Government attention should be focused on investing in the infrastructure in rural America (for example, investing in new technologies).

How can Federal rural and farm programs provide effective assistance in rural areas?

Comment:

I think with regard to forest lands, the Farm Bill should address the economic viability of ~~the~~ landowners. Assistance should be given (for development of business plans - (up to \$5,000), and once the plan is approved), additional funds should be provided for implementation of the plan. In turn, landowners should sell the development rights for their land for a 10 year period (or permanently at the discretion of the landowner).

Without this assistance, urban sprawl will continue its insidious impacts on natural resources.

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SECRETARY, USDA

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