

H.R. 1749 – House Passed Farm Bill

After more than 10 hours of debate, late last evening the House Agriculture Committee approved on a 36-10 vote a five-year farm bill - a bill that is almost identical to a measure that was passed last year. H.R. 1749, the Federal Agriculture Reform and Risk Management Act of 2013 will cost about \$940 billion over the next decade, cutting about \$40 billion from direct spending. House leadership has committed to having the bill on the floor in June.

Highlights of H.R. 1749 are:

Passed: An amendment cosponsored by Reps. Mike Conaway – (R-TX) and Jim Costa – (D-CA) that repeals the section of the 2008 farm bill that directed the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Grain Inspection and Packers and Stockyards Administrations (GIPSA) to review contract and industry structure practices of the meat and poultry industries. The amendment passed on a voice vote and Members of the Committee on both sides of the aisle spoke in support of the amendment. Ranking Member Collin Peterson (D-MN) said, “The Department overreached. This amendment probably overreaches in the other direction. But maybe this is a lesson not to overreach. So I am going to support this amendment.”

Passed: An amendment sponsored by Rep. Rick Crawford – (R-AR) that would restrict the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) from making any changes to the National Poultry Improvement Plan (NPIP). The amendment would keep the physical location of NPIP the same, as well as the current structure. The funding level was set at the current level, as well, but with language on NPIP in both House and Senate bills, a chance to tweak the language is possible.

Passed: An amendment sponsored by Rep. Steve King – (R-IA) that would make it illegal for a state to restrict sales of products based on production standards. The amendment says that states can’t set regulations on agricultural product methods and apply them to goods coming in from other states. The amendment generated debate over whether it would undermine states’ rights and have implications for other state regulations. The amendment passed on a voice vote.

Passed: Rep. Jim McGovern – (D-MA) offered an amendment that would make it a federal offense to attend an animal fighting venture or cause a minor to attend. The amendment passed 28 to 17

The bill also contained several provisions aimed at deflecting the impacts of U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulations on farmers and ranchers.

Passed: Rep. Bob Gibbs – (R-OH) sponsored an amendment that would prevent federal agencies from giving out personal information of agricultural producers to third-party groups. This amendment is a result of EPA’s recent release of data from livestock operations to three environmental groups. The data release, which came about as a result of a Freedom of Information Act request, has gained traction on Capitol Hill. On the Senate side, Sen. Chuck Grassley – (R-IA) filed a similar amendment to the farm bill, but it was not debated during mark up. It is likely that Sen. Grassley will revisit the issue during the Senate floor debate.

Passed: Rep. Bob Goodlatte – (R-VA) sponsored a provision that would require the USDA to undertake reviews of any EPA regulations that could affect the agricultural community. Goodlatte said that the

amendment was in response to EPA's recent program for the Chesapeake Bay, which required states to develop and put in place plans to reduce nutrient runoff into the bay.

Passed: Rep. Vicki Hartzler – (R-MO) sponsored an amendment that would repeal the USDA catfish inspection program and transfer the duties to the Food and Drug Administration, which inspects all other species of fish. USDA says the program could cost millions of dollars, but lawmakers with catfish constituents say that USDA inspection is necessary in the face of concerns over the safety and environmental implications of overseas catfish.

S. 945- The Senate Passed Farm Bill

Earlier this week, the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Forestry and Nutrition passed a farm bill, S. 945, The Agriculture Reform, Food and Jobs Act of 2013. On a vote of 15-5, the bill took less than four hours to be marked up and approved. The bill will cut \$23 billion over 10 years. Majority Leader Harry Reid – (D-NV) has scheduled S. 945 to be on the Senate floor this Monday, May 20.

Highlights of S. 945 are:

Passed: A measure that would establish the position of Under Secretary of Agriculture for Trade and Foreign Agriculture Affairs. Approved as part of a large group of amendments the measure would propose a reorganization of international trade function for imports and export of the USDA. The Under Secretary would serve as a multiagency coordinator of sanitary and phytosanitary issues and nontariff trade barriers in agriculture.

Passed: Language that supports keeping the current Governance Committee at the National Poultry Improvement Plan (NPIP) was included in a package of amendments. Since both bills contain language on NPIP, technical corrections can be made to the measure.

Passed: To address the shortfall in federal investments supporting the animal sciences, the National Association for the Advancement of Animal Science created the Animal Agriculture Integrated Research initiative (AAIR). AAIR will highlight three key focal areas: food Security, Animal Health and Stewardship.

Passed: Poultry Insurance Program establishes a pair of studies on the feasibility of insurance programs to protect America's poultry growers from catastrophic loss, such as disease outbreaks and from bankruptcies of poultry integrators.

Both bills contain identical language on both the Market Access Program – at \$200 million and the Foreign Market Development at \$34.5, which is at current levels, as well as the Conservation Reserve Program which is gradually reduced from 30 million acres to 25 million acres.