

Bob Dole



NEWS

U. S. SENATOR FOR KANSAS

FROM:

SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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FARM BILL

DOLE LEADS SENATE TO PASS LANDMARK LEGISLATION PROVIDING AMERICA'S FARMERS WITH CERTAINTY, SIMPLICITY, & FLEXIBILITY; BIG WIN FOR RURAL AMERICA, U.S. TAXPAYERS, & ENVIRONMENT

The first question that must be asked of any farm bill is, "is it good for agriculture." And this historic farm bill is good for agriculture.

It is also good for taxpayers. It is good for the environment. And it is good for America.

I congratulate Senator Lugar and Congressman Roberts--the Chairs of the Senate and House Agriculture Committees--for their countless hours of hard work in producing this bipartisan legislation.

Congratulations as well to the ranking minority members, Senator Leahy and Congressman de la Garza, for making this legislation a truly bi-partisan effort.

Crafting this historic bill has required patience and perseverance -- qualities which farmers and ranchers also must possess.

Farmers Finally to Plant for Market - Not for Government

The legislation before us will transition America's farmers into the 21st century, without disrupting the farm economy or land values. Farmers will finally plant for the market and not for the government.

In addition, this legislation provides farmers with what they have asked for most -- certainty, simplicity and flexibility. As I travel across America, farmers and ranchers tell me the same thing -- keep it simple. All government programs -- and especially all regulations -- must be simpler and less intrusive. Farm programs should pass the common sense test.

And, as I said, another big winner in this bill is the American taxpayer. This legislation ensures reasonable and responsible spending through a capped entitlement. If we are to balance the budget--and we will--the American farmer will tell you that everyone must contribute.

Farmers often remind me that they are taxpayers, too. And as taxpayers, farmers want a balanced budget. Under a balanced budget, spending on interest payments are projected to decline \$15 billion over seven years.

For family farmers who often struggle to make ends meet, the money saved through reduced interest payments could make the difference between success and failure.

Commonsense Conservation Approach

This bill is landmark legislation. The bill contains one of the most significant conservation packages ever enacted. Instead of mandates and the heavy hand of government, this bill reflects a commonsense approach. This historic farm bill is one that conservationists can be proud of.

This legislation includes many elements from the conservation bill authored last year by Senators Lugar, Craig, Grassley and Dole--also known as S. 1373, the Agricultural Resource Enhancement Act.

For example, this farm bill continues the Conservation Reserve Program which, at 36.4 million acres makes the program twice the size of the National Wildlife Refuge System. This program is the nation's biggest and most successful private lands conservation program.

The bill streamlines cost share incentive programs into one revitalized program, the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQUIP). The program will spend \$200 million per year on cost share assistance for crop and livestock farmers as they work to control pollution and erosion.

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For years farmers have been planting the same crops year after year which lead to excessive use of fertilizer, chemicals and tillage to control pests and maintain crop yields. This bill provides farmers with complete planting flexibility allowing them to plant environmentally sensitive crops.

This bill also insures sound conservation practices on over 300 million acres. This legislation continues the successful record of the 1985 and 1990 farm bills by requiring participating producers to meet soil conservation and wetlands protection standards.

In addition, the bill provides funding for restoration of the Florida Everglades, balances conservation compliance regulations, expands mitigation options for wetlands and authorizes new conservation and wildlife enhancement programs.

Several national farm organizations have praised the conservation provisions as providing a more common sense balance between practical conservation methods and protection of natural resources and wildlife.

First, Positive Step to Ensure A Prospering Rural America

As I see it, this bill is not an end, but a beginning. It is a positive first step in a larger effort to ensure that rural America prospers. From here, we can address other issues. Tax and regulatory reform are a must. Property rights protection and health care reform are vital. I am committed to taking action on these issues, so that rural America can realize a brighter future.

American agriculture is ready and waiting for policies that will help prepare it for a successful 21st century. This legislation lays a solid foundation for sustained growth.

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* Remarks delivered on Senate floor, approximately 12:25 p.m.