

Farm Bill Remains in Limbo After Failing to Pass House

As you have likely already heard, we are still without a Farm Bill. Last Thursday, June 20, the U.S. House of Representatives failed to pass the Farm Bill by a vote of 195-234. This represents a huge failure on the part of House leadership to round up its members to come to any kind of compromise agreement, which does not bode well for other even more controversial issues to come. It also leaves the nation's farmers and ranchers- as well as many USDA programs- in limbo for long term planning, stalls the first steps forward on real reform of commodity program payments, and sidelines many programs that would benefit smaller farmers, development of local and regional systems, and rural development efforts.

Prior to failure to pass the entire bill, the House did vote for the Fortenberry amendment, which would have limited commodity payments and close eligibility loopholes. The Senate version of the Farm Bill also includes those provisions. This was the first time the full House had voted for such commodity payment reform. But, unfortunately, it may be some time before such reform gets a full debate let alone passes.

But grassroots action also killed amendments that attacked local and regional food systems programs.

The Kansas Congressional House delegation all voted against the Fortenberry amendment to reform commodity program payments, but split on the amendment to eliminate Farmers Market and Local Foods Promotion Programs. According to Congressional records, Jenkins and Yoder voted to kill the amendment to eliminate, and Pompeo and Yoder voted to eliminate the programs. On the amendment to eliminate the financing for the Healthy Food Initiative, only Yoder voted against elimination.

But the delegation split their votes on passage of the full bill. (Jenkins and Yoder voted for passage; Pompeo and Huelskamp voted against) showing that even among the Kansas delegation there was disagreement on the need to put passage of a bill above the strict adherence to the ideology of small or no government at all costs.

We want to thank all of you who made calls to your representatives on these and other farm bill issues and amendments. We ask that you stay tuned for future Farm Bill developments. Today speculation centers on the possibilities or likelihood of an extension of the old (2008) Farm Bill, much like last year's extension.

Action continues in the Appropriations committees that are working on Fiscal Year 2014 budgets for existing or remaining authorized programs. We will keep you informed as the dust continues to settle on the Farm Bill and becomes available!