

Senate Passes Farm Bill

Early last week the U.S. Senate easily passed the Farm Bill by a vote of 66-27. The five-year, \$500 billion bill expands crop insurance and cuts roughly \$4 billion (over ten years) to the food stamp program. The Senate bill also creates a shallow-loss program that will compensate farmers for small losses before crop insurance comes into play.



The House may pass its own bill sometime this week.

The big difference in the two bills is the food stamp program within. The House bill proposes a \$20 billion cut over ten years to the food stamp program. Speaker John Boehner (R-OH), who has voted against past Farm Bills, has ensured a vigorous House debate on the issue.

Should the House pass its own Farm Bill, both the House and Senate versions will have to be conferenced together and passed again. The current Farm Bill, an extension of the 2008 Farm Bill, expires this September.

PIA National signed on to a letter to Speaker Boehner and Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) urging that the House reject amendments that discourage producer (farmer) participation or undermine private sector delivery of crop insurance.

The current farm bill — from either house — may not be enough. Or so says the University of Illinois. Spokesman Nick Paulson said a study published by the Environmental Working Group said big price drops of 15% or more in corn, rice and others could wipe out the projected savings of either the Senate or House bill — assuming one or the other is passed and signed into law.

Those drops would set off payments of \$6.9 billion a year and wipe out the projected savings by 40%.

The group opposes the House bill and says it will raise the payouts by farmers and end up costing taxpayers more.