

Farm Bill Reported Out of Committee

(July 20, 2007)

Mahoney: "This year's Farm Bill is a win for Florida Agriculture"

(Washington, DC) - Congressman Tim Mahoney (FL-16), the lone Florida Representative on the House Committee on Agriculture, today announced that the 2007 Farm Bill, which was approved by the committee last night, is a win for Florida agriculture. The 2007 Farm Bill is expected to be voted on by the U.S. House of Representatives next week.

"The 2007 Farm Bill that was approved by the House Agriculture Committee last night makes significant changes that are beneficial to Florida agriculture. The bill makes a commitment to improving pest and disease control, spurring investment in cellulosic ethanol production, supporting specialty crops like fruits and vegetables, and improving access to conservation programs. I have been proud to represent Florida agriculture at the table as the Farm Bill was written and will continue fighting to make sure the bill keeps its commitments to programs important to our state," said Congressman Tim Mahoney.

Highlights of the 2007 Farm Bill:

Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative

Improves access to conservation programs by:

- Streamlining government bureaucracy by providing a single application process for multiple conservation programs;
- Giving states flexibility to combine conservation programs to meet the unique needs of the land/region could now be tailored to the benefits of the programs, instead of the farmers/region trying to fit their particular needs into a cookie-cutter type federal program.

Ethanol Loan Guarantee Program

Florida has the opportunity to become a leader in production of cellulosic ethanol from citrus and other products. The 2007 Farm Bill makes a commitment to supporting cellulosic ethanol production by:

- Providing financial incentives in the form of a loan guarantee for the construction of cellulosic biofuel plants. The loan guarantee is capped at 90% of the principal and interest of the loan;
- Authorizing 2 billion in funding for research to develop ethanol technologies;
- The definition of agricultural cellulosic biomass was expanded to include agricultural waste, including citrus. This is important because FL producers will now be able to participate and benefit from the new cellulosic ethanol programs.

Pest and Disease

Improving pest and disease control is very important in Florida, where one invasive plant pest is discovered each month. The Farm Bill will help improve pest and disease control by:

- Requiring the USDA to identify offshore threats and develop action plans that will be implemented when pest is discovered;
- Giving the USDA sole authority to determine funding for pest and disease;
- Transferring Agricultural Port Personnel from DHS to back USDA.

Specialty Crop Funding - \$2 billion

Florida is a top producer of specialty crops, like tomatoes, melons, citrus, snap beans, sweet corn.

- \$215 million - Competitive grant program for state land grant universities such as UF and FAMU
- Mandatory funding for organic research - \$25 million. **In the past the funding for specialty crops has not been mandatory and subject to a fungible reserve fund.
- Block grants
- \$365 million (\$100 million extra)
- FL approx 10-12 million annually
- Fruit and vegetable snack program expanded to all 50 states
- \$350 million
- DOD Fresh program
- \$50 million
- Technical assistance for specialty crops
- \$38 million
- Value added grants

- Clean Plant Network--\$20 million
- Air Quality Mitigation Funding--\$150 million
- Fresh Produce Food Safety Grants--\$25 million

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