

Florida Gets Historic Farm Bill

Bill Increases Sales of Fruits and

Vegetables, Invests in Conservation, and

Puts Florida in the Biofuel Business

(May 14, 2008)

(Venus, FL) - Today Congressman Tim Mahoney (FL-16), Florida's only member of the Agriculture Committee, voted to support H.R. 2419, the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008. This historic bill breaks the Midwest's 70-year monopoly on farm and conservation programs and Florida growers and farmers will directly benefit from the \$10.4 billion new investment in programs that will support research, pest management, trade promotion, nutrition for children and seniors, and encourage the development of cellulosic ethanol. The bill passed by a vote of 318-106.

"Florida's agriculture is finally getting its fair share of tax dollars, which will help strengthen and grow our economy," said Congressman Mahoney. "With the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act, our growers and farmers will see an increase in demand for their products and we will finally be able to participate in programs critical for Everglades restoration. This legislation also makes critical investments in biofuels beyond corn putting Florida at the forefront of the biofuels industry."

To view Congressman Mahoney speaking on the House floor, [click here](#).

The Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 makes historic investments in our food and farm economy. The bill will invest in biofuels, increase funding for nutrition programs for children and seniors, protect our vital natural resources, create new markets for specialty crops, fight pests and diseases, and reform commodity programs. The bill is fiscally responsible and all new spending has been offset.

"All mothers living in our rural communities want to raise their kids, give them a good education, and help them have the opportunity to get good paying jobs in the communities where they grew up," said Congressman Mahoney. "The Farm Bill is a significant step towards fulfilling that dream."

Key provisions of the Bill will:

Promote Development of Cellulosic Ethanol

- Creates the Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) to provide \$250 million in grants and loan guarantees for agricultural producers and rural small businesses to purchase renewable energy systems and make energy efficiency

improvements

- o Includes grant funds for organizations with energy expertise to assist agricultural producers and rural small businesses in performing energy audits
- o Assists agricultural producers and rural small businesses in planning and preparing feasibility studies for projects supported by the Rural Energy for America Program

- Creates a Biomass Crop Assistance Program to develop the next generation of feedstocks for renewable energy
- o Encourages the production of feedstocks for cellulosic ethanol and other energy production and provides for multi-year contracts for crop and forest producers to grow dedicated energy crops
- o Provides incentives for producers to harvest, store, and transport biomass to bioenergy facilities

- Provides \$120 million for the Biomass Research and Development Program
- o Coordinates research and development activities, including improvements in feedstock development and the efficiency of biofuel production

- Funds the Bioenergy Program at \$300 million
- o Provides incentives for expanding production of advanced biofuels made from agricultural and forestry crops and associated waste materials, including animal manure and livestock/food processing waste

- Funds the Biodiesel Education Program with \$5 million to help educate government and private owners of vehicle fleets about the benefits and technical aspects of biodiesel.

Protect the Environment

- Increases total spending on conservation programs by \$7.9 billion
- \$1.4 billion for the Wetlands Reserves Program (WRP). WRP is a voluntary, non-regulatory, incentive-based program that helps private landowners, farmers and ranchers protect and restore wetlands on their property.
- \$3.4 billion for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), which offers financial and technical help to assist farmers and ranchers install or implement conservation practices on eligible agricultural land to protect water, air and soil quality as well as wildlife habitat.
- Establishes the Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (AWEP) to help producers achieve water quality goals and address water quantity concerns
- Creates the Cooperative Conservation Program Initiative (CCPI) to provide assistance to producers by coordinating conservation activities between USDA and outside organizations

Help With Rising Food Costs

- Nearly three-fourths of the Farm Bill, an additional \$10.4 billion in new spending, goes to nutrition programs that help 38 million American families afford healthy food.

- \$1.02 billion for the USDA Fruit and Vegetable Snack Program -increasing the amount of fruits and vegetables in the diets of Americans will create a significant market for fruits and vegetables for Florida farmers.
- Expands food stamp eligibility by increasing the minimum benefit for recipients, indexes asset limits and excludes retirement and education accounts as assets, and excludes special combat pay as income
- \$1.26 million for the Emergency Food Assistance program to help food banks
- \$33 million over five years for direct producer to consumer marketing to promote Farmer's Markets
- \$20 million over 10 years in new funding for Seniors Farmer's Market Programs--Florida's Farmer's Markets and the farmers and producer who supply the markets will be able to access these funds for their markets.

Invest in Specialty Crops

- Establishes a new Specialty Crop Research Initiative to develop and disseminate science-based tools to address the needs of specific crops and their regions, including work in plant breeding and genetics, safety, quality, and yield; efforts to identify and address threats posed by invasive species; marketing; pollination and efforts to improve production.
- âžŸ \$59 million for Technical Assistance for Specialty Crops to provide assistance to resolve phytosanitary issues in trade
- âžŸ \$20 million for the Clean Plant Network to establish a funding source for clean planting stock
- âžŸ \$78 million dedicated to organic research
- âžŸ Maintains funding for USDA Market Access Program (MAP) to assist producers in Florida and other states in accessing foreign markets for their products.

Fight Pests and Disease

- \$377 million to implement a new program to fight devastating agricultural pests and diseases. These include medfly, citrus canker and greening.
- The Farm Bill removes statutory roadblocks that prevent federal and state agencies from mitigating pest and disease threats. This includes:
 - âžŸ Surveying for pests and diseases to quickly catch outbreaks before they spread;
 - âžŸ Quickly accessing federal funds to deal with these outbreaks; and
 - âžŸ Creating an audit-based certification approach to protect against the spread of invasive pests.