

Why congress must pass this bill

By Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack

Getting a Food, Farm and Jobs Bill passed this year is essential - and it can't fall victim to politics as usual. Too much is at stake, and too many people lose out if Congress can't act. Here are 10 good reasons why Congress must take action as soon as possible to achieve passage of a Farm Bill this year:

1. America's farmers, ranchers and producers need certainty about the next five years of U.S. farm policy, to continue the recent momentum of the U.S. agricultural economy and rising farm income.
2. Livestock producers need disaster assistance applied retroactively, in light of a long-term drought that has forced the liquidation of herds to the lowest level in decades.
3. Dairy producers need an effective support system that helps them to stem the decline in the number of U.S. dairy operations.
4. Farmers, landowners and forest owners need streamlined conservation programs

that will make a more efficient and effective use of limited conservation funds, while building on record conservation efforts underway today.

5. Organic and specialty crop producers need renewed and expanded access to Farm Bill programs that have fueled the growth of a multibillion dollar industry in direct-to-consumer sales.

6. Researchers and students at Land Grant Universities need support to meet modern challenges in agriculture and carry out the innovation we need to sustainably increase agricultural production. A new, nonprofit research foundation provided by a Food, Farm and Jobs Bill could leverage millions of dollars of private sector funding to provide this assistance.
7. Job seekers in rural America need new and expanded investments in renewable energy, biofuel, and bio-based product manufacturing, all of which can create jobs in rural areas.
8. Beginning producers -

including a growing number of veterans returning to the land - need technical assistance, credit and affordable crop insurance to get started and keep growing. This is especially important as we seek to reverse the rising average age of America's farm population.

9. Producers and small business owners need a resolution of the Brazil cotton dispute that if left unsolved, threatens hundreds of millions of dollars annually in tariff penalties against U.S. agricultural products and other American-made goods.

10. And anyone who is concerned about the Federal deficit needs a Food, Farm and Jobs Bill that provides meaningful deficit reduction.

These all are good reasons why a Food, Farm and Jobs Bill can't wait. Americans across the country are impacted by this important legislation, and Congress must achieve passage of a Food, Farm and Jobs Bill as soon as possible.

New consumer protection record set

The Kansas Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division recovered more money for Kansans last year than ever before in state history, Attorney General Derek Schmidt announced today.

Schmidt's office recovered more than \$49 million in consumer restitution, fees and penalties during 2012, shattering the previous one-year record of \$17.3 million.

"We have made consumer protection one of the top priorities for our office," Schmidt said. "We have slowly built capacity and strengthened our enforcement work against scam artists and others who illegally get Kansas consumers' money. We have assembled a dedicated team of consumer specialists

who are committed to helping Kansans. That focus is paying off for Kansans."

The Consumer Protection Division is led by Deputy Attorney General Jim Welch. Its staff of investigators and litigators also includes former U.S. Attorney for Kansas Jackie Williams. AG Schmidt is a former assistant attorney general for consumer protection, a position he held during the administration of former Attorney General Carla Stovall. He currently serves as the national co-chair of the Consumer Protection Committee of the National Association of Attorneys General.

Schmidt said he plans to continue strengthening his office's consumer protection work on behalf of Kansans. He said that

although he is pleased with the large financial recoveries last year, the key measure of success is whether the Consumer Protection Division is providing help and assistance to Kansans who have lost money to scams, ripoffs and illegal business practices.

Schmidt released the 2012 information today by filing the annual Consumer Protection Report with the Kansas Legislature. That report is available online at www.ag.ks.gov/2012-cp-annual-report.

Kansans who have experienced scams or deceptive or unconscionable business practices may contact the Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division at (800) 432-2310 or at www.ag.ks.gov.

Commodity Credit lending rates for July

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) recently announced interest rates for July 2013. The CCC borrowing rate-based charge for July 2013 is 0.125 percent, unchanged from 0.125 in June 2013. For 1996 and subsequent crop year commodity and marketing assistance loans, the interest rate for loans disbursed during July 2013 is 1.125 percent, unchanged from 1.125 in June 2013.

Interest rates for Farm Storage Facility Loans approved for July 2013 are as follows, 1.500 percent with seven-year loan terms, up from 1.250 in June 2013; 2.125 percent with 10-year loan terms, up from 1.750 in June 2013 and; 2.375 percent

with 12-year loan terms, up from 2.000 percent in June 2013. The interest rate for Sugar Storage Facility Loans for July 2013 is 2.625 percent, up from 2.250 in June 2013.

The maximum discount rate applicable for July 2013 for the Tobacco Transition Payment Program is 5 percent, unchanged from June 2013. This is based on the 3.250 percent prime rate plus 2 percent, rounded to the nearest whole number.

Past monthly releases announcing interest rates charged by CCC on commodity and marketing assistance loans disbursed for that particular month reflect the interest rate the U.S. Treasury charged CCC for that month. This was the interest

rate specified by CCC since Jan. 1, 1982, but the process of establishing the interest rate was changed by a provision of the Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996 (the Act), enacted on April 4, 1996.

Section 163 of the Act requires that monthly interest rates applicable to commodity and marketing assistance loans are to be 100 basis points - or 1 percent - greater than the rate determined under the applicable interest rate formula in effect on Oct. 1, 1995. This formula resulted in a rate equivalent to the amount the U.S. Treasury charged CCC for borrowing, for the month.

Highway

(Continued From Page 1)

making the road safer without meeting all current standards. That is expected to cost about \$500,000 a mile, compared to \$2 million a mile for a new, high-standard road.

The state has little money for rebuilding secondary routes like K-23, he said, and this way, the agency can get something done much sooner. The program actually began after Sheridan County people asked repeatedly for help with their north-south road. Under former Secretary of Transportation Deb Miller, the agency came up with a plan for lower-cost improvements for some routes.

While the project has not gone for bids yet, the engineer said, the 18 miles of road is expected to cost \$11.3 million when bids are sought in the fall. Under the practical improvement approach, the contractor will remove a couple of feet of old pavement and material and regrade the road, fix any soft spots in the base, and put down a 28-foot pavement, rather than

the 24 foot at present. That will allow for two-foot paved shoulders with a strip of crushed rock along the edges.

Though the practical improvement job usually includes little serious grading, engineers said they would shave some hills to improve sight lines north of Hoxie.

People in the crowd asked why the state had chosen to work on the road north of Hoxie, rather than to the south, where several miles of rolling hills have caused some horrific accidents over the years. Mr. Stewart said the department has that area as a priority for "modification" to current standards to eliminate or smooth out the hills, but that will have to wait for the next transportation plan, after 2020. The current project fits the budget today.

He advised Sheridan County residents to keep pushing for the job south of town.

"The public involvement can push you over," he said.

Mike King, secretary of transportation under Gov. Sam

Brownback, attended the meeting and talked briefly about the need to broaden the state and federal fuel tax to include all forms of motor fuel, from natural gas to electric, as people buy more fuel-efficient and alternative fueled vehicles.

Questions at the meeting included how emergency vehicles and postal carriers will be able to get through work zones. Engineers said there will be times when there is no practical way to get through some areas, but emergency agencies will need to keep in touch with the department.

The Hoxie postmaster said residents along the highway will need either to move their mailbox to someplace where the carrier can get to it or use a free, temporary post office box in town.

Mr. Stewart said the department has learned that people tend to find out how to get around the work, and urged everyone to keep in touch with state engineers.

From the field to the bin...



The 2013 wheat harvest is well underway but not showing much of a return. Denny Lofgreen finished cutting a field of continuous wheat just north of Norton on Tuesday and it averaged 12 bushels to the acre, 9-10 moisture and 56-58 test weight. "Pretty pathetic!" Lofgreen stated. Low averages have been reported all over the area. No matter the type of farming practices used, the drought has really done a number on the 2013 wheat crop and will go down in the books as such.

- Telegram photo by Dana Paxton

Emergency Disaster Loan deadline nears

The expiration date for filing applications for Emergency Disaster (EM) loans by farmers and ranchers in Decatur, Norton and Phillips Counties is Sept. 9, 2013, according to Pat L. Bohl, Farm Loan Officer, for the Farm Service Agency (FSA).

Bohl advised that those needing farm credit as a result of drought on Nov. 15, 2012 and continuing and who think they are eligible for FSA assistance, should make their applications at the Norton County FSA Office, 11506 Pineview Dr., Norton, Kansas, before the expiration date.

"Loans covering physical and/or production losses are scheduled for repayment as rapidly as feasible, consistent with the applicant's reasonable ability to pay," said Bohl. The current interest rate for July is 2.25 percent but is subject to monthly changes until the loan is approved. FSA's Farm Loan Programs

staff is committed to new and existing customers, FSA customer goals and our rural communities. FSA's service extends beyond the typical loan, offering FSA customers ongoing consultation, advice and creative ways to make your farm business thrive. At the Farm Service Agency, we want to be your lender of first opportunity to overcome these adverse weather conditions and rebuild your operation to get back on track. FSA's loan staff can refer customers to other public and commercial financing sources that can serve as a blend with FSA's farm loan programs.

FSA loans covering physical losses may be used to replace installations, equipment, livestock, or buildings (including homes), lost through this disaster.


FSA loans covering production losses may be used to buy feed, seed, fertilizer, livestock, or to

make payments on real estate and chattel debts. "Funds can also be used for other essential operating and living expenses," Bohl said.

To be eligible for an emergency disaster loan, an applicant must be operating a family size farm or ranch, must be unable to get credit elsewhere, and must have suffered a qualifying physical and/or production loss from the disaster. Farmers who suffered at least a 30 percent reduction to at least one cropping enterprise, may have a qualifying production loss. Emergency disaster production loss loans cover 100 percent of qualifying losses.

Farmers and ranchers that think they may eligible should contact the FSA County Office in Norton, Kansas or call (785)877-5156 for additional information and how to apply. USDA is an equal opportunity employer and provider.

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