



Farm Bill Legislation in the 113th Congress

BACKGROUND: The 2008 Farm Bill (P.L. 110-627) expired on September 30, 2012 after the 112th Congress failed to reauthorize a new five-year bill. The bill was operating under an extension that extended most USDA programs through September 30, 2013. Congress was unable to pass an extension of the farm bill or complete a full reauthorization before September 30, which means the farm bill has lapsed.

The farm bill extension that expired on September 30 discontinued funding for USDA's Rural Development mandatory spending accounts. Under the 2008 Farm Bill, USDA's Rural Development programs received \$135 million in mandatory funding for two programs: \$15 million for the Rural Microenterprise Assistance Program (RMAP) and \$120 million for the Water/Wastewater Backlog Program. RMAP, utilized by regional development organizations (RDOs) and local governments for micro-lending programs, could end without reauthorization of mandatory funding. However, the majority of USDA Rural Development programs utilized by RDOs and local governments including the Intermediary Relending Program (IRP), the Rural Business Enterprise Grant (RBEG), and the Water/Wastewater Backlog Program are funded through the annual appropriations process.

NADO supports mandatory funding for USDA Rural Development's portfolio of grants and loan programs designed to foster regional economic development in rural areas: the Intermediary Relending Program (IRP), Business Enterprise Grants (RBEG), Rural Micro-entrepreneur Assistance Program (RMAP), Value Added Producer Grants (VPAG), and funding to address the backlog of loan and grant applications.

NADO supports reauthorization of federal-state economic development commissions that work to address the community and economic development needs of the most severely distressed regions of the United States:

- Delta Regional Authority
- Northern Border Regional Commission
- Northern Great Plains Regional Authority
- Southeast Crescent Regional Commission

NADO supports streamlined and broadened USDA Rural Development applications, policies, and reporting requirements to reflect the scale of rural investments, emerging needs and opportunities of rural regions, and capacity of local organizations. NADO also supports retaining USDA Rural Development's existing financial and performance accountability standards. Congress should ensure USDA Rural Development has a modern set of policies, programs, and incentives to help rural communities pursue regionally-based, locally-driven community and economic development strategies.

NADO supports increasing intergovernmental cooperation among all levels of government, while retaining and coordinating the existing set of rural development programs. NADO promotes flexibility within the USDA Rural Development mission area to foster regional innovation and development, including regionally-based initiatives to promote regional strategic planning, entrepreneurship, deployment of broadband and advanced technologies, infrastructure upgrades and resources for business development finance assistance.

Senate Approved farm bill

On June 10, the U.S. Senate passed the Agriculture Reform, Food and Jobs Act of 2013 (S. 954) by a vote of 66 to 27. The bill reauthorizes USDA programs for five years and includes \$23 billion in program cuts and consolidations. Additionally, the Senate bill would reduce \$400 million out of \$80 billion spent annually on food stamps, now known as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

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S. 954 sets mandatory funding levels per year for the following USDA Rural Development programs:

- \$150 million for the Water/Wastewater Backlog Program
- \$62.5 million for the Value Added Producer Grants (VAPG)
- \$15 million for the Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program (RMAP)

House Approved farm bill

On July 11, the U.S. House approved an agriculture-only version of the farm bill (H.R. 2642) by a vote of 216 to 208. The House leadership decided to split the farm bill into two parts—removing food stamp and nutrition programs from the bill. The House failed to pass the original farm bill (H.R. 1947) on June 20 by a vote of 195 to 234. H.R. 2642 sets mandatory funding for one USDA Rural Development Program: \$50 million for the Value Added Producer Grants (VPAG) over ten years.

On September 19, the House approved H.R. 3102, which addresses food stamp and nutrition programs, by a vote of 217-210. This bill would cut \$39 billion in funds over the next decade for the food stamp and nutrition programs.

Both the Senate and House versions of the farm bill include reauthorizations for the Delta Regional Authority, Northern Border Regional Commission, Northern Great Plains Regional Authority, and Southeast Crescent Regional Commission.

LATEST ACTION: NADO has joined a coalition of other organizations in writing to the House and Senate Agriculture Committee leadership in support of a robust Rural Development title and in support of the Senate farm bill's mandatory funding levels for the Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program, the Water/Wastewater Backlog, and Value Added Producer Grants. Click [here](#) to view a copy of the letter.

On October 12, the House voted to move its version of the farm bill to a conference committee with the Senate. On October 1, the Senate renamed their conferees to the committee who were previously announced on August 1. On October 30, the farm bill conference committee met for the first time, and in doing so, took the first steps to reauthorize a five-year farm bill. The conference committee is charged with merging the two farm bills into one bill that both bodies can pass before sending the final bill to the president for his signature.

The path forward for a five-year farm bill remains unclear. The differences between the Senate and House-passed farm bills are significant and, possibly, the largest hurdle is the vast differences between the food stamp and nutrition titles in both bills.

The full farm bill conference committee is as follows:

Senate Conferees: Debbie Stabenow (D-MI), Max Baucus (D-MT), Michael Bennet (D-CO), John Boozman (R-AR), Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Saxby Chambliss (R-GA), Thad Cochran (R-MS), Tom Harkin (D-IA), John Hoeven (R-ND), Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Patrick Leahy (D-VT), and Pat Roberts (R-KS).

House Conferees: Frank Lucas (R-OK), Dave Camp (R-MI), Michael Conaway (R-TX), Jim Costa (D-CA), Rick Crawford (R-AR), Rodney Davis (R-IL), Suzan DelBene (D-WA), Jeff Denham (R-CA), Eliot Engel (D-NY), Marcia Fudge (D-OH), Sam Johnson (R-TX), Steve King (R-IA), Sandy Levin (D-MI), Tom Marino (R-PA), Jim McGovern (D-MA), Mike McIntyre (D-NC), Gloria Negrete McLeod (D-CA), Randy Neugebauer (R-TX), Kristi Noem (R-SD), Collin Peterson (D-MN), Martha Roby (R-AL), Mike Rogers (R-AL), Ed Royce (R-CA), Kurt Schrader (D-OR), Austin Scott (R-GA), Steve Southerland (R-FL), Glenn Thompson (R-PA), Filemon Vela (D-TX), and Tim Walz (D-MN).