

May 14, 2008 - Rep. Slaughter Applauds Passage of Farm Bill

FOR IMMEDIATE
RELEASE

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Slaughter Applauds Passage of Farm Bill

Washington, DC – Rep. Louise M. Slaughter (D-NY-28), Chairwoman of the House Rules Committee, today applauded the passage of H.R. 2419, the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008, commonly known as the Farm bill. This bipartisan legislation will strengthen the American agriculture industry and ensure the safety of America's food supply. The bill passed in the House of Representatives by a veto proof margin of 318-106.

“The Farm bill makes great strides in strengthening American agriculture to meet the 21st Century needs of the United States with a safe, stable food supply,” said Rep. Slaughter. “This legislation will go a long way to help Americans struggling with the rising cost of groceries and gasoline.”

Specifically, the bill will expand food security and nutrition programs, protect America's natural resources, promote healthier foods, and reform commodity and biofuel programs to reflect the priorities of the nation. Additionally, the bill enhances funding for programs designed to aid and improve the specialty crop industry which is vital to Western New York's economy.

“I am especially pleased that nearly three fourths of the money provided by the Farm bill is designated to nutrition programs that will help millions of American families afford healthy food,” Slaughter continued. “What's more, the bill will bolster the specialty crop industry, including Western New York's apple farms and vineyards that are so critical to our regional economy.”

BACKGROUND

The conference report on H.R. 2419, the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008, commonly known as the Farm bill, will make historic investments in our food and farm economy. The Senate is expected to pass this conference report and then it will be sent to the President to be signed into law.

Help With Rising Food Costs in America

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.

It updates the food stamp program to reflect the current state of our economy. These critical food stamp provisions will help about 11 million people by 2012. Households with children receive 77% of food stamp benefits.

Provides much-needed support to emergency feeding organizations, such as food banks, food pantries, and soup kitchens by increasing funding for The Emergency Food Assistance Program by \$1.25 billion – with \$50 million for immediate shortages at food pantries.

Helps schools provide healthy snacks to students, with \$1 billion for free fresh fruits and vegetables.

Investing in Specialty Crops and Conservation Programs

Fruit and vegetable producers will have their own place in the Farm Bill for the first time and will benefit from more than \$1.3 billion for new programs that support research, pest management, trade promotion and nutrition for the industry.

Provides \$466 million for the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program, that focus on local efforts to enhance producers' ability to compete in the marketplace and provide consumers with safe, abundant food.

Establishes the Specialty Crop Research Initiative and provides \$230 million to develop and disseminate science-based tools to address the needs of specific crops and their regions. The research important priorities such as food safety, mechanization, genetics, plant breeding and pests and diseases.

Conservation

programs are boosted by \$7.9 billion, which reduce soil erosion, enhance water supplies, improve water and air quality, increase wildlife habitat and reduce damage caused by floods and other natural disasters.

Critical Reforms

Commodity

programs account for less than 13% of the Farm Bill—and decline by \$60 billion over the next ten years compared to the last Farm Bill in 2002.

This

bill begins to end payments to farmers who don't need the help, with the most significant reforms in over 30 years. It reduces the cap for non-farm income by 80%, to \$500,000, and puts in place the first-ever cap for farm income at \$750,000 for fixed direct payments.

It cuts federal payments to crop insurance companies that are making windfall profits due to higher crop prices by \$5.7 billion.

Ethanol's Impact on Prices

The Farm Bill takes a critical step in transitioning biofuels beyond corn - by reducing the current tax credit for corn-based ethanol by six cents per gallon and creating a new tax credit to promote the production of cellulosic biofuels.

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