

Farm Bill Passage Needed

Kansas Corn Farmers Say Farm Bill Passage Needed for Crop Insurance, Trade and Research

Simply put, farm programs like crop insurance and programs support trade and are in jeopardy if the Farm Bill is not passed.

Two Kansas corn leaders who have recently participated in national meetings say Congress must pass a comprehensive five-year farm bill this year. The 2008 Farm Bill expired Sept. 30, 2012, and an extension of the Farm Bill will expire next month on Sept. 30.

In mid-July, Kansas Corn Growers Association (KCGA) President Bob Timmons, Fredonia, and other Kansas corn leaders attended the National Corn Growers Association Corn Congress in Washington, D.C. Marion farmer Terry Vinduska, who is a past chair of the U.S. Grains Council, also attended the recent U.S. Grains Council board of delegates meeting in Ottawa, Canada. Vinduska currently serves on the Kansas Corn Commission.

While at the NCGA meetings in Washington, D.C., Timmons and other Kansas Corn leaders visited the offices of every member of the Kansas Congressional delegation.

"We told our delegation we were disappointed in the lack of progress for passage of the farm bill," Timmons said. "We explained that a strong crop insurance program remains our top priority, but also reminded them the farm bill has many other vital components including funding for trade development and research. Kansas farmers should not have to hope for another extension of the 2008 bill. We need a new Farm Bill that represents today's challenges and opportunities."

At the U.S. Grains Council meeting Vinduska joined in discussions regarding the importance of funding as the lifeblood for the Market Access Program (MAP) and Foreign Market Development program. He says the Council counts on federal support to gather funds to use for overseas export promotion work. The bottom line, he says, is that without a Farm Bill in place, funding for these essential programs is in limbo.

"The Farm Bill has already been an extension of past year's program," Vinduska says. "We've maintained at previous levels but we are not sure what will happen the next time around. If another extension takes place that aspect might not be there. If program funding is cut, a certain percentage it could also mean we close offices overseas, which means fewer opportunities for U.S. farmers."

A key component to building export markets for U.S. grains is to eliminate trade barriers. Vinduska has been part of U.S. Grains Council meetings with his counterparts in Brazil and Argentina and said the group discussed how to open world markets for biotech crops, which have a bad rap in Europe.

"Our frustration, and anyone who farms in the U.S. is with countries that have a barrier," he says. "So much of their policy is not based on sound science but rather based on perceptions and false ideas on what bioengineered crops and BT corn actually is. It's tough to deal with someone not using science in their decision making."

Representatives and Senators from Kansas are home this month and are holding meetings with their constituents. Timmons encouraged growers to let their Congressional leaders know how important it is to get final passage of a comprehensive five-year farm bill.

For growers, especially young and beginning farmers, managing the potential loss of revenue is vital. The Kansas Corn Growers Association (KCGA) supports efforts to ensure the Federal Crop Insurance Program remains the cornerstone of the farm safety net and advocates for market based risk-management tools that complement the Federal Crop Insurance Program. Because current inaction hampers farmers' ability to make sound long term business decisions for the next five years, KCGA is urging Congress to pass a comprehensive five-year Farm Bill this year.