



# FEDERAL FOOD AND FARM POLICY

*FARM BILL STRATEGY AND ACTION*



*Sarah Hackney and Wes King, NSAC*



Thanks, folks.

- ❑ NSAC: a grassroots alliance of over 100 member organizations from around the country working together to improve federal food & farm policy for over 25 years!
- ❑ CAN is a member! As are many other organizations across the region







## **FARMERS & STAKEHOLDERS**

Share their experiences, ideas, challenges related to federal policy, programs, rules with local groups



## **MEMBER GROUPS**

Collect input from farmers & stakeholders as well as their own experiences, bring asks to NSAC



## **NSAC**

Helps members: identify top priority sustainable food & farm policy issues nationwide, set campaign strategies, campaign to win!



## **CONGRESS & FED AGENCIES**

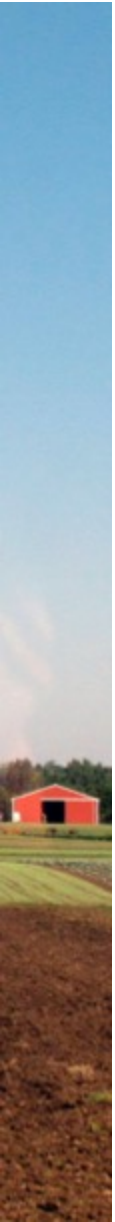
NSAC brings – directly and thru members – priority asks to Congress and agencies like USDA to improve federal food & farm policy

- ❑ **Elections:** Getting good people who care about sustainable agriculture into office (*NSAC does not work on electoral campaigns and is nonpartisan*)
- ❑ **Authorization:** AKA “How a bill becomes a law” - supporting good legislation, stopping bad legislation. Can include developing good programs, winning increased \$\$\$, or making changes to laws or programs to reflect farmers’ and communities’ changing needs
- ❑ **Appropriations:** Ensuring funding goes where it’s needed
- ❑ **Implementation:** Ensuring programs and policies work as intended at the agencies and in the field



# So let's talk Farm Bill







# Why We Do This Work





A comprehensive, multiyear piece of legislation that governs a substantial array of federal farm, food, forestry, and rural policies and programs under the joint jurisdiction of the House Committee on Agriculture and the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

# What's in the 2014 Farm Bill?

- **Title 1: Commodities**
  - Ex. Price Loss Coverage
- **Title 2: Conservation**
  - Ex. EQIP; CSP; CRP; ACEP
- **Title 3: Trade**
  - Ex. International Food Aid
- **Title 4: Nutrition**
  - Ex. Food Stamps
- **Title 5: Credit**
  - Ex. Farm Loans
- **Title 6: Rural Development**
  - Value Added Agriculture; Rural Microenterprise Development
- **Title 7: Research & Extension**
  - Ex. Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program
- **Title 8: Forestry**
  - Ex. Healthy Forests Reserve Program
- **Title 9: Energy**
  - Ex. Rural Energy for America
- **Title 10: Specialty Crops & Horticulture**
  - Ex. FMLFPP; NOCCSP; SCBG
- **Title 11: Crop Insurance**
  - Ex. Organic Price Elections
- **Title 12: Miscellaneous**
  - Ex. Outreach to Minority and Veteran Farmers and Ranchers



## □ What's IN

- Commodity Programs
- Crop Insurance
- Conservation
- Agriculture Credit
- Forestry programs
- Anti-hunger/nutrition assistance
- Rural development
- Ag research
- Trade

## □ What's OUT

- Farm/food worker rights & protections
- Public land grazing rights
- Irrigation water rights
- FDA food safety
- Renewable fuels standard
- Tax issues
- School meals & WIC
- GMO labeling

# What's it Mean to be "IN" the Farm Bill?



- For included programs, the Farm Bill details things like:
  - ▣ Overall program 'authorization'
  - ▣ Definitions
  - ▣ Eligibility
  - ▣ Priorities
  - ▣ And more...
- Example: Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program



# What's it Mean to be "IN" the Farm Bill?



- What about funding?
  - Mandatory
  - Discretionary
  
- Example: Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program (SARE)

# Untangling Who Does What



**Authorizing  
Committees**



**Appropriations  
Committees**



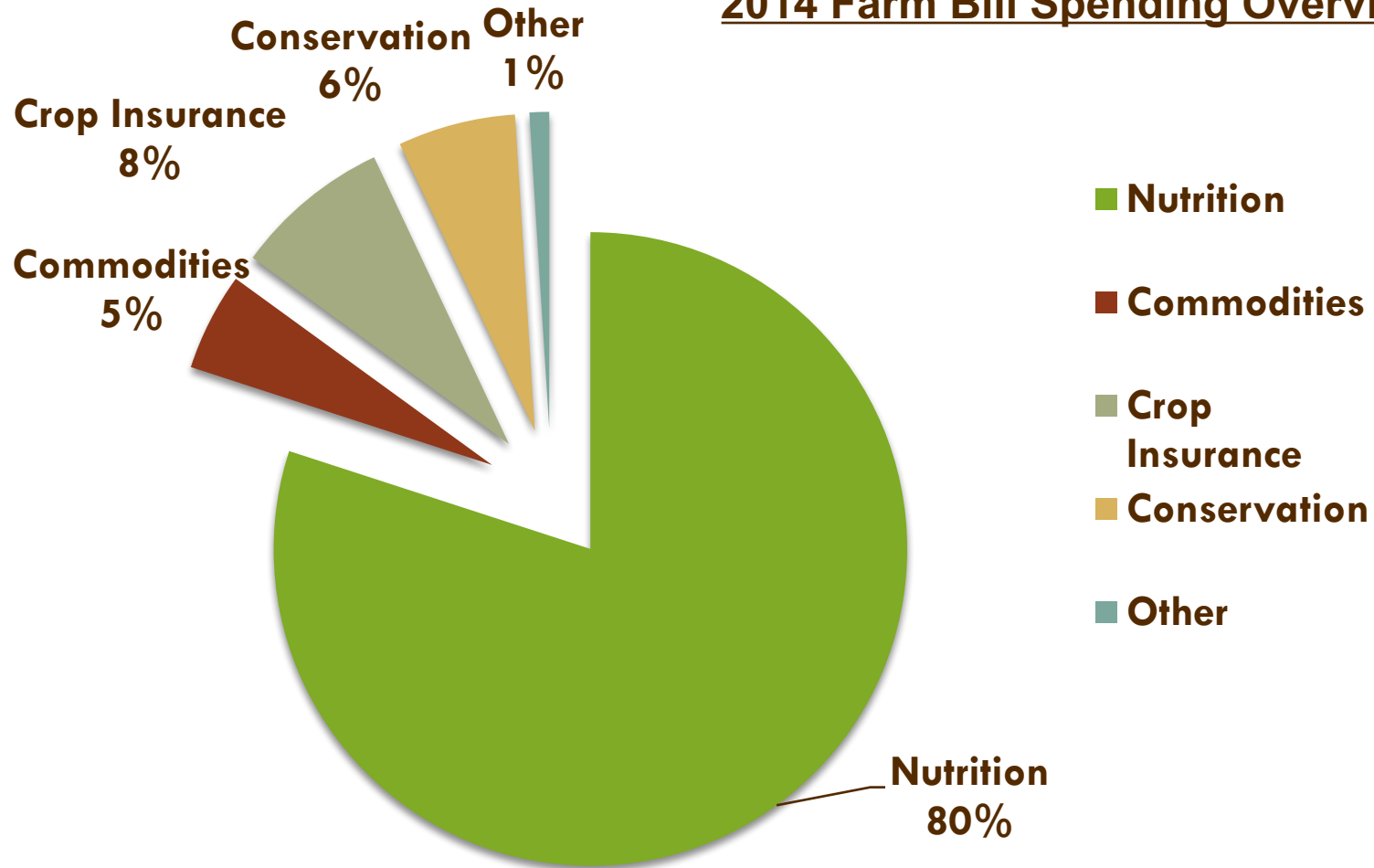
**Budget  
Committees**



- ❑ Major redesign of commodity programs
- ❑ Expanded crop insurance coverage and subsidies
- ❑ Consolidated and cut conservation programs
- ❑ Relatively modest cuts to SNAP
- ❑ New diversified farm insurance program
- ❑ Expanded support for farmers markets, organic and local/regional food
- ❑ Expanded support for beginning farmers and ranchers

# How the Pie Got Sliced!

## 2014 Farm Bill Spending Overview



Source: Congressional Research Service

- Everything included in the ENTIRETY of these titles: Trade, Credit, Research, Rural Development, Forestry, Energy, Horticulture, Miscellaneous. For example, these key programs:
  - **Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BFRDP)**
  - **The Farmers Market and Local Food Promotion Program (FMLFPP)**
  - **Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentives (FINI)**
  - **Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program (RMAP)**
  - **Value-Added Producer Grant Program (VAPG)**





**House  
Agriculture  
Committee**

## AGRICULTURE COMMITTEES

The Farm Bill starts as two bills - one in the House and one in the Senate - drafted, debated, and amended by the Agriculture Committees.



**Senate  
Agriculture  
Committee**

Estimated to begin  
in early spring 2018



**Full House of  
Representatives**

## FULL CONGRESS "THE FLOOR"

Once a majority of each committee votes for their bill, each bill goes to the floor (the full legislative body) of either the House or Senate for debate, amendments, and a vote.



**Full  
Senate**

Could happen in spring-  
summer 2018

## CONFERENCE COMMITTEE

Once the House and Senate pass their versions of the bill, a small group of legislators - the conference committee - meets to merge them and resolve any differences.

Conference negotiations  
could begin in late  
summer 2018



**Full House of  
Representatives**

## FULL CONGRESS "THE FLOOR"

Both the full House and Senate must next pass the conference committee's final farm bill.



**Full  
Senate**

Could happen as early as  
late summer or early  
autumn 2018

Once Congress passes the final bill, it goes to the White House for the President's signature and becomes law! If the President vetoes the bill, it has to go back to Congress. They can vote to override the veto and pass it as-is or make changes to the bill and send it back to the President.



**LAST STEP - THE  
WHITE HOUSE**

Could occur as early as  
September 2018

# How Does It Become Law?

## ❑ **BUDGET RECONCILIATION**

- ❑ Annual budget resolution directs committees to cut mandatory spending by \$XX amount
- ❑ Spending provisions only
- ❑ Ag committees reports back changes to budget committee for inclusion in reconciliation bill
- ❑ Filibuster proof

## ❑ **TWO BILLS or ONE?**

- ❑ Nutrition programs
- ❑ Farm programs

- ❑ **SNAP**
- ❑ **Cotton & Dairy**
- ❑ **Depressed Farm Economy**
- ❑ **Conservation Programs**
- ❑ **1% Programs – Stranded?**
- ❑ **Marker Bills**



- The most important from our perspective of the potential stranded programs are:
  - The Beginning Farmers and Rancher Development Program
  - The Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentives Program
  - The Value Added Producer Grant Program
  - The Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program
  - The Farmers Market and Local Food Promotion Program
  - The National Organic Cost-share Certification Program

- ❑ Local and Regional Food Systems Marker Bill
- ❑ Beginning Farmer and Rancher Marker Bill
- ❑ Conservation Marker Bill
- ❑ Crop Insurance Marker Bill
- ❑ Seeds and Breeds Marker Bill
- ❑ ... Plus more?



**TAKING ACTION!**



- ❑ Congressional committees:
  - ❑ House Committee on Agriculture
  - ❑ Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry
- ❑ Full Congress
- ❑ The President
- ❑ Advocacy groups & industry lobbyists
- ❑ Grassroots voices: YOU!

# Key Legislators in the CAN Region

- ❑ **KENTUCKY:** Sen. Mitch McConnell (\$ and Ag), Rep. Comer (KY-1, Ag), Rep. Rogers (KY-5, \$)
- ❑ **OHIO:** Sen. Sherrod Brown (Ag), Rep. Fudge (OH-11, Ag), Rep. Gibbs (OH-7, Ag)
- ❑ **TENNESSEE:** Rep. DesJarlais (TN-4, Ag)
- ❑ **VIRGINIA:** Rep. Goodlatte (VA-6, Ag)
- ❑ **WEST VIRGINIA:** no Members on any agriculture-focused committees

- **Things You Can Do Right Now / This Year:**
  - LISTEN to & LEARN about your Members of Congress
  - EDUCATE your Members of Congress: what matters around sustainable ag, rural development, local food?
  - ASK your Members of Congress to do the right thing
    - E.g. cosponsor a marker bill!



- **LEARN:** Who represents you?
  - ▣ 2 Senators, 1 Representative, each sits on multiple cmtes
  - ▣ <https://www.govtrack.us>
- **LISTEN:** What are your MoCs supporting or opposing?
  - ▣ Check out their website, sign up for their email newsletter
  - ▣ Follow them on Facebook and/or Twitter!
  - ▣ See recently sponsored bills (by issue area), voting record, committee lists, much more:  
<https://www.govtrack.us>

# Some Context for your MoC's life



- ❑ **SHAKE hands:** introduce yourself to field office staff (no matter their position), not just MoCs
- ❑ **SEND invites:** invite MoCs (and their staff!) to your field day, farmers market, workshop, or celebration
- ❑ **SHARE news:** win a grant? An award? Share the news with your MoCs' field team!
- ❑ **SHOW up:** attend Town Halls (including via telephone), listening sessions, coffee chats. Plus in-district and in-DC meetings!

First – **anything you can do is helpful.** An informed and engaged citizenry is critical to all of this. So don't beat yourself up if you're busy and have a hard time finding time. *There's no silver bullet or quick fix in policy advocacy!*

- Let's talk about action in 3 contexts:
  - *Assuming you already know WHO your legislators are and you've done a little bit of homework and educating...*
  - I have 90 seconds to do something. What's most impactful?
  - I can occasionally put in modest time and energy.
  - I can put in regular time and energy.



## □ What's worth your 90 seconds?

- Anything with a clear ask and a clear target
- Anything that will contribute to amplifying an issue (and a solution)
- Example: calling your legislator!
  - Calls take 90 seconds
  - You can call DC or in-state
  - Write a simple script
  - Offices tally and monitor #s!
  - Calls > petitions or social media



## □ Ready to step up your game?

- Keep up those “S” actions around education – and start including an ASK.
  - *If a staffer shows up for an event, make sure they understand where the funding came from; if it was federal funding, ask them to support the program in the farm bill!*
- Link up with local and national groups working on the issues you care about
  - *Join their call-in days, sign-on letters, and local actions*
- Be a sharer / amplifier on social media

# I Want to Do This Work on the Regular!

- **Let's do this. Our most effective grassroots groups emphasize:**
  - Coordination, coordination, coordination.  
See also: listening, allyship.
    - *Coordinated events, letters, sign-on opportunities, call-in days, meetings, and events*
  - Tap, organize, and engage your personal and professional networks!
    - *Seek out and foster relationships that build bridges and connections*

- **Our most effective grassroots groups emphasize (continued):**
  - Request a formal meeting with your MoC – you can do this! But you need the relationships first.
  - Come to DC! Join an NSAC fly-in or host your own!
  - Formalize your stakeholder ‘listening’ – consider a policy advisory group or ongoing education
  - Some groups engage during election cycles – very helpful but proceed with caution if you’re a c3 (Reference Alliance for Justice)



## □ Congressional calendar:

### ■ Main RECESS periods through 2017

- *May 29 – June 5 (Memorial Day)*
- *July 3-7 (Independence Day)*
- *August 1-Sept 4 (Labor Day)*
- *November 20-24 (Thanksgiving)*
- *December 18-29 (Christmas)*



## ○ Action Opportunities this Year:

- EDUCATE lawmakers
- BUILD SUPPORT for marker bills (cosponsors!)
- RALLY grassroots voices to speak out for what we want to see in the next farm bill (in the media, at Town Halls, in meetings, EVERYWHERE)

