

## Senators, state official praise passage of 2012 Farm Bill

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The passage of the 2012 Farm Bill has drawn positive comments from Sen. Mike Johanns (R-Neb.), Sen. Ben Nelson (D-Neb.) and Nebraska agriculture director Greg Ibach.

Johanns applauded the Senate's passage of the Agriculture Reform, Food and Jobs Act of 2012, known as the farm bill.

The bill reduces government spending by approximately \$23 billion, while providing risk management tools to agricultural producers, and significantly reforms agriculture policy by taking a more market-oriented approach.

"This is a reform-minded, market-oriented farm bill that represents a positive step in our nation's ag policy," Johanns said. "Given our daunting budget situation, it is appropriate this bill saves more than \$23 billion—a step in the right direction in dealing with our debt—while helping to mitigate the risks producers face.

Nelson noted the bill eliminates outdated subsidies, promotes job creation and improves the safety net for producers, while taking steps to reduce the deficit with \$23 billion in spending cuts.

"The 2012 Farm Bill ushers in a new era for Nebraska farmers and ranchers, and the agriculture industry that drives our economy," he said. "Its budget-minded reforms, and swapping of government subsidies for new crop insurance programs, will benefit Nebraska's more than 47,000 farms while strengthening the safety net for tough times."

Ibach said he was pleased that senators, after thoughtful deliberation, passed the Agriculture Reform, Food and Jobs Act.

"Their action today gives forward momentum to legislation that is critical to rural Nebraska," Ibach said. "It is important for our farmers and ranchers to know, going into the next production season, the federal farm bill policies under which they will be operating."

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The farm bill passed with a bipartisan vote of 64-35.

The Farm Bill is the federal government's main legislative authority over agriculture, farming, and food; it reauthorizes American agriculture programs for five years through 2017.

This bill will reduce the deficit by more than \$23 billion because of changes to every title and the elimination of nearly 100 federal programs overall. It shifts farm policy further away from dependence on income support and instead focuses on risk management.

The bill saves \$15 billion from commodity crop support by eliminating four programs, including direct payments; countercyclical payments; the Average Crop Revenue Election Program, called ACRE; and the Supplemental Revenue Assistance Program, called SURE.

The bill tightens payment limits and ensures those who receive government assistance are actively engaged in farming.

It consolidates 23 conservation programs into 13. The improvements reduce costs while making the programs more farmer friendly, Johans said.

The Farm Bill is updated and reauthorized approximately every five years by Congress; the previous Farm Bill (the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008) expired this year.

Action now heads to the House of Representatives, which will produce its own bill. A conference committee will need to resolve differences before it receives final approval.

"The U.S. House should take notice of the Senate's strong bipartisan effort to further Nebraska agriculture, and pass its Farm Bill soon," Nelson said. "Congress must set a new five-year course for American agriculture this year."

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