



NOFA-NY FARM BILL PRIORITIES

4.19.18 Update: The House Agriculture Committee passed their Farm Bill Markup along party lines. Chair Conaway says he hopes to have a vote of the entire House in early May, but delays are likely. The Senate is still working on its bill in Committee, and may have a bill for the Senate floor by early June. If the two houses can't agree, and a bill isn't passed before the election recess, many sustainable agriculture programs will be in jeopardy of being stranded with no funding during an 'extension'.

PROGRAMS	DESCRIPTION	\$\$ ASK	HOUSE MARK-UP April 18, 2018
<p><u>Organic Research</u></p> <p>NOFA-NY supports the bipartisan Organic Agriculture Research Act (H.R. 2436; S. 2404) which would authorize \$50 million in mandatory funding annually for the Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative (OREI). Funding for OREI has been stagnant at \$20 million since fiscal year 2010, while many of the production challenges of organic farmers go unaddressed.</p>	<p>Investing in organic research is central to increasing domestic production of organic crops to meet growing demand. In addition, because of the focus on soil health and alternative pest and disease management strategies, organic research benefits organic and conventional farmers alike. Unfortunately, over the past five years, while overall funding for agricultural research has grown significantly, funding for organic research has stagnated. For example, according to USDA's data, funding for organic in the flagship competitive grant research program, the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI), has averaged about two-tenths of one percent (0.2 percent) annually. In addition, funding for USDA's organic-specific research programs has been stagnant for years.</p>	<p>OREI: \$50 m.</p>	<p>OREI: \$30 m.</p>
<p><u>Organic Standards Oversight and Enforcement</u></p> <p>The bipartisan "Organic Farmer and Consumer Protection Act" (H.R. 3871) was introduced by NY Rep. John Faso to address fraud issues. NOFA-NY strongly supports this bill because "fraudulent 'organic' grain and feed originating overseas is not only deceptive to consumers, but it artificially drives down the price of real organics, hurting legitimate organic farmers in Upstate New York and across the country."</p>	<p>Without effective enforcement of organic standards by USDA, organic farmer and handler investments as well as consumer trust are jeopardized. USDA should take immediate action to bring non-complying operations and their organic certifying agents into compliance, or exclude them from the program. Congress should use its oversight authority to ensure that USDA takes the necessary actions to tighten enforcement.</p> <p>USDA must enhance mechanisms for compliance and inspection to ensure that all imported organic products meet U.S. standards. Unfair competition from products that do not meet U.S. organic standards puts U.S. producers at a disadvantage.</p> <p>This Bill should include a requirement for USDA to implement enhanced procedures to track organic imports and ensure that imported products fully comply with U.S. organic standards.</p>	<p>\$5 m</p>	<p>HR 3871 fully included and funded at \$5 m.– we are working with Faso to add some more specifics in the Report language</p>
<p><u>Certification Cost Share Assistance</u></p> <p>The bipartisan Local Food and Regional Market Supply Act (Local FARMS Act (H.R. 3941/S. 1947) was introduced by Pingree, Fortenberry, and S.P.Maloney et al. We strongly supports this bill because it reauthorizes the Organic Cost Share Program, as well as several other programs to help farmers tap into growing markets and help consumers access healthy food.</p>	<p>One of the unique costs faced by organic farmers is the fee associated with the rigorous annual organic certification. Two federal programs, the National Organic Certification Cost Share Program and the Agricultural Management Assistance Act (AMA), provide organic farmers with modest reimbursements for a portion of their annual organic certification fees. These cost-share programs should be renewed with adequate mandatory funding to meet projected demand. Additional flexibility should be given to the Secretary to determine other unique costs faced by organic farmers that should be reimbursed.</p>	<p>NOCCS and AMA Certification Cost Share fully funded</p>	<p>Organic Certification cost Share is cut entirely: NOCCS -- \$0 AMA – \$0</p>

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<p><u>Seeds and Animal Breeds to Address Farmers' Needs</u></p> <p>The new Farm Bill should require USDA's National Institute for Food and Agriculture (NIFA) to use its existing competitive grants research programs to collectively allocate \$50 million annually to public plant and animal breeding programs, with a focus on developing regionally adapted cultivars and animal breeds. Seeds for the Future Act (H.R. 5208)</p>	<p>Both organic and conventional farmers need seeds and animal breeds that are suited to their local growing conditions, changing climates, and farming systems. Congress, USDA, & public research universities must work to reinvigorate public plant and animal-breeding programs to provide farmers with regionally adapted seeds and breeds.</p> <p>The seeds and breeds developed with this public funding should remain in the public realm to allow farmers the right to save the seeds and allow plant breeders access to the germplasm for field trials, and to make further improvements to adapt the cultivars to farmers' changing needs. A Seeds and Breeds coordinator should be appointed to help ensure a coordinated effort throughout all parts of the agency.</p>	<p>\$50 m.</p> <p>Langauge requiring public funding to only pay for public cultivars.</p> <p>Seeds & Breeds Coordinator</p>	<p>\$0.</p> <p>None of the proposed provisions to reinvigorate public plant and animal breeding were included in the bill.</p>
<p><u>USDA National Organic Program and the National Organic Standards Board</u></p> <p>NOFA-NY strongly opposes any efforts to dilute the authority and role of the NOSB in the overall standard-setting process, or to seek statutory changes to the delicate balance of stakeholder slot allocations for the Board membership.</p>	<p>The role of the NOSB is important to the organic sector to ensure that all stakeholders with an interest in organic agriculture and food have access and input into the USDA process for setting organic standards. It is this diverse body with statutory authority that helped give the organic label the credibility and accountability that it has today and the platform for the exponential growth of the organic market.</p> <p>The process of establishing and revising USDA organic standards must continue to be fully transparent with full opportunity for public participation, as envisioned by the procedures established in OFPA.</p>		<p>Statutory Changes to NOSB:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. expedited petitions and procedures for substances 'related to food safety'. 2. broadens NOSB membership to include 'employees' of farms, handling operations and retail. 3. Mandated NOSB task force any time the NOSB is considering substances that EPA and FDA consider to be safe.
<p><u>Risk Management Program Reforms</u></p> <p>The new Farm Bill should renew language from the 2014 Farm Bill requiring RMA to provide price elections for all organic crops. In addition, the Whole Farm Revenue Program should be reformed and streamlined to improve options for diversified organic farms.</p>	<p>Many organic famers want to be able to insure their crops based on organic prices, not conventional prices. While USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA) has made progress in this area, organic price elections are still not available for all organic crops, which makes crop insurance of limited value for organic farmers</p>	<p>Complete full price elections for all organic crops</p>	<p>This was not addressed</p>
<p><u>Conservation Program Reforms – Organic</u></p> <p>The payment limits under the Organic Initiative within the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) should be equalized with the rest of the EQIP program to ensure full opportunity for organic farmers to participate in the program. Homegrown Organic Act (H.R. 3637, S.2215</p>	<p>Currently, organic farmers who choose to participate in the EQIP Organic Initiative face a payment limit of \$20,000 per year and \$80,000 over 6 years, whereas the payment limit in the general EQIP program pool is \$450,000 over 6 years. In addition, the USDA conservation programs should be used to provide technical assistance and mentorship for farmers transitioning to organic.</p>	<p>Equalize payment limits for organic to the same as the rest of the EQIP program</p>	<p>-- NO equalization of the payment limits for organic farmers -- Elimination of the Conservation Stewardship Program</p>
<p><u>Conservation Programs – General</u></p>	<p>For a detailed review of all the Conservation Programs in the proposed Farm Bill , see http://sustainableagriculture.net/blog/chairmans-mark-conservation/</p>		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cuts total funding for the conservation title by nearly \$1 billion. Including cutting funding for working lands conservation programs by nearly \$5 B. over 10 years. 2. Eliminates the authority and funding for CSP 3. Attacks and weakens the Endangered Species Act by allowing the approval of pesticides without considering the impact on endangered species.

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<p><u>Payment Limitations</u></p> <p>Setting limits on how various program payments are paid helps to level the playing field for family farmers and reduce abusive subsidy schemes used to circumvent the law. This Farm Bill should continue the movement begun in the 2014 Farm Bill by limiting program payments to the largest operators.</p>	<p>Payment limitations are based on any number of criteria – from income levels to defining who gets the payments: actively engaged farmers; only certain number of family members or managers, only specific corporate structures, and limits how much any one operation could receive in payments. This varies in different programs, but putting limits on payments levels the playing field for all farmers.</p>		<p>Greg Fogel, NSAC: “Never before has there been such a brazen attempt to undo years of statute for the benefit of the nation’s largest farm operations. This radical proposal would turn what is intended to be a safety net into an unlimited give away, placing family farms at a disadvantage and stunting the growth of new farm businesses by bidding up the price of already scarce farmland.”</p>
<p><u>Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Programs –</u></p> <p>SNAP is the financial centerpiece of the farm bill, which is estimated to cost \$87 billion a year, with three-fourths of it going to food stamps</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) allocations. • Fully fund programs that support the ability of local and regional food systems to provide viable markets for local farmers and access to fresh fruits and vegetables for senior and limited-resource consumers. 		<p>The work requirements “would cause more than 1 m. low-income households - about 2 m. people —low-income working families with children — to lose their benefits altogether or have them reduced,” increasing hunger. [Ctr. On Budget and Policy Priorities].</p>
<p>The “Protect Interstate Commerce Act,” is an Amendment Introduced by Rep. Steve King -- HR 4879/3599 to Pre-empt State or Local regulations on agricultural production.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would prohibit states from passing regulations that affect agricultural production in other states, or that exceed existing federal law. • Would allow any producer, consumer, trade association, business, or government agency to challenge, and potentially invalidate, regulations that affect agricultural production in other states, within a 10-year statute of limitations. • Any state agricultural regulation that was passed in the prior decade could in theory be subject to federal challenge. 		<p>This Amendment is in the Mark-Up voted on by the House Agriculture Committee</p>
<p>For Up-To-The-Minute Farm Bill information, see: National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, and the NSAC BLOG, as well as RAFI-USA</p>			