

AG ISSUES UPDATE

Edited by Brad Hollabaugh
June 2018

Farm Bill Advances in Senate

On Wednesday, June 13, the Senate Agriculture Committee passed its version of the Farm Bill with a vote of 20-1. This bipartisan legislation is fully supported by USApple and our partners in the Specialty Crop Farm Bill Alliance.

Committee Chairman Pat Roberts (R-KS) and Ranking Democrat Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) listened to our concerns and included our priorities in the final bill. The legislation maintains and improves key specialty crop programs including an increase in funding for the Specialty Crop Research Program and some policy changes we are advocating.

The long process was kicked off with a Michigan field hearing last May where USApple Board Member Chris Alpers testified on behalf of the industry. He advocated for continued funding for priority programs including research, crop insurance, trade promotion and initiatives to fight pests and disease. This, too, was the message brought by apple leaders at our Capitol Hill Day in March and through ongoing efforts by USApple staff with the Agriculture Committee.

The full Senate is expected to consider the bill before their July 4th break, and amendments to cut or eliminate important programs like the Market Access Program and crop insurance are likely. Be on the lookout for action alerts and weigh in with your Members of Congress when asked! (*Apple Bites* - 6.14.18)

Farm Bill Vote Fails in House

Although the Senate is moving forward with its version of the Farm Bill, the U.S. House's first attempt at passing the 2018 Farm Bill fell short in May as lawmakers voted down the critical agriculture legislation.

While there's still time for Congress to act, the 193 to 213 vote marks a setback as advocates push to have the 2018 Farm Bill in place before the current farm bill expires at the end of September. Adopting a new farm bill by that deadline is vital to continuing essential risk management programs, including crop insurance and Title I commodity programs, as well as making improvements to programs that help dairy producers manage their risk.

House leaders must now return to the drawing board to determine how to build broader support for the legislation. The bill drew opposition from all Democrats, who objected to changes to nutrition programs, as well as 30 Republicans, who withheld support due to a separate disagreement over immigration. House leaders plan to bring the bill up for another vote by late June.

Members of Pennsylvania's delegation who voted for the bill are: Reps. Lou Barletta, Ryan Costello, Mike Kelly, Tom Marino, Lloyd Smucker, Bill Shuster, and Glenn "G.T." Thompson.

Mexico Slaps Tariffs on American Apples

Mexico recently announced it will impose tariffs on U.S. apples as part of a retaliation against the U.S. imposing tariffs on steel and aluminum. USApple President and CEO Jim Bair discussed the

impact these tariffs will have on U.S. apple growers in a live nationwide interview on RFD-TV and Sirius XM radio.

The blog commentary shown below, "Mexico Slaps Tariffs on American Apples", ran in the Wall Street Journal following the reporter's conversation with USApple President and CEO Jim Bair. (*Apple Bites - 6.14.18*)

"Headlines containing the words 'Apple' and 'tariffs' are sure to get readers' attention. Once people notice that the target of the retaliatory measures begins with a lowercase 'a' they are less-alarmed. The iPhone maker's revenue in the past year was about 60 times as much as that of U.S. growers of the shiny red fruit.

"About a fourth of U.S. apples are exported according to the U.S. Apple Association and Mexico is the number one customer. But if Mr. Trump is concerned about the ability of Mexicans to keep the doctor away, he need not be — they can get their apples from world's number one producer, China.

"That is little consolation, though, to farmers concentrated in states like Washington, New York and Michigan as Mexico plans to put levies on their crop in response to President Donald Trump's announced tariffs." (*Spencer Jakob, Jun 11, 2018*)

US Apple Meets with President about Trade Frictions

Jim Bair and Diane Kurrle joined with representatives of the Northwest Horticultural Council and the Washington Apple Commission for a day of meetings with Trump Administration officials and Members of Congress to discuss market disruptions occurring or expected from the current trade frictions.

Also participating were USApple Director Steve Smith, Yakima Fresh; Cass Gebbers, Gebbers Farms; Bryon McDougall, McDougall & Sons; Mark Powers, Northwest Horticultural Council and Todd Fryhover, Washington Apple Commission. (*Apple Bites - 6.14.18*)

Food Labeling: USDA Publishes Proposed Rule to Implement National Bioengineered Food Disclosure Standard

On May 4, 2018, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Agricultural Marketing Service published notice in the Federal Register of a proposed rule to establish the National Bioengineered Food Disclosure Standard (NBFDS) (83 FR 19860). Under the proposed rule, food manufacturers and "other entities that label food for retail sale" would be required to disclose information regarding bioengineered foods and bioengineered food ingredients.

Bioengineered foods are also commonly referred to as genetically engineered, genetically modified, or GMO. The disclosure required by the proposed rule could be provided through a number of different methods including the use of standardized text, standardized symbols, or the provision of an electronic or digital link. The requirements under the proposed rule differ somewhat depending upon whether the food or food ingredient is one which is deemed to have a highly adopted bioengineering status, meaning that 85% of the commodity in the United States is bioengineered.

Comments on the proposed rule must be received by July 3, 2018. The proposed rule is the result of a July 29, 2016 amendment to the Agricultural Marketing Act of 1946 mandating that USDA establish a federal NBFDS (Public Law No: 114-216 (07/29/2016)). The law required USDA to develop the NBFDS within two years of the July 29, 2016 enactment.

Additionally, the law prohibits states from requiring the labeling or disclosure of bioengineered foods in a way that is "not identical" to the standard established by USDA. The law was enacted shortly after Vermont legislation (Act 120) mandating the labeling of foods "produced with genetic engineering" was scheduled to go into effect on July 1, 2016.

Bill Clarifying Agritourism on Preserved Farmland Clears Committee

A bill that seeks to add more certainty for farmers who are looking to supplement their income by establishing agritourism operations on preserved farms has cleared its first hurdle in the General Assembly.

Senate Bill 819, sponsored by Sen. Ryan Aument of Lancaster County, was passed by the Senate Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee and now heads to the full chamber for consideration. The legislation would establish a uniform definition of agritourism and clarify that such activities are permissible on preserved farms.

Currently, county farmland preservation boards may approve incidental businesses, including agritourism, on preserved farms. However, the definition of what constitutes agritourism can vary between counties. The bill would maintain county boards' roles in approving agritourism on preserved farms but establish common definitions that landowners and farmland preservation boards can rely on to make decisions.

Bill to Give Farmers Input on Environmental Regulations Advances

The state Senate's Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee has given its approval to a measure that would give farming community a chance to offer input on proposed environmental regulations.

Senate Bill 1171, sponsored by Sen. Michele Brooks of Crawford County, now heads to the full Senate for consideration. The bill would establish a Farm Animal Agriculture Advisory Board to replace the Nutrient Management Advisory Board currently housed under the State Conservation Commission. The bill would require state agencies to seek the board's input on all proposed environmental regulations affecting animal agricultural operations, including those outside the scope of the Nutrient Management Act.

Pennsylvania Farm Bureau supports the bill and is concerned that the limited scope of the Nutrient Management Advisory Board leaves farmers out of important discussions around environmental regulations that affect their operations. The organization believes the expanded panel proposed in the bill would be better positioned to examine the broad range of issues that come up in regulating animal agriculture.

Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture Issues Spotted Lanternfly Quarantine Order

The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture recently posted an "Order of Quarantine and Treatment" for the spotted lanternfly, an invasive plant pest dangerous to forests, ornamental trees, orchards, grapes, and other plant, stone and wood products.

The spotted lanternfly is not yet widely prevalent or distributed within or throughout Pennsylvania, but has been found in several primarily southeastern Pennsylvania counties. The quarantine order supersedes all previous orders by PDA and presently applies to Berks, Bucks, Carbon, Chester, Delaware, Lancaster, Lebanon, Lehigh, Monroe, Montgomery, Northampton, Philadelphia, and Schuylkill Counties.

Intentional movement of the spotted lanternfly is expressly prohibited and is a serious offense. Violations could result in criminal or civil penalties and/or fines. The quarantine also restricts the movement of certain articles. If you are seeking to enter into a compliance agreement to be able to move these articles you can request a permit by contacting Dana Rhodes at PDA at **717.772.5205** or at danrhodes@pa.gov.

Extension Names Spotted Lanternfly Chief

Penn State Cooperative Extension has created a new position to coordinate efforts towards halting the spread of the invasive spotted lanternfly.

Heather Leach will serve as spotted lanternfly extension associate. She will oversee Penn State's efforts and work closely with state and federal agencies, including the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the state Department of Agriculture, Game Commission and Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. She will also ensure that extension agents are trained and prepared to work with the spotted lanternfly response.

"My goal is to develop a comprehensive understanding of spotted lanternfly priorities from every perspective and disseminate new information on biology, behavior and effective management techniques as effectively as possible," Leach said. "I believe that a unified and collaborative approach will give us the best chance to manage this important pest."

First discovered in Berks County in 2014, the spotted lanternfly has since spread to 13 southeastern counties. It is a major threat to agricultural crops, particularly grapes, tree fruit and hardwoods. State and federal officials are working in conjunction to halt the insect's spread and depopulate the already-infected areas.

Leach comes to Penn State from Michigan State University, where she researched strategies for minimizing pest damage to fruit crops.

Nominations Open for FSA Committees

It's time for farmers to nominate candidates to represent their communities in decisions on how federal farm programs are administered at the local level. Nominations for the U.S. Department of Agriculture Farm Service Agency's county committees opens June 15. Farmers will have until Aug. 1 to nominate themselves or others to serve on the FSA committee in their county.

Candidates must participate or cooperate in an FSA program and live in the area where the election is being held to be eligible. Committee members serve three-year terms. Farmers should check with their local USDA service center to determine whether there are positions open this year.

"We strongly encourage all eligible producers to visit their local FSA office today to find out how to get involved in their county's election," said Acting FSA Administrator Steve Peterson. "There's an increasing need for representation from underserved producers, which includes beginning, women and other minority farmers and ranchers."

Committee members make decisions on how FSA programs operate day-to-day and on how the agency deals with disasters, conservation, emergencies, commodity price loan support, county office employment and other agricultural issues.

To be considered, a producer must sign an FSA-669A nomination form. The form and more information about the process are available at www.fsa.usda.gov/elections. Election ballots will be mailed to eligible voters beginning Nov. 5.

Help Us Spread the Word: Educator's Ag Institute

The Pennsylvania Friends of Agriculture Foundation is committed to growing agriculture literacy. And one way the foundation achieves that goal is by helping educators develop lesson plans based on agriculture.

The foundation, a charitable organization supported by Pennsylvania Farm Bureau, is hosting the Educator's Ag Institute this summer at Penn State. This year's institute, planned for July 8-12, will give teachers an up close and personal look at farming practices, and how they can use agriculture as the basis for lesson plans.

While at the conference, educators will tour a number of Penn State's agriculture facilities, participate in hands-on lessons and leave with a host of materials for use in their classrooms.

The Educator's Ag Institute is open to new educators, along with those who have previously attended our Ag in the Classroom workshop. Participants will also tour several area farms and hear from farmers about how they grow food, care for and feed their animals, and how the farm is run. Educators will receive Act 48 credits and/or can register for continuing education credits through Penn State.

Please consider sharing information about this valuable workshop with educators in your area. For more information, contact the foundation at 717.731.3556 or www.pfb.com/aginstitute.