

Editorial Support for Farm Policy Reform

The New York Times

New York Times: *An Even Better Farm Bill*
May 28, 2007

"...with so much at stake — energy, conservation, rural development, the health of smaller farms and fair trade — and with the administration and influential centrists demanding reform, the full House and Senate should pay attention [to reform] even if the committees do not."

The Washington Post

Washington Post: *Farm Sense – Can Congress write a farm bill without wasteful subsidies?*
May 20, 2007

"The farm bill can be a vehicle for investing heavily in important priorities such as rural conservation or food stamps for low-income Americans, without depleting the federal bank account or violating the Democrats' responsible pay-go budget rules -- but only if Congress is willing to make agriculture spending more rational. If the House Agriculture Committee does not move in that direction, the full House should."

Washington Post: *The Fat of the Land -- Whom to help -- wealthy cotton growers, or just about everyone else in the world?*
June 24, 2007

"The panel's vote suggests that the farm bloc in the House plans to "circle the wagons" to defend [status quo] subsidy programs, as Rep. Frank D. Lucas (R-Okla.) put it Tuesday. On the other side are lawmakers such as Reps. Ron Kind (D-Wis.) and [Jeff Flake](#) (R-Ariz.), who introduced a much more attractive proposal to phase out certain farm payouts. This could lead to a bloody battle on the House floor this year.

"A "compromise" that contains little meaningful subsidy reform, on the other hand, would be a failure of policy and of leadership. So would temporarily extending the current farm bill as time to reauthorize the legislation runs out."

Washington Post: *This is Not Reform -- Will the Democrats keep wasting money on farm subsidies?*
July 24, 2007

"Instead, the House Agriculture Committee has produced a bill that essentially maintains current subsidy programs, with some minor tweaks billed as "reforms." Among them is a provision that would disqualify a farmer with an annual adjusted gross income of \$1 million -- yes, \$1 million -- from receiving subsidies. That's a pathetic five times the \$200,000 cap President Bush proposed earlier this year. The bill also includes a small sop to fruit and vegetable farmers not covered under current commodity programs -- a move that could generate more support for the bill on the floor than it deserves. And it increases price targets for some commodity crops, worsening a wasteful federal liability.

"So what is the speaker's take on this rotten bill? It "represents a critical first step toward reform," Ms. Pelosi said last week. That's the wrong answer. The House leadership should be pushing for significant reform of the crop subsidy system. It can start by supporting an amendment from Rep. Ron Kind (D-Wis.) that would lower the income cap and scale back some of the most egregious payouts. Mr. Kind's amendment is still too modest, but proposals like it, not the legislation on the table right now, are the critical first steps toward reform."



Wall Street Journal: *Farming for Dollars*
July 6, 2007; Page A8

And if they ever have chance [for reform], it ought to be this year. Farmers have been pocketing about \$20 billion a year in taxpayer handouts, even as they enjoy record crop prices. Thanks to the ethanol subsidy boom, corn has hit as high as \$4 a bushel, more than double the 2005 price. Yet almost half of all farm subsidies go to corn growers, thanks to the clout of Midwest and Plains-state Senators. Farm incomes are now about 30% higher than the average for all workers. And thanks to a surge in land values, the average net worth of a full time farmer is \$830,000.

The danger is that Congress's agricultural barons -- who favor the status quo, only more so -- will pocket the new subsidies and drop the reform. The bill that passed the House Agriculture Committee recently is a classic in bipartisan logrolling. Messrs. Kind and Flake have a better idea -- and let's hope that in these flush times liberals and conservatives can unite on the House floor to slash subsidies to all but the poorest farmers.

Chicago Tribune: *Farming in a New Century*
June 22, 2007

"FARM-21 faces a rough road, particularly in the House. There's a reason that farm subsidies have survived: farm state lawmakers desperately want to preserve them. But they have to end."

"U.S. farmers are the most productive in the world. They are smart, they are adaptable and they are resilient. They can stand on their own--and FARM-21 acknowledges that. It is the best agriculture reform plan to come out of Washington in a long time."

StarTribune

Minneapolis Star Tribune: *Finally, a chance to reform farm subsidies*
May 21, 2007

"For as long as anyone can remember, fair-minded reformers in Washington have been trying to wean American farmers from government subsidies, design a more sensible rural safety net and let market signals, rather than federal regulations, guide the nation's food supply.

"Last week a big, bipartisan group of lawmakers introduced a remarkable bill to do just that. It even saves money for taxpayers and speeds up the development of renewable biofuels. The Food & Agriculture Risk Management Act is a radical break from past farm policy, and it sidesteps the normal process for writing agriculture legislation. But it points farm policy in exactly the right direction, and if it doesn't exert some influence on the big farm bill that Congress will write this summer, then the process will be a failure.

Los Angeles Times

Los Angeles Times: *Cut the Farm Bill Fat*
June 24, 2007

"It's probably too much to expect progress from the House Agriculture Committee. But even if it drafts a status-quo farm bill, the rest of Congress can scrap it. There are strong reform alternatives, particularly the bipartisan bill introduced in the Senate by Sen. Richard G. Lugar (R-Ind.) and in the House by Reps. Ron Kind (D-Wis.), Jeff Flake (R-Ariz.).

"A small minority of farm states has controlled U.S. agricultural policy for far too long. It's time for the rest of the country to wean agribusiness off the dole."

The Atlanta Journal- Constitution

Atlanta Journal-Constitution: *Cultivate reform in farm program*
May 16, 2007

"In the next few weeks, lawmakers are expected to start writing legislation covering farm policy and related expenditures of \$70 billion or more for the coming six years. They should begin by considering ideas proposed last week by Reps. Ron Kind (D-Wis.), Jeff Flake (R-Ariz.) and others.

"No doubt the powerful farm lobby will dig in to protect its spot at the public trough. Congress should resist the temptation to give in to the squeals of protest."

Wisconsin State Journal

Wisconsin State Journal: *Seize chance to end subsidies*
Monday, June 4, 2007

"[Rep. Kind's bill proposes a radical departure that benefits farmers, taxpayers, consumers and international trade. ... risk management accounts would help bring U.S. farm policy in compliance with global trade agreements, which are hurt by subsidies. That would help lead the world toward freer trade, benefiting U.S. exports.

"...it's time for American farmers to produce for market demands, not to collect a subsidy check."

The Philadelphia Inquirer

The Philadelphia Inquirer: *Cultivating saner policy*
May 31, 2007

“What’s different this year is the diverse coalition of politicians, farmers, taxpayer groups, environmentalists, and international nongovernmental groups jointly demanding changes to traditional farm subsidies. Ninety percent of farm-subsidy payments are channeled to growers of just five crops: wheat, rice, corn, soybeans and cotton.

“This country needs better farm policy - to provide a farmer safety net, to protect the land, to rectify international trade inequity, to feed the poor. Congress should nurture the good seeds that have been planted.”

Seattle Post-Intelligencer

Seattle Post Intelligencer: *Living Food – Time for a change*
May 20, 2007

“In a refreshing example of much-needed suburban interest in farm policy...key themes that must emerge in a new farm bill: better support for domestic and international anti-hunger programs, more encouragement for organics, encouragement of farmers markets and new emphasis on fruit and vegetable growers.



Milwaukee Journal Sentinel: *Take bull by the horns*
June 13, 2007

“A bill introduced Wednesday by Kind would create a framework for a saner system of farm support. Along with President Bush's own ideas, announced in January, there are sensible alternatives to the illogic of the current system.

“It’s time for change. Half of all farm spending goes to just 22 congressional districts...The overly rich payouts have consequences beyond our shores: They are a key reason global trade talks stalled last year.

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel: *Reaping What You Sow*
July 9, 2007

The current system must be changed. It does almost nothing to help small farmers, it hurts consumers by needlessly boosting prices on a variety of products and it was a key reason that the effort to reach a global trade deal fell apart last year. Congress has a chance to create a saner system that will truly support farmers and at the same time save taxpayers billions of dollars. What’s not to like about that?

Orlando Sentinel

Orlando Sentinel: *Phase out farm subsidies*
June 30, 2007

It’s not too late to come up with a better farm policy that doesn’t waste taxpayers money, squander resources and hinder U.S. trade negotiations. But lawmakers who want to see improvements will need to stand together to overcome a stubborn group who are beholden to the status quo’s vested interests instead of national interests.

Current farm policy needlessly sends billions of dollars a year in subsidies to large farming operations, often corporate owned. More than two-thirds of U.S. farmers don’t qualify. Only 1 percent of subsidies between 1995 and 2005 went to Florida farms.

The Des Moines Register

Des Moines Register: *In Search of Leadership on the Farm Bill*
July 1, 2007

“The farm bill is perhaps [democrats] best opportunity to date to show that they can make the everyday operations of government work better for ordinary people: More money to feed the hungry and protect the environment. Less money to the ultra-wealthy few. It’s a chance to show they can exercise fiscal discipline while backing up their party’s ideals with action.”

“Staying the course without reforms is neither good policy nor good politics. Ten percent of recipients get two-thirds of payments, according to Environmental Working Group data. The government made \$1.3 billion in direct payments since 2000 to landowners who didn’t farm, the Washington Post has reported.”