

Commodity Programs and Beyond in the 2008 Farm Bill

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Not since 1985 have the words agriculture, farm or some recognition of production agriculture been omitted from the title of a farm bill. Some see this as a sign of the decline in Congressional support for agricultural programs. In the Food, Conservation and Energy Act of 2008 (FCEA), commodity funding was cut by an estimated \$12 billion from the 2002 Farm Bill. Despite cuts in programs affecting production agriculture, the FCEA still contains authorization for substantial spending on commodities, conservation, and specialty crops, and contains sufficient implications for trade agreements, to be properly called a farm bill.

The articles in this theme discuss major new and renewed provisions of the 2008 FCEA affecting traditional and specialty agricultural production and trade. ACRE a new commodity program based on state and farm revenue shortfalls, and increased spending on conservation programs are discussed in two separate articles. Provisions for specialty crops, which for the first time gained their own farm bill title, are also highlighted. A final article discusses commodity program implications for U.S. trade and trade agreements.

A state revenue based commodity program included in the farm bill provides a new and untested program for producer consideration. In this issue Carl Zulauf, Michael Dicks and Jeffrey Vitale describe "ACRE" and what it means in comparison to more traditional farm support programs.

James Pease, David Sweickhardt and Andrew Seidl follow up with a discussion of major conservation program provisions of the farm bill and implications for future funding for "working lands" programs. The relative increase in the importance of conservation over 2002 is highlighted.

Articles in this Theme:

ACRE (Average Crop Revenue Election) Farm Program: Provisions, Policy Background, and Farm Decision Analysis 29

Conservation Provisions of the Food, Conservation and Energy Act of 2008: Evolutionary Changes and Challenges 36

The U.S. 2008 Farm Bill: Title X and Related Support for the U.S. Specialty Crop Sector 41

The WTO and U.S. Domestic Support in the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 46

For the first time, specialty crops have their own farm bill Title X ("Horticulture and Organic Agriculture.") Mechel Paggi and Jay Noel explore key provisions of this title and the potential benefit to U.S. specialty crop agriculture.

In the final article, Eric Wailes and Parr Rosson look at the implications of the farm bill for international trade agreements. Issues such as how domestic agricultural supports in the legislation affect U.S. trade commitments and how they are likely to affect future trade negotiations are explored.

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