

AAM Senter On The Hill 9-12-18

The Farm Bill Conference Committee met September 5th to give members a chance to give opening statements. During this meeting Conferees presented issues they wanted addressed in the final bill. Since then the Chair and Ranking Members of both the House and Senate Agriculture Committees have met to try to find common ground so a compromise can be reached. Farm groups are mostly united that the Senate bill is better than what passed the House. I'm told that House Democratic Members of the House Agriculture Committee support passage of the Senate legislation. But, times up - - this week Farm Bill negotiators must reach a compromise between the House and Senate bills. Another meeting of the Big Four is set this week because there are still several issues not agreed to. The reason is that for the Farm Bill to be passed by both Houses of Congress and get to the President, there are very few days left before the end of the month when the current bill expires. Congress is anxious to get out of town and hit the campaign trail for November's election. There is still no final agreement on changes to the SNAP program as well as spending levels and Conservation issues.

There's still time for Congress to make much needed changes to what's contained in the Commodity Title. Net Farm Income is down another 13% since 2017 which means that even with a good crop, producers are going to lose money. Dr. Harwood Schaffer and Dr. Daryll Ray of the Agricultural Policy Center at the University of Tennessee says, "We would argue that it is a fool's errand for US policy makers to continue to pursue a low-price-and-export-will-be-agriculture's-savior policy. When all is said and done, such a policy is not in the interest of US farmers or taxpayers". I agree totally with this statement, Congress needs to raise Loan Rates, so producers can get a fair price from the marketplace.

With the uncertainty in the market place and low prices, we are setting the stage to see large numbers of family farmers pushed off the land. Farmers will not be receiving payments to help offset the Trade War impact until after harvest is completed which will be to-little-to-late for thousands of producers. Why isn't protecting the producers of our food and fiber a National Security issue? Unfortunately, you will find that the processors and exporters oppose increases in prices for farmers because they want cheap commodities, so they can increase profits.

We are seeing further concentration in agribusinesses, the Organization for Competitive Markets, recently reported that three companies control two thirds of the seed and 70% of the agriculture chemical markets. Four multinational corporations' control 71% of the pork and 85% of the beef market and 90% of the grain market.

I ask that we all say a prayer for all the people in Harms Way from the approaching hurricane.

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