

AAM Senter On the Hill 7-13-18

I hope everyone had a great 4<sup>th</sup> of July with family and friends to celebrate the United States of America. With all the issues that seem to tear at the seams of this country, the 4<sup>th</sup> of July is a time when most everyone can come together and be proud of the hard-fought battles that were necessary to win and protect our freedom. Many of our AAM members have served and fought for this country, so our hats and caps are off to honor them.

Now a little update on the Farm Bill, after moving with almost record speed in the Senate, the Farm Bill process is grinding to a halt. Most observers believed that the House and Senate would begin Conference of the competing versions as soon as July 4<sup>th</sup> break was over. Well it hasn't happened yet because before the official Conference can begin, the House must pass a resolution to begin Conference. That resolution has not been taken up on the House Floor yet, so nothing is happening except that Speaker Ryan is digging in his heels on the welfare reform changes contained in the House Bill. These changes originated not in the Agriculture Committee but in the Speaker's Office. These changes are what led to the defeat of the Farm Bill in the first try in the House and was the reason the bill did not get a single Democratic vote.

With the days counting down for Congress this session it is time the House did its job, so the Conference can move forward. This is no time for partisan games because farmers have enough issues to deal with, they at least need to know what the farm programs are going to be next year as it becomes more and more difficult to survive the current low prices as well as uncertain markets.

Now let's move on to the widening Trade War with China as well as many US allies. In early July, Secretary Perdue said that USDA would have a program ready by Labor Day to protect U.S. producers against effects of a Trade War. Now it seems that he is backtracking and saying it is going to take longer and that producers should not expect to be fully protected from adverse impacts of the escalating Trade War. That's not just backtracking, that's putting it in reverse and gunning the engine. Prior to that producers were told they would be fully protected. AAM made our recommendation that USDA should raise Loan Rates to the Cost of Production so that when producers must sell commodities to pay harvest and living costs or go to the bank to discuss financing for next year, they would be protected. It is clear agriculture is being used as a foreign policy tool to force changes in world trade and is going to end up as collateral damage.

AAM did not support the WTO when it was debated in the 1980's, nor did we support NAFTA or other unfair trade agreements. The problem now is that after 30 years of going down the wrong road, the US can't fix the problem overnight without further driving the farm economy into bankruptcy. Come on folks, get your head out of the sand because your ass is still sticking up and everybody can see it. Put a floor under commodity prices, implement COOL so consumers know where their meat is coming from and start negotiating Trade deals to sell American products at a fair price.

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