

POLICY POSITION

4. RELATING TO THE 2013 FARM BILL

BACKGROUND

U.S. farm policy should ensure food and fiber production for domestic consumption and export, an adequate base of agricultural land for current and future generations, and fair competitive markets among producers at all levels. Central to this policy is the understanding that agriculture is critical to national security and is of importance to all Americans. Maintaining the United States' capacity to produce sufficient food and fiber for our needs and for export is vital to maintaining our global pre-eminence. It is necessary that farm policy provide for the viability of producers, access to fair markets domestically and internationally, and a predictable and transparent regulatory framework.

Farm Bills represent a delicate balance between America's farm, nutrition, conservation energy and rural development needs, and require strong bipartisan support in Congress, as well as that of the American people and the farm community. The Farm Bill helps to maintain our nation's farmers, ranchers, forest owners, food security, natural resources and wildlife habitats, rural communities and the 16 million Americans whose jobs directly depend on the agriculture industry.

Farm Bills must be renewed periodically. Failure to do so results in a reversion to permanent law, much of which dates to the late 1940s. Such a step would end the current safety net, increase prices for some commodities, and eliminate vital programs for farmers and ranchers. Such a system of regular renewals ensures timely adjustments to farm policy to adapt to new conditions.

RECOMMENDATION

The Southern Legislative Conference of The Council of State Governments urges the Senate and House to complete a conference committee on a comprehensive Farm Bill that does not override permanent law. The SLC urges both chambers to pass said bill before the September 30, 2013 expiration date. The SLC further requests that Congress create a Farm Bill that continues to recognize and support regional differences in production, and resists one-size-fits-all options.

The Southern Legislative Conference of The Council of State Governments asks that a copy of this policy position be communicated to appropriate state and federal officials.