

Agricultural Policy/Legislative Affairs Committee

Report to the NGFA Board of Directors

March 2024

I. Key Issues:

- Continue to execute a strategy to achieve NGFA's farm bill priorities – especially prioritizing working lands conservation programs, reducing the amount of prime farmland in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), increasing funding for market access and foreign market development programs, and strengthening crop insurance as a risk management tool for farmer customers.
- Monitor Congressional activity for other opportunities and challenges for the grain handling industry, and when appropriate develop and execute a strategy to defend or promote the industry.

II. Committee Activities:

A. Farm Bill: With divided chambers, and divisions in the Republican party—especially among House Republicans—getting anything passed this Congress has proven exceptionally difficult. As of the time we are writing this report, none of the 12 Appropriations bills for FY24 (which started last September) have passed Congress. Last fall, the 2018 Farm Bill was extended by one year (until Sept. 30, 2024), to allow Congress more time to work on the next package. Since that time, several suggested timelines have come and gone. Most recently, Senate Ag Committee Chairwoman Debbie Stabenow (D-Mich.) indicated she would not support a new Farm Bill if it included cuts to the climate-smart conservation funding in the Inflation Reduction Act, or the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. Chairwoman Stabenow will retire at the end of 2024, so this announcement could suggest the Farm Bill will be punted to the next Congress.

Farm Bill Principles and Related Marker Bills: At its March 2023 meeting, the ITAP Committee agreed on the following principles for the next Farm Bill:

- *Crop insurance should be preserved as a primary risk management tool.*
- *Commodity programs should be market driven and not influence planting decisions.*
- *Funding authorizations for the Market Access Program should be increased to help build commercial export markets for U.S. agricultural products and commodities.*
- *Congress should increase investments in working lands conservation programs and ensure the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prioritizes EQIP and CSP.*
- *USDA conservation programs should target the most environmentally sensitive portions of farms.*
- *The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acreage cap should not be increased from 27 million acres.*
- *Congress should build on the positive CRP rental rate reforms in the 2018 farm bill to prevent the federal government from competing against socially disadvantaged and beginning farmers for land.*

- *The underutilized Transition Incentives Program (TIP) which transitions expiring CRP acres to beginning or socially disadvantaged farmers should be improved.*

To this end, there are several “marker bills” that NGFA is supporting for inclusion in the next Farm Bill. They are:

- The CRP Reform Act of 2023 (S. 1509)
- The Agricultural Export Promotion Act of 2023 (H.R. 648)
- The Expanding Agricultural Exports Act (S. 176)

B. Other Legislative Opportunities: With the creation of the new Ag Policy and Legislative Affairs Committee, new opportunities for committee engagement have arisen. While the policy direction remains in the appropriate policy committee, here is a summary of legislative engagement to promote those policies:

- **Government Funding:** We continue to advocate for the passage of appropriations bills that are supportive of our industry. We are working specifically with the subcommittees with jurisdiction over the Army Corps of Engineers to ensure adequate funding for inland waterway projects and to prevent language or funding for studies that would result in the closure of the locks and dams Lower Snake River (directed by Waterborne Commerce Subcommittee). We are also working to include language that stresses the importance of rail crossings to agricultural products and encourages Customs and Border Protection to consider alternatives to closing rail crossings when staffing shortages arise (directed by the Rail Subcommittee).
- **Innovative FEED:** We continue to look for legislative pathways for the Innovative FEED Act, which will establish a new category of animal food additives to cover ingredients that provide animal health, food safety or production benefits (directed by the Feed Committee).

C. Committee Fly-In: The NGFA Washington Fly-In will be held June 4-5, 2024. More information to come, following the NGFA Board of Directors meeting.

III. Issues for Discussion/Input:

- Are there trade or agricultural policies that are harming the industry of which the industry should be aware?
- A number of key Congressional leaders are retiring at the end of 2024. Which future leaders should NGFA be building relationships with this year?
- What other engagement opportunities exist for the new committee?