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NEWS

House Ag Committee advances farm bill

The House Agriculture Committee voted after midnight on May 24 to advance the farm bill (H.R. 8467). The committee approved the bill 33-21 with four Democrats voting in favor — Reps. Sanford Bishop, D-Ga.; Yadira Caraveo, D-Colo.; Don Davis, D-N.C.; and Eric Sorensen, D-Ill.

Chairman Glenn “GT” Thompson, R-Pa., released the legislative text of the bill late last week. The Conservation Title retains the current Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) enrollment cap of 27 million acres. The text also doubles funding for the Market Access Program (MAP) and Foreign Market Development Program (FMD), both critical trade promotion programs run by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS).

NGFA warns against Canadian rail stoppage

NGFA urged the Canadian Industrial Relations Board to take action to avert a rail strike or lockout in [comments](#) submitted on May 21.

Shutdowns or slowdowns of rail-dependent facilities would result “in harmful consequences for Canada’s agricultural producers and industry as well as domestic and global food security,” NGFA said.

As negotiations between the Teamsters Canada Rail Conference and the Canadian National and Canadian Pacific Kansas City Railways continue, the Board has requested comments regarding the impacts of lost rail service on the movements of food throughout Canada.

NGFA noted that many of its member companies rely on rail services that transit to and via Canada. A strike or lockout “would lead to ripple effects across the entire industry.”

For example, the livestock industry depends on rail to deliver corn and other feed grains, and biofuels operations, flour mills and agricultural export facilities require uninterrupted rail service. “A stoppage of rail service would materially harm Canada’s farmgate prices for commodities, Canada’s ag shippers and exporters and its global customers,” NGFA stated.

“The impact of a strike would be particularly severe as trucking is not a viable option for many agricultural shippers due to their high-volume needs and the long distances for many of the movements,” NGFA noted.

NGFA concluded: “An operational railroad is essential for agricultural production and food distribution, and we thank you for your responsiveness to this imminent supply chain issue.”

Minnesota committee stops train length bill

The Minnesota Judiciary Committee chose not to advance a bill that would limit train lengths after hearing testimony from representatives of NGFA and BNSF Railway this month.

Tom Wilcox, NGFA’s Transportation Counsel, testified on May 8 before the committee on the legal ramifications of limiting train lengths to 8,500 feet. The committee ultimately agreed that state laws on train length limitations are federally preempted by authority Congress granted to the Surface Transportation Board and the Federal Railroad Administration, and by the Commerce Clause of the United States Constitution.

Minnesota’s House Transportation Finance and Policy Committee had advanced the bill in March. However, the Judiciary Committee chose not to include train length limitations in an omnibus bill passed last week.

In his testimony, Wilcox noted that shuttle/unit trains -- the most efficient way of moving large volumes of ag commodities long distances -- sometimes meet or exceed the 8,500-foot limit of the proposed Minnesota bill.

“Reducing longer trains to meet the 8,500-foot cap would result in higher costs and operational inefficiencies that will be borne by the railroads’ customers, and the end user consumers of the products made from the commodities,” Wilcox said in his testimony. “While the length of most ag shuttle/unit trains would not be immediately impacted by the limit, they would nevertheless still be adversely affected by the increased network congestion resulting from breaking up longer intermodal, automotive, coal, and other trains that can reach 12,000 feet.”

At least four states have proposed legislation to limit train lengths, but NGFA is unaware of any yet passed into law.

Senate committee advances bipartisan WRDA

The Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works unanimously advanced the Thomas R. Carper Water Resource Development Act of 2024 (WRDA) on May 22, authorizing navigation and ecosystem restoration projects for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps).

“Today’s markup demonstrates the dedication of Chairman Tom Carper, D-Del., and Ranking Member Shelley Moore Capito, R-W.Va., and fellow lawmakers to maintaining waterways infrastructure legislation on a biennial basis in a bipartisan fashion,” NGFA said in a press release issued after the markup. NGFA also thanked Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee Chairman Mark Kelly, D-Ariz., and Subcommittee Ranking Member Kevin Cramer, R-N.D., for their efforts on WRDA.



In addition to authorizing 81 feasibility studies and eight new or modified construction projects, the bill directs the Corps to expedite the completion of several ongoing studies and projects from past WRDAs. The bill also permanently increases the federal cost-share for inland waterway projects to 75 percent, with 25 percent from the Inland Waterways Trust Fund (adjusted from 65/35). It also provides full federal funding for projects funded in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.

A committee summary of the bill is [available here](#).

The House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee is expected to hold a markup of its version of WRDA in June. The NGFA will advocate for the cost-share and funding provisions of the Senate WRDA to be included in any final bill.

WRDA is authorizing legislation that Congress passes every two years. The funding of WRDA-authorized projects is provided through the annual Energy and Water Development appropriations process and supplemental appropriations.

FDA provides update on testing dairy products for avian influenza

By David Fairfield, Senior Vice President, Feed

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) on May 20 provided [additional information](#) on the agency’s sampling and testing of retail dairy products for viable Highly Pathogenic H5N1 Avian Influenza (H5N1 HPAI) virus.

In a previous update on May 10, FDA had announced that all 297 samples from the agency’s survey of retail dairy products were negative for the virus. The additional information made available provides details on testing protocols, where the milk product was processed, and the number and types of products tested. Both FDA and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) continue to indicate that the commercial milk supply is safe based on the current available information.

In response to the detections of H5N1 HPAI in dairy cattle and an associated human H5N1 HPAI infection, USDA and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services also recently announced [new actions](#) to reduce the impact and spread of H5N1 HPAI. These actions include: 1) making available financial tools for lost milk production in herds; 2) supporting enhanced biosecurity practices; 3) coordinating with States with affected herds on movement of animals; 4) additional funding to bolster

testing and laboratory capacity and surveillance; and 5) additional activities related to ensuring the safety of the commercial milk supply.

Detections of H5N1 HPAI virus in dairy cattle have occurred in nine states: Colorado, Idaho, South Dakota, Kansas, New Mexico, Texas, Michigan, Ohio, and North Carolina. The latest [confirmed detections](#) occurred on May 16 in Michigan and Idaho.

EVENTS

CONVEY'24 is July 23-25

[CONVEY'24](#) an annual conference jointly hosted by NGFA, Grain Journal, and the Grain and Elevator Processing Society (GEAPS), is July 23-25 in Omaha, Neb. The early bird registration rate expires on June 17. Register to attend or exhibit at conveyconference.com.

Each year, NGFA, GEAPS and Grain Journal present this unique opportunity for grain handling employees and leaders to gain practical knowledge and training on real-world compliance issues, best practices and emerging industry trends. This year's focus will be on new technology and automation.



New this year: DEGESCH will host a pesticide state-certification workshop on the afternoon of July 23. Additional registration is required for this workshop.

SUPPLEMENTS

Register for next People Spark leadership training by May 24

The deadline to register for the June 2024 leadership program hosted by People Spark Consulting is TODAY, **May 24**.

NGFA and People Spark Consulting have partnered to further the mission to provide education and training to members at all levels in the agriculture industry. The [People Spark Leadership Transformation Program](#)® is a year-long course that focuses on practical application of leadership skills and tools. It starts with an 8-week intensive training, followed by 10 months of ongoing support to reinforce and sustain the learned skills. NGFA members receive a bonus private coaching session with their Leadership Transformation Program® registration. New cohorts begin monthly throughout 2024.



[Click here for information!](#) The investment for the 12-month People Spark Leadership Transformation Program® is \$2,500. Use reference code: NGFA

Extra Supplements

NGFA in the news:

Baking Business: [Sheryl Wallace named to lead Ardent Mills](#)

Feed & Grain: [Senate committee advances 2024 Water Resource Development Act](#)

American Ag Network: [Senate Committee Advances Bipartisan WRDA](#)

Grain Journal: [NGFA Details the Dangers of a Canadian Rail Stoppage](#)

World Grain: [NGFA urges action to avert Canadian rail strike](#)

Other news:

Agri-Pulse: [Opinion: House farm bill delivers common ground on conservation](#)

Trains: [CPKC and Teamsters Canada remain at impasse, with no new contract talks scheduled](#)

Agri-Pulse: [Thompson lays out possible timing for farm bill, hits Democratic opposition](#) *(log in)*

Bloomberg: [Biofuel Groups Seek Supreme Court Renewable Fuel Decision Review](#)

Feed Navigator: [US soy group proves biggest winner in USDA funding round](#)

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