

provisions for livestock producers and fruit and vegetable growers.

Source: American Farm Bureau Federation.

President Obama picks veterinary college as site to sign Farm Bill

President Obama signed the long-awaited Farm Bill at the Mary Anne McPhail Equine Performance Center at Michigan State University's College of Veterinary Medicine.

The Farm Bill is only the second time that Obama has signed legislation in a location other than the White House. This vital legislation has a far-reaching impact on the work veterinarians do every day to protect the health and welfare of both people and animals. Fittingly, he chose a college of veterinary medicine to sign it into law.

In describing the impact of the Farm Bill, Obama said, "It's like a Swiss Army Knife — it multitasks. It creates more good jobs and gives more Americans a shot at opportunity."

"The Farm Bill is often referred to as the 'Food, Farm and Jobs Bill,' but here at the AVMA (American Veterinary Medical Association), we'd like to add that it's a bill for animals, too, because of its far-reaching impact on the work that veterinarians do every day to protect their health and welfare," said Ron DeHaven, AVMA's executive vice president and CEO.


"We commend the president, as well as the Farm Bill conference committee and House and Senate leadership, for their diligence in passing a bill that helps ensure that Americans have access to the safest and

highest-quality food supply in the world," said Clark Fobian, AVMA president.

The Farm Bill contains several crucial veterinary research and food safety programs that are vitally important for animal health and welfare, including:

- ▶ Authorizing up to \$15 million annually for the National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN), a vital, early-warning disease-surveillance program that gives veterinarians and scientists the ability to test for economically devastating diseases such as bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), foot-and-mouth disease (FMD), avian and swine influenza, and classical swine fever, many of which could affect public health.

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Farm Bill Update

NCBA Ag & Food Policy Committee offered an update on the 2014 Farm Bill.

National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA) members attending the 2014 Cattle Industry Convention in Nashville, Tenn., had the opportunity to attend several committee meetings Feb. 6.

Kristina Butts, NCBA executive director of legislative affairs, presented an update on the Farm Bill to the Ag & Food Policy Committee. She noted that the bill, which had finally passed the House and Senate, contained several positives, such as removal of the livestock title, which was a top priority of NCBA, as well as maintaining funding for the conservation title. She noted that the 60% allocation for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) was in jeopardy at one point, but because of grassroots input, it was maintained.

Butts said they are excited for the research title and the provisions it outlines, and they are pleased that disaster assistance was kept in the final version of the Farm Bill. Butts also noted that the disaster assistance is retroactive to cover the past two years when no program was in place to offer such assistance.

In spite of those positives, Butts said they are very concerned with the mandatory country-of-origin labeling (mCOOL) provisions the 2014 Farm Bill failed to address.

"Unfortunately you (the beef industry) are going to suffer retaliations from our two largest trading partners — Canada and Mexico — if Congress does not fix the problematic COOL law," she said, noting that both countries did about \$1 billion dollars each in trade with the beef industry last year.

NCBA president Scott George also weighed in regarding the Farm Bill. He explained that NCBA has worked for three

years to get the Farm Bill finalized. When it came time for this most recent version to be voted on, he said NCBA's leadership decided to publically oppose the Farm Bill because of the mCOOL requirements. "We know we need disaster assistance as that helps some of our producers, but we wanted to get mCOOL stopped, as that impacts every one of our producers. We hoped by opposing it, we could get it fixed before the final vote," he explained.

Of mCOOL George added, "When the Farm Bill came out without fixing mCOOL, it was a slap to the face of every livestock producer. The potential for this is really scary."

The current mCOOL label was determined by the Office of Management and Budget to cost the industry as much as \$100 million to implement, George said. "Packers and consumers are not going to pay it all; it's going to be passed back to feeders and cow-calf producers."

George expressed fear that beef's limited supply combined with mCOOL costs could cause more consolidation among the packing industry, which he said, "is not a good thing."

Butts noted that the retaliations list from Canada currently would impact numerous industries, including the U.S. wine industry, corn-based ethanol and sugar. She stated, "mCOOL is a much broader issue than just livestock. So as we work to get this fixed, we will be working with these other industries."

She asked for continued grassroots efforts and input and noted that it does make a difference.

— by Kindra Gordon, field editor