

Louisiana Agriculture United on Farm Bill

The Honorable Jim McCrery
U.S. House of Representatives
242 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-1804

Congressman McCrery,

After months of delays due to policy and procedural differences, the bipartisan farm bill is now awaiting final approval by Congress. Louisiana's farm community is united in asking you to vote to approve the conference report on the 2008 farm bill. Our farmers, our lenders, our farm input providers, and the thousands of Louisianans employed directly and indirectly in the farm community are counting on you for leadership.

While none of us achieved everything we wanted in this tortuous process, the final bill contains many important provisions and changes essential to Louisiana's farmers, including:

- specialty crop block grants for crops like sweet potatoes and pecans
- a sweet potato disaster amendment supported by the entire delegation
- assistance for U.S. cotton textile facilities to help maintain cotton usage in the U.S. and continuation of the marketing loan program
- a provision to maintain uniform loan rates for all classes of rice
- an effective market balancing mechanism to address any sugar surpluses resulting from opening the US market to unlimited imports from Mexico.

In addition, the tax provisions that led to a partisan vote in July 2007 have been eliminated and the final product now enjoys wide bipartisan support. A veto threat has been leveled, but that threat can be rendered meaningless if Congress will send the conference report to the President's desk with the support of two-thirds of the House and Senate.

As leaders of the Louisiana agricultural industry, we strongly urge you to work with others in Washington, D.C. to over-ride the veto before it occurs by overwhelmingly approving the farm bill now.

Sincerely,

Mike Strain, D.V.M. – Commissioner
Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry

Ronnie Anderson - President
Louisiana Farm Bureau Federation

Jim Simon - General Manager
American Sugar Cane League

George LaCour, Jr. - President
Louisiana Cotton Producers Association

Jeff Durand - President
Louisiana Rice Growers Association

Mark Fields - President
Louisiana Sweet Potato Association

Verl Day - President
Pecan Producers of Louisiana

Charles Canatella - President
Louisiana Soybean Association

Jackie Loewer - President
Louisiana Rice Producers Group