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## Memo: “Senate Agricultural Appropriations Bill”

The Senate Appropriations Committee

Date: 11/12/2020

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The Senate Appropriations Committee recently released its 12 Fiscal Year 2021 Appropriations Bills. They do not intend to do traditional markups on any of these bills but will use them to kick off negotiations with the House over FY 2021 spending. The House has already passed 10 of their 12 appropriations bills. The current Continuing Resolution (CR) maintains government funding through December 11.

A link to the complete Senate Ag Appropriations bill can be found [here](#), and the explanatory statement (report) can be found [here](#).

- For necessary expenses of the Risk Management Agency, \$60,373,000: Provided, That \$1,000,000 of the amount appropriated under this heading in this Act shall be available for compliance and integrity activities required under section 516(b)(2)(C) of the Federal Crop Insurance Act of 1938 (7 U.S.C. 1516(b)(2)(C)), and shall be in addition to amounts otherwise provided for such purpose: Provided further, That not to exceed \$1,000 shall be available for official reception and representation expenses, as authorized by 7 U.S.C. 1506(i). *Note – This is additional funding for Program reviews, compliance and integrity. Last year appropriations provided an additional \$2 million. On page 27 of the bill text.*
- Cover Crops Research and Outreach
  - The Committee recognizes the importance of developing profitable and practicable cover crop options for dairy, grain, and vegetable production systems, including for use in no-till organic systems and as forages. Therefore, the Committee provides no less than the fiscal year 2020 level to support research with the purposes of improving measures of soil health and resiliency; varietal development; optimal dairy forage species combinations; timing and strategies for cover crop seeding and termination; forage integration into organic dairy systems; and mitigation of environmental and extreme rainfall impacts on water quality and soil security for diverse cover crop systems. *From page 20 of report.*
- Risk Management Education
  - The Committee supports the recent expansion of the Risk Management Education Program to include educating farmers and providing technical assistance on a wide range of farm viability and risk management activities. The Committee notes the increase in mandatory funding provided by the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (Public Law 115–334) for this program, and, in light of this increase, encourages NIFA to raise the maximum grant size in order to accommodate a wider range of project types and scopes. The Committee also urges NIFA to develop a process to support regional, multi-regional, and national projects, which would require a separate larger maximum grant size. *Page 37 of report.*

- Acreage Crop Reporting Streamlining Initiative [ACRSI]
  - The Committee recognizes the significant potential of ACRSI to reduce the time and burden of Federal reporting requirements on farmers. The Committee notes that ACRSI was designed to allow farmers to report data electronically and securely with both R.M.A. and F.S.A. to automatically pre-populate forms, eliminate redundant reporting, and increase data integrity. However, the Committee recognizes that USDA's prioritization of ACRSI has been inadequate and therefore directs the Under Secretary for Farm Production and Conservation to allocate all necessary resources to identify the software options necessary to ensure that ACRSI technology is adopted and deployed by R.M.A. and F.S.A. within 120 days of enactment of this Act. *Page 59 of report.*
- Corn Test Weight
  - The Committee is aware of concerns over whether discount tables used by F.S.A. and R.M.A. accurately reflect market conditions. The Committee directs the agency, in consultation with relevant stakeholders, to study and update corn test weight discount tables to improve the accuracy of these discount factors. *Page 64 of report.*
- Haying and Grazing of Cover Crops
  - The Committee recognizes that planting cover crops is one of the best ways farmers can build soil health, improve crop health, and protect water quality. Therefore, the Committee directs R.M.A. to provide flexibility to producers wishing to hay or graze cover crops on prevented planting acreage before November 1st. The Committee further directs R.M.A. to study alternatives to a nationwide haying and grazing date in order to avoid primary nesting and the potential impact of eliminating penalties for haying and grazing after the primary nesting season. R.M.A. shall report the results of this study to the Committee no later than 180 days after enactment of this Act. *Page 64 of report.*
- Improved Producer Education
  - The Committee recognizes that crop insurance is a vital public-private partnership and is the first line of defense for effectively managing risk for many farmers. However, the Committee believes that additional education is needed through the use of clear, comparative, and easy to understand information on the costs of selected crop insurance policies, the producer premium, and the Federal premium subsidy. Therefore, the Committee directs the Secretary to work with crop insurance providers and agents to ensure that all farmers have access to that cost information on their policies in a transparent and easy to understand manner. *Page 65 of report.*
- Malting Barley Endorsement
  - The Committee is aware of concerns regarding the effectiveness of the malting barley endorsement as a risk management tool for barley growers. The Committee directs R.M.A. to work with stakeholders to make improvements to the malting barley endorsement to ensure that it is providing producers with an effective risk management tool. *Page 65 of report.*

- Pasture, Rangeland, and Forage Pilot Program
  - While the Committee supports efforts to ensure that crop insurance programs are actuarially sound and reflect the value of the commodities, the Committee is concerned by recent adjustments to the Pasture, Rangeland, and Forage Pilot Program that have resulted in significant fluctuations to the county base values. The Secretary is directed to ensure that future adjustments to the county base value be phased in or made gradually in order to avoid the dramatic changes that some producers have experienced in recent years. The Committee expects the Secretary to provide policyholders with adequate notification of any such changes well in advance of the sales closing date. *Page 65 of report.*
- Whole-Farm Revenue Protection
  - The Committee notes that the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (Public Law 115–334) directed the Board of Directors of the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation to consider treating the different growth stages of aquaculture species as separate crops for the Whole Farm Diversified Risk Management Insurance Plan. R.M.A. is directed to report to the Committee regarding the steps taken by the Board to consider the feasibility of this proposed change to recognize the difference in perils at different phases of growth for aquaculture species. *Page 65 of report.*