

Title I: Commodities

Economic conditions facing farm country are undeniably bleak. USDA recently announced net farm income is projected to drop 12 percent in 2018, falling to levels not experienced since 2002 when adjusted for inflation. Title I of the conference report exists to aid producers struggling with poor market conditions and the countless other challenges impacting their operations each day. Passage of the conference report will provide certainty that an extension of the 2014 Farm Bill could not. The agreement reauthorizes and strengthens the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) options through 2023, improves the dairy safety net, continues standing disaster programs, and includes several common-sense improvements to U.S. farm policy.

Enhances Farm Policy and Provides Additional Flexibility

PLC provides assistance to producers when the market price for a covered commodity falls to critically low levels (below the statutory reference price). ARC provides assistance to producers when actual crop revenue for a covered commodity falls below 86 percent of the benchmark revenue. Producers electing ARC can choose between county (CO) and farm-level (IC) coverage.

Updated election options: The conference report offers producers a new choice between ARC and PLC on a crop-by-crop and farm-by-farm basis, applied jointly to the 2019 and 2020 crop years. Beginning in crop year 2021, producers will have the flexibility to make an annual decision between ARC and PLC on a crop-by-crop and farm-by-farm basis.

Effective Reference Prices: The conference report allows PLC Reference Prices to adjust with improvements in market prices. This Effective Reference Price is calculated as the greater of 85 percent of the 5-year Olympic average price and the PLC Reference Price established in the 2014 Farm Bill. In no case can the Effective Reference Price be more than 115 percent of the PLC Reference Price (or less than the PLC Reference Price), shown in the table below.

Reference Prices for Covered Commodities

Commodity	Units	PLC Reference Price	Maximum Effective Reference Price*
Barley	bu.	\$4.95	\$5.69
Chickpeas (Large)	cwt.	\$21.54	\$24.77
Chickpeas (Small)	cwt.	\$19.04	\$21.90
Corn	bu.	\$3.70	\$4.26
Dry Peas	cwt.	\$11.00	\$12.65
Grain Sorghum	bu.	\$3.95	\$4.54
Lentils	cwt.	\$19.97	\$22.97
Minor Oilseeds	cwt.	\$20.15	\$23.17
Oats	bu.	\$2.40	\$2.76
Peanuts	ton	\$535.00	\$615.25
Rice (LG/MG/SG)	cwt.	\$14.00	\$16.10
Rice (TJ)	cwt.	\$17.36	\$19.96
Seed Cotton	lb.	\$0.367	\$0.422
Soybeans	bu.	\$8.40	\$9.66
Wheat	bu.	\$5.50	\$6.33

*To reach the maximum Effective Reference Price, the 5-year Olympic average price of the covered commodity must exceed the statutory reference price by 135 percent.

Optional nationwide yield update: Beginning in crop year 2020, owners of all farms in the country will have the opportunity to update the program yield used on the farm to calculate assistance under PLC, similar to the update opportunity provided in the 2014 Farm Bill. The update is intended to benefit producers who sustained multiple years of losses during the 2008-2012 crop years (the previous update period) for which the 2014 update was less effective.

Producers may update the yield on the farm for each covered commodity to 90 percent of the average yield per planted acre on the farm from 2013-2017—ignoring years where the covered commodity was not planted on the farm—multiplied by the yield update factor for the covered commodity listed in the table below. For any year in which the yield on the farm was less than 75 percent of the county average yield from 2013-2017, owners may plug 75 percent of the county average yield.

For example, assume the average yield per planted acre on the farm from 2013-2017 for wheat was 35 bu/ac. The producer could update the PLC yield to 30.8 bu/ac (or 90% x 35 bu/ac x 0.9767).

Yield Update Factor by Commodity

Commodity	Yield Update Factor*
Barley	0.9714
Canola	0.9595
Chickpeas (Large)	1.0000
Chickpeas (Small)	0.9767
Corn	0.9000
Cotton (Upland)	0.9000
Dry Peas	0.9988
Flaxseed	1.0000
Grain Sorghum	0.9000
Lentils	1.0000
Mustard	0.9423
Oats	0.9677
Peanuts	0.9273
Rapeseed	1.0000
Rice (LG)	0.9324
Rice (MG/SG)	0.9866
Rice (TJ)	0.9591
Safflower	1.0000
Soybeans	0.9000
Sunflower	0.9378
Wheat	0.9767

*The yield update factor is the ratio of the national average yield for the commodity from 2008-2012 and 2013-2017 (limited to not less than 90 percent or more than 100 percent).

ARC-CO improvements: The conference report makes several targeted improvements to enhance the efficacy of ARC-CO. The conference report:

- Increases the yield plug from 70 percent to 80 percent of the county transitional yield.
- Incorporates the Effective Reference Price into the calculation of benchmark revenue.

- Adds a trend adjustment factor that will function similar to the factor utilized in crop insurance policies.
- Creates a pilot program that will allow the Secretary the flexibility to divide up to 25 large counties into sub-county units with independently calculated ARC payment rates.
- Requires the Secretary to establish guarantees for irrigated and nonirrigated yields in each county.
- Prioritizes the use of RMA data for calculating county yields in accordance with H.R. 4654.
- Provides assistance based on the county of the farm’s physical location.
- Requires USDA to publish payment rates and program data in a more timely manner.

Targets assistance to land in active production: The conference report suspends ARC and PLC payments on farms that have been entirely in grass or pasture since 2009 to ensure the farm safety net is targeted to those farms that are producing covered commodities. Recognizing that farms in grass are conserving natural resources, the conference report guarantees those farms an opportunity to participate in a 5-year grassland incentive contract under the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) at a rate of \$18 per acre.

Improves the Marketing Assistance Loan

Harvest is often the lowest point of the year for commodity prices. The marketing loan allows farmers to pledge their crop as collateral and receive a loan for a portion of the crop’s value, providing flexibility to market the crop when prices improve. The conference report increases the loan rates for certain commodities to more accurately reflect current market prices and provide more relevant assistance to farmers.

Loan Rate Comparison Table

Commodity	2014 Farm Bill	2018 Farm Bill
Barley	\$1.95/bu	\$2.50/bu
Chickpeas (Large)	\$11.28/cwt	\$14.00/cwt
Chickpeas (Small)	\$7.43/cwt	\$10.00/cwt
Corn	\$1.95/bu	\$2.20/bu
Cotton (ELS)	\$0.7977/lb	\$0.95/lb
Cotton (Upland)	\$0.45 - \$0.52/lb	\$0.45 - \$0.52/lb
Dry Peas	\$5.40/cwt	\$6.15/cwt
Grain Sorghum	\$1.95/bu	\$2.20/bu
Lentils	\$11.28/cwt	\$13.00/cwt
Minor Oilseeds	\$10.09/cwt	\$10.09/cwt
Oats	\$1.39/bu	\$2.00/bu
Peanuts	\$0.1775/lb	\$0.1775/lb
Rice	\$6.50/cwt	\$7.00/cwt
Soybeans	\$5.00/bu	\$6.20/bu
Sugar (Raw Cane)	\$0.1875/lb	\$0.1975/lb
Wheat	\$2.94/bu	\$3.38/bu

Strengthens the Dairy Safety Net

All sectors of production agriculture have been struggling to cope with a period of chronically low prices, but perhaps none more so than the dairy sector. Recognizing these challenges, in February Congress passed the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 (BBA) which made an \$800 million investment in the Margin Protection Program (MPP) and lifted the cap on livestock insurance expenditures. The conference report renames MPP as Dairy Margin Coverage (DMC) and builds on the BBA investment by offering new coverage levels for the first 5 million pounds of production, drastically reducing premiums on catastrophic coverage levels for larger producers, and eliminating the restriction between the margin program (formerly MPP, now DMC) and Livestock Gross Margin (LGM) insurance.

Increases coverage options: The conference report adds \$8.50, \$9.00, and \$9.50 coverage levels for the first 5 million pounds of covered milk production. Additionally, the conference report expands the range of production allowed to be covered, from 5 percent up to 95 percent of production history.

Rewards risk management strategies: For dairy operations that choose to make a 5-year decision to lock in a coverage level and coverage percentage for the life of the 2018 Farm Bill, premium rates are reduced by 25 percent.

Offers flexibility and reduces certain premiums for large operations: The conference report allows dairies with covered production in excess of 5 million pounds to enroll in \$8.50, \$9.00, or \$9.50 coverage under Tier I and to make an independent coverage level election in Tier II. Additionally, as noted in the table that follows, premiums for \$5.00 coverage in Tier II are reduced by 88 percent (91 percent if the premium is discounted for 5-year coverage) in an effort to make catastrophic coverage levels more affordable.

Premium Comparison Table (\$/cwt)

Coverage Level	Tier I (first 5m pounds)			Tier II (over 5m pounds)		
	MPP premium	DMC Premium	DMC Discounted Premium	MPP Premium	DMC Premium	DMC Discounted Premium
\$9.50	N/A	\$0.150	\$0.113	N/A	N/A	N/A
\$9.00	N/A	\$0.110	\$0.083	N/A	N/A	N/A
\$8.50	N/A	\$0.105	\$0.079	N/A	N/A	N/A
\$8.00	\$0.142	\$0.100	\$0.075	\$1.360	\$1.813	\$1.360
\$7.50	\$0.087	\$0.090	\$0.068	\$1.060	\$1.413	\$1.060
\$7.00	\$0.063	\$0.080	\$0.060	\$0.830	\$1.107	\$0.830
\$6.50	\$0.040	\$0.070	\$0.053	\$0.290	\$0.650	\$0.488
\$6.00	\$0.016	\$0.050	\$0.038	\$0.155	\$0.310	\$0.233
\$5.50	\$0.009	\$0.030	\$0.023	\$0.100	\$0.100	\$0.075
\$5.00	\$0.000	\$0.005	\$0.00375	\$0.040	\$0.005	\$0.00375
\$4.50	\$0.000	\$0.0025	\$0.00188	\$0.020	\$0.0025	\$0.00188
\$4.00	\$0.000	\$0.000	\$0.000	\$0.000	\$0.000	\$0.00000

*The DMC Discounted Premium would be the premium cost if an operation chooses to lock in the coverage level and coverage percentage for 5 years.

Provides access to more risk management tools: The conference report eliminates the restriction on participating in DMC and LGM crop insurance. This flexibility, along with the new Dairy Revenue Protection (Dairy-RP) insurance policy developed by the American Farm Bureau Federation, will provide multiple options to address risk for dairy farmers.

Provides equitable relief for 2018 MPP participation: The conference report allows dairy operations that were prohibited from participating in MPP following the premium reductions enacted via the BBA (due to enrollment in an LGM contract) to retroactively enroll in coverage.

Incentivizes participation in revamped program: Recognizing MPP did not provide an adequate safety net for dairy farmers, the conference report provides dairy operations the opportunity to utilize 75 percent of the net premium paid for MPP from 2014-2017 as a credit for future DMC premiums. Alternatively, operations can elect to receive 50 percent of net premium as a direct refund.

Improves Vital Disaster Programs

Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP): LIP provides assistance to livestock producers in the event of the death or forced sale of livestock due to an eligible cause of loss. The conference report updates the eligible causes of loss to include disease and deaths of unweaned livestock, so all livestock death losses are consolidated under one program (whereas certain losses were previously covered under ELAP).

Livestock Forage Program (LFP): LFP provides feed cost replacement for livestock producers in the event of forage loss due to severe drought. The conference report maintains this critical assistance for livestock producers.

Emergency Assistance For Livestock, Honey Bees, and Farm-raised Fish (ELAP): ELAP provides assistance to producers of livestock, honey bees, and farm-raised fish to aid in the reduction of losses not covered under other disaster programs. The conference report ensures ELAP assistance will cover the inspection of herds for cattle fever tick and removes the arbitrary payment limitation on ELAP assistance.

Tree Assistance Program (TAP): TAP offers cost share assistance to eligible orchardists who suffer loss or damage to tree groves. Producers may receive 65 percent of the cost of replanting trees or 50 percent of the cost to remove damaged limbs and vines. The conference report increases the cost share to 75 percent for beginning farmers and veterans.

Maintains Current Administrative Provisions

Payment limitations and AGI means testing: The conference report maintains the current payment limitation of \$125,000 in assistance from ARC/PLC per person or entity. The separate limit for peanuts is maintained and doubling for spouses continues to apply. Additionally, participation continues to be limited to persons or entities with less than \$900,000 in average adjusted gross income (AGI). The conference report removes Loan Deficiency Payments (LDPs) and Marketing Loan Gains (MLGs) from counting toward the payment limitation.

Actively Engaged in Farming (AEF) regulations: The conference report maintains current AEF regulations and continues to ensure all individuals eligible for the farm safety net are required to contribute land, labor, or capital to the farm operation AND provide the necessary amount of labor and/or management. The conference report amends the definition of family to include first cousins, nieces, and nephews to ensure family farms are not subjected to cumbersome regulations only intended for non-family operations.

Title II: Conservation

The conference report continues the voluntary, locally-led, incentive-based conservation model. It builds on the success of the 2014 Farm Bill by streamlining, simplifying and improving program administration. The conference report also provides additional investment in soil health practices, such as cover crops, ultimately providing “downstream” benefits to communities in the form of cleaner water, cleaner air, healthier soils, and more wildlife habitat.

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP): The conference report allows for an increased acreage cap of 27 million acres by 2023, while also addressing the issue of CRP competing with farmers for productive land by reducing rental rates and incentive payments. The conference report includes House-passed provisions to increase the grassland acre floor to 2 million acres and provides more flexibility for grazing.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP): The conference report continues the commitment to working lands by increasing funding for EQIP to \$2.025 billion by fiscal year 2023. Furthermore, the conference report adds producer-focused flexibility by establishing incentive contracts and alternative funding arrangements for irrigation districts. The conference report fosters innovation through Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG). Furthermore, it authorizes Conservation Innovation Trials and the Soil Health Pilot Project, connecting farmers and ranchers in the conservation innovation space with public and private entities and reporting findings for public review.

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP): The conference report continues the commitment to comprehensive working lands conservation by reforming and adding much needed flexibility to CSP. By removing the average \$18 per acre funding requirement for the program, the conference report intends to better incentivize farmers to address local resource concerns. Current CSP contracts will be honored with an option for a one-year extension for contracts expiring in 2019. Otherwise, funding for CSP is reduced from approximately \$1.8 billion per year to no more than \$1 billion per year with the savings being used to fund other higher-priority initiatives like EQIP, ACEP, and RCPP.

Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP): The conference report restores funding for ACEP to \$450 million per year and provides additional flexibility for ACEP to make the program more efficient for farmers, stakeholders, and USDA. The conference report continues to perform the functions of conserving agricultural lands through Agriculture Land Easements (ALE) and wetlands through Wetland Reserve Easements (WRE). The conference report makes important changes to streamline the requirements for ALE plans, add flexibility to matching fund requirements, reform the right of enforcement, clarify the need for conservation plans, and lift burdens on land trust certification.

Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP): The 2014 Farm Bill consolidated the authorities of the many regional programs into RCPP, where USDA partners with private organizations to address natural resource concerns. Targeted conservation initiatives are developed on the local level and selected by USDA through a competitive, merit-based application process. The conference report increases funding for RCPP to \$300 million per year and streamlines the program to allow greater flexibility for NRCS, partners, and producers.

Watershed and Flood Prevention and Small Watershed Rehabilitation: The conference report provides \$500 million over 10 years for conservation infrastructure initiatives like Watershed and Flood Prevention and Small Watershed Rehabilitation.

Additional producer access: The conference report removes impediments to conservation adoption by eliminating requirements for entities to have a SAM/DUNS number and providing USDA the ability to waive AGI limits for environmentally sensitive land of special significance.

Feral Swine Eradication and Control Pilot: According to USDA, feral swine cause an estimated \$1.5 billion in damage to property, crops, and natural resources annually and present a risk for the transmission of African Swine Fever (ASF) and other potentially catastrophic diseases. The conference report establishes the Feral Swine Eradication and Control Pilot with \$75 million for threat assessment, control methods, and land restoration.

Emphasizes protection of drinking water sources: The conference report reserves 10 percent of covered conservation funding for the protection of sources of drinking water, allows community water systems to work with State Technical Committees to identify local priority areas for source water protection, and allows additional incentives for practices that protect source water.

Other highlights:

- Provides \$50 million for the Voluntary Public Access Program.
- Provides \$5 million for Grassroots Source Water Protection.
- Reauthorizes the Conservation of Private Grazing Land Program.
- Updates the Technical Service Provider (TSP) definition and the TSP certification process.

Title III: Trade

Agricultural Trade Promotion and Facilitation: In an era where global agricultural markets are routinely distorted by the high and rising subsidies, tariffs, and non-tariff trade barriers of foreign governments, U.S. trade promotion programs are critical to promoting American agricultural products. The conference report streamlines the four existing trade promotion programs under one umbrella—as envisioned in the House-passed farm bill—to establish and maintain budget baseline for each of the programs moving forward. The conference report includes \$255 million each fiscal year for Agricultural Trade Promotion and Facilitation with a Priority Trade Fund of \$3.5 million annually to be used amongst the four programs at the discretion of the Secretary.

- **Market Access Program (MAP):** MAP provides funding for export market development for U.S. agricultural commodities (both generic and branded) in other countries around the world. The conference report funds MAP at not less than \$200 million each year.

- *Foreign Market Development (FMD)*: FMD develops foreign markets for generic agricultural commodities and product exports. The conference report funds FMD at not less than \$34.5 million each year.
- *Technical Assistance for Specialty Crops (TASC)*: TASC allows USDA to help address barriers threatening U.S. specialty crop exports. The conference report funds TASC at \$9 million each year.
- *Emerging Markets Program (EMP)*: EMP facilitates research and development of foreign market-oriented economies with the potential to become viable commercial markets for U.S. agricultural products. The conference report funds EMP at not more than \$8 million each year.

Builds on the Success of International Food Aid and Food Security Efforts

For more than 60 years, the U.S. has led the way in global efforts to alleviate hunger through international food aid assistance—primarily via the donation or sale of U.S. agricultural commodities. The conference report reauthorizes and improves successful emergency and development programs that were reauthorized within the House-passed farm bill, including the Food for Peace, Food for Progress, and McGovern-Dole programs.

Food for Peace (FFP): FFP provides foreign emergency and development assistance on behalf of U.S. citizens. The conference report maintains in-kind food aid as the foundation of FFP, as well as the 20 percent flexibility provided in the 2014 Farm Bill to ensure the appropriate food aid modality can be used in each emergency and development situation. The conference report authorizes appropriations for FFP at \$2.5 billion each year.

Food for Progress (FFPr): FFPr provides commodities to support countries that have made commitments to expand trade and strengthen agricultural economies. The conference report maintains commodity donations as the heart of FFPr, but also establishes a pilot project to study the effectiveness of providing direct financial assistance for development projects.

McGovern-Dole Food for Education Program (McGovern-Dole): McGovern-Dole provides U.S. commodities, financial assistance, and technical training to carry out feeding programs in schools in developing countries. The conference report allows for a portion of McGovern-Dole funds to be used on commodities grown locally and regionally in project countries to increase community engagement and improve nutrition. The conference report maintains the current authorization of appropriations for McGovern-Dole.

Extends and Improves Other Important Trade Provisions

Global Crop Diversity Trust (Crop Trust): The Crop Trust works to preserve crop diversity from around the world to protect global food security. The conference report increases the proportion of contributions that may be provided by the United States to 33 percent of total trust funds effective beginning in fiscal year 2019 while limiting the value of annual U.S. contributions to \$5.5 million in each fiscal year through 2023.

Bill Emerson Humanitarian Trust (BEHT): The BEHT serves as a financial reserve allowing the Secretary of Agriculture and the Administrator of USAID to respond to unanticipated food crises abroad when other resources are not available. The conference report extends authority to use the funds of the BEHT, which currently holds over \$280 million in available funds, through fiscal year 2023.

Cochran Fellowship Program: The Cochran Fellowship Program is maintained to provide short-term training opportunities to agricultural professionals from middle-income countries, emerging markets, and emerging democracies. The conference report includes a House provision that allows the Secretary to authorize in-country training if deemed more appropriate and emphasizes fellowships focused on sanitary and phyto-sanitary standards. The conference report authorizes appropriations of up to \$13 million each fiscal year to carry out the program.

Borlaug International Agricultural Science and Technology Fellowship Program: The Borlaug Fellowship Program is reauthorized to continue promoting food security and economic growth through training fellowships for citizens from developing and middle-income countries. The conference report directs the Secretary to leverage fellowship alumni engagement to further improve the program and maintains the current authorization of appropriations for the program.

International Agricultural Education Fellowship Program: First proposed in the House-passed farm bill, the International Agricultural Education Fellowship Program will enhance agricultural capacity in eligible countries by providing fellowships to U.S. citizens for the development of school-based agricultural education and youth extension programs. This new initiative will build on the successful 4-H and FFA models in the U.S. to encourage young agricultural leaders in developing countries. This initiative will also provide real-world, hands-on experience for recent U.S. college graduates who plan to return to the U.S. to pursue careers in agriculture. The conference report authorizes appropriations of \$5 million for the International Agricultural Education Fellowship Program each fiscal year.

Title IV: Nutrition

The conference report reflects over 30 improvements to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and other federal nutrition programs, many of which reflect House priorities and lay the groundwork for improved policy by this administration and in future farm bills. The conference report includes incremental but significant victories that will improve SNAP integrity and make the program more effective for recipients.

Incentivizes Work

Existing work requirements are strengthened and paired with a variety of options and supports to increase opportunities for recipients while holding states accountable to administer Employment and Training (E&T) programs effectively. The conference report:

- Requires state agencies to consult with their state workforce development board or local employers to design the state agency's employment and training (E&T) program to meet state or local workforce needs.

- Requires E&T programs to include case management and allows for additional options including supervised job search, apprenticeships, and subsidized employment.
- Allows the state agency and the Secretary to certify additional training and work programs, known as workforce partnerships, to be operated by a private employer or a nonprofit organization with no use of federal funds.
- Prioritizes reallocation of unexpended E&T funds, ensuring they go to states with impactful pilots and programs.
- Requires state agencies to advise adults with no earnings of available E&T services at SNAP recertification.
- Expands countable veteran workforce programming to include programs run by the Department of Labor or Department of Veterans Affairs.
- Requires the support of governors for all Able-Bodied Adults without Dependents (ABAWD) work requirement waiver requests.
- Reduces monthly exemptions—whereby states can exempt SNAP recipients from the ABAWD work requirements—from 15 percent to 12 percent of the ABAWD population.

Improves Program Integrity

While SNAP is impactful and effective at helping those most in need, improvements are needed to reduce the almost \$700 million in annual program abuses.

Participant tracking and access to state information systems: The conference report provides minimum standards and funding for states to track the length of time participants are on SNAP and permits the Secretary to audit and inspect state records and information systems.

Quality control improvements: The conference report eliminates \$48 million in annual state bonuses while holding states accountable for ensuring households receive the accurate amount of SNAP benefits and for making certain the program is administered in the most effective and efficient manner. States will no longer be given bonuses for administering SNAP in a manner that should be considered standard operating procedure.

Interstate data matching to prevent multiple issuances: The conference report establishes a National Accuracy Clearinghouse, ensuring SNAP recipients are not receiving benefits in multiple states. The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimates that this provision alone will save almost \$60 million per year.

Evaluation of child support enforcement cooperation requirements: The conference report requires USDA to assess the feasibility and potential impact of mandatory child support enforcement orders across states. This will lay the groundwork for future efforts to ensure unpaid child support goes to the children who are entitled to it and in many cases desperately need it.

Review of SNAP operations: The conference report authorizes a review of certain group facilities, ensuring they are not drawing nutrition-related benefits from multiple federal programs.

Required action on data match information: The conference report permits states to pursue additional clarification and verification information (e.g. 3rd party income verification services) to ensure accurate eligibility and benefit determinations.

Retail food store and recipient trafficking: The conference report provides continued support to combat retailer fraud and recipient trafficking.

Improvements to electronic benefit transfer system: The conference report limits benefit storage to three months and benefit expungement to nine months (down from six and 12 months, respectively), giving households a reasonable amount of time to use benefits if they need them while mitigating concerns about high balances on EBT cards and the potential for fraud.

Promotes Healthy Foods

More can be done to incentivize healthy food purchases. The conference report achieves this by improving existing incentives and by expanding coordination between educators, retailers, and recipients.

Retail incentives: The conference report codifies the current waiver process by which retail food stores offer incentives to households participating in SNAP to purchase certain staple foods identified for increased consumption by the most recent dietary recommendations.

Nutrition education: The conference report improves nutrition education through coordination, reporting, technical assistance, and comprehensive analysis of impact and outcomes.

The Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program: The conference report permanently establishes projects to increase the purchase of fruits and vegetables among low-income consumers participating in SNAP by providing incentives at the point of purchase. Additionally, the conference report establishes a nutrition incentive technical assistance center to inform current and future grantees of best practices related to the delivery of incentives and the collection and dissemination of information related to incentive projects. This program was formerly known as the Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive (FINI) program

Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program: The conference report extends funding through 2023 to carry out a program geared toward low-income seniors that increases consumption of agricultural commodities and aids in the development of new farmers' markets.

The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP): The conference report provides additional resources for TEFAP, assisting emergency feeding organizations (e.g. food banks) in meeting the needs of their communities.

Healthy fluid milk incentives projects: Subject to appropriations (and authorized at \$20 million), the Secretary is required to carry out milk incentive projects that develop and test methods to increase the purchase and consumption of milk by SNAP households via incentives at the point of purchase.

Title V: Credit

The conference report ensures access to credit so farmers and ranchers have the capital they need to invest in and run their operations. Access to credit is essential to production agriculture, because most producers utilize loans to buy seed, fertilizer, fuel, feed, and other inputs; buy and upgrade equipment; access land; and make all the other purchases and investments needed to run their business. Because most agricultural operations are financed with debt, farmers and ranchers borrow more money each year to produce a crop than most Americans will borrow in a lifetime.

The conference report updates credit authorities to meet the capital needs of modern production agriculture with an emphasis on beginning farmers and ranchers. It also reauthorizes the credit programs contained in the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act, including all Farm Service Agency (FSA) loans.

Provides Additional Incentives for Beginning Farmers and Ranchers

New flexibility for veterans: Under current law, all ownership loan applicants must have participated in business operations of a farm or ranch for at least three years prior to the date the application is submitted. The conference report allows military and other relevant experience to fulfill a portion of, or satisfy entirely, the eligibility requirement.

Individual Development Accounts: The conference report reauthorizes the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Individual Development Accounts Pilot Program which authorizes matching-funds for savings accounts to meet farming-related expenses.

Reserving loan fund set-asides: The conference report sets aside a portion of funds to provide guaranteed farm ownership loans and direct operating loans for beginning farmers and ranchers.

Priority for joint financing: The conference report continues an existing priority for joint financing participation loans and down payment loans within direct farm ownership loans. By providing priority to applicants, USDA can maximize the number of borrowers served for a given level of appropriations.

Improves FSA Loans

Increases farm ownership loan limits and operating loan limits: Under current law, FSA can guarantee standard operating loans and farm ownership loans up to \$1,399,000 and make direct operating and farm ownership loans for up to \$300,000. The conference report increases guaranteed loan limits to \$1,750,000, direct operating loans to \$400,000, and direct farm ownership loans to \$600,000, which enables farmers and ranchers to maintain, buy, and enlarge down payments and construction on new or existing farms or ranches.

Extends Conservation Loan and Loan Guarantee Program: FSA makes and guarantees loans to promote conservation practices on farms and ranches that help protect natural resources throughout the United States. The conference report extends the Conservation Loan and Loan Guarantee Program to provide access to credit for farmers who need and want to implement conservation measures on their land but do not have the “up front” funds available to implement these practices.

Other Provisions

Farm Credit Act: The Farm Credit Act of 1933 established the Farm Credit System (FCS) as a group of cooperative lending institutions to provide short, intermediate, and long-term loans for agricultural purposes. The conference report does not make any policy or jurisdictional changes to Farm Credit Institutions but makes numerous clarifications and modest updates to ensure that FCS and its regulated institutions have the tools and authorities they need to serve the agricultural community.

Study on loan risk: Under current law, farm mortgages are not allowed to be passed on to secondary markets if they are over 1,000 acres or \$13 million. Secondary markets are a vital component of agricultural lending. The conference report requires the Farm Credit Administration (FCA) to conduct a study assessing the feasibility of increasing the 1,000 acre limitation to 2,000 acres. The findings of that report will be sent to the committees of jurisdictions in both chambers and will highlight any potential lending risks that may occur. Upon completion of a favorable study, the cap will be increased to 2,000 acres.

Maintains state agricultural mediation programs: State mediation programs were developed to assist agricultural producers, their creditors, and other persons directly affected by the actions of USDA to resolve disputes, thereby reducing the participant's cost associated with administrative appeals, litigation, and bankruptcy. The conference report reauthorizes the mediation program to enable states to assist farmers facing economic challenges in the declining farm economy.

Equitable relief: The conference report authorizes the Secretary to provide equitable relief to a farmer or rancher whose failure to comply with the terms of a loan was caused by an action of USDA.

Successional land: The conference report authorizes relending authority to resolve ownership of successional farmland.

Study on credit needs of certain farmers: The conference report requires GAO to report on the agricultural credit needs of Indian tribes and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers.

Title VI: Rural Development

The conference report invests in the health, infrastructure, and economic development projects needed to meet the current challenges in rural America. It provides new tools for USDA to help meet the opioid and mental health crises roiling our communities. It redoubles the federal commitment to providing broadband access to every rural American. It provides many rural communities new access to the credit they need to make long-term infrastructure investments. Finally, it promotes cooperative, regional economic development.

Addresses the Rural Health Crisis

Combats opioid addiction through treatment access: The conference report prioritizes projects that help communities meet the challenges of the opioid crisis, including projects that build and upgrade medical facilities, and projects that provide access to telehealth services in rural

communities. It also provides a 33-percent increase in authorized funding for grants under the Distance Learning and Telemedicine Program.

Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network: The conference report reestablishes the Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network to direct resources to mental health professionals aiding the agricultural community during a time of record suicides. During these times of challenging economic conditions in farm and ranch country, this network will help bring behavioral health services and support to America's farm and ranch families.

Combating other rural health emergencies: The conference report also includes additional authority from the House-passed farm bill for the Secretary to declare other types of rural health emergencies and to prioritize program resources to meet those emerging challenges.

Extends Rural Broadband Networks

Access to broadband: The conference report continues USDA's critical investments in rural broadband. It provides new authority for the Secretary to make grants to finally bring broadband access to Americans in the most rural corners of our nation. Importantly, it includes the House-passed requirements for forward-looking broadband standards, to ensure that applicants build projects right the first time.

Extending middle-mile broadband infrastructure: The conference report includes the House-passed authority for USDA to make loans and grants to middle-mile broadband projects, which link rural regions to the Internet backbone connections needed to provide high speed internet in rural communities.

Improves Rural Economies

Expanding rural access to capital for critical infrastructure: The conference report gives all rural communities access to the credit they need to finance critical infrastructure by expanding the guaranteed lending programs that bring private capital into rural America. This change, included in the House-passed farm bill, will permit these larger rural communities to build and upgrade essential infrastructure like hospitals, water systems, schools, public safety institutions, and telecommunications networks under the Community Facilities, Water and Waste Disposal, and Broadband Guaranteed Lending Programs.

Regional economic development: The conference report includes House-passed improvements to the Strategic Community Economic Development Program, which incentivizes communities to work together with a broad coalition of stakeholders to achieve durable economic development gains. It also includes a new program designed to support emerging economic clusters in rural regions.

Improves Program Integrity and Protectes Taxpayers

Promote better coordination among broadband agencies: The conference report includes important House-passed language to require coordination among USDA, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), and the National Telecommunications and Information

Administration (NTIA), the three principal agencies with jurisdiction over broadband policy, when administering their respective programs.

Reducing duplication in broadband deployment: The conference report makes certain that broadband funds are spent where they are most needed, by prioritizing projects to communities with less than 10/1 Mbps broadband service and requiring that 90 percent of the households in any new broadband project receiving a grant or subsidized loan be unserved. It also includes an expanded process for public notification and assessment of proposed broadband projects, to ensure that existing providers have the opportunity to protect their investments.

Safeguarding taxpayer investments: The conference report includes numerous House-passed tools to promote program integrity and protect taxpayer resources, including by creating actionable requirements for broadband grant recipients and requiring new fees on lenders for certain guaranteed loans.

Title VII: Research, Extension, and Related Matters

The farm bill keeps American agriculture at the forefront of innovation and productivity through cutting-edge research and support of the nation's land grant and non-land grant colleges of agriculture to provide the safest, most abundant, most affordable food supply in the world. Research is especially critical with the world population expected to reach 9 billion by 2050.

Land Grant Universities: The land-grant university system plays a critical role in food and agricultural research, extension, and education. While maintaining the investment in capacity and competitive funds, the conference report provides the framework for future investment in the land-grant system's infrastructure and deferred maintenance. The conference report also streamlines the plan of work and time and effort reporting processes for land-grant formula funds to ensure that university research and extension personnel are able to spend their time and effort on actual projects rather than on completing unnecessary federally-mandated reports.

The conference report provides new resources to strengthen our nation's 1890 land-grant universities. The conference report strikes an onerous carryover funding limitation for 1890 extension programs, directs the Secretary to issue a report highlighting the state-level disparity in matching funds, and establishes a grant program for each 1890 institution to award scholarships to individuals pursuing a career in food and agricultural sciences.

Non Land-Grant Colleges of Agriculture (NLGCA): The conference report reauthorizes competitive grants to support the research and outreach capacity at NLGCA institutions and makes a key revision to clarify that an NLGCA institution is required to have at least two food and agricultural science degrees.

Specialty Crop Research Initiative (SCRI): The conference report maintains \$80 million per year for SCRI and incorporates \$25 million per year in additional funding from the creation of the Citrus Trust Fund for the Emergency Citrus Disease Research and Extension program.

Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative (OREI): To ensure an adequate domestic supply of organically produced goods, the conference report makes a historic investment in organic

agricultural research to ensure organic producers have the tools and resources needed to take advantage of higher premiums and a robust organic market.

Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI): AFRI is USDA’s premier competitive grants program for agricultural sciences, providing funding for important research, extension, and education. The conference report reauthorizes appropriations for AFRI at \$700 million per year, repeals the matching funds requirement, and refines priorities to ensure stakeholder needs can be addressed.

National Agricultural Research, Extension, Education, and Economics Advisory Board: The Board, its Specialty Crop Committee, and Citrus Disease Subcommittee are all reauthorized in the conference report. The membership of the Board is adjusted to remove duplication and encourage a streamlined stakeholder process. The conference report clarifies that the purpose of the Board is to provide a stakeholder-driven process to make recommendations to the Secretary on federal research priorities. The conference report also clarifies that agricultural economists should be represented on the board.

Pest and disease research: The conference report carries an important provision from the House-passed farm bill to increase coordination of research for the tactical sciences to help address biosecurity threats from pests, diseases, contaminants, and disasters.

Title VIII: Forestry

Expedites environmental reviews: The conference report encourages proper management for healthy and productive federal, state, and private forests and incentivizes infrastructure and new market opportunities to revitalize communities and healthy landscapes. The conference report simplifies environmental reviews while still ensuring robust protection of the environment.

The conference report reduces the threat of catastrophic wildfires by renewing the insect and disease categorical exclusion (CE) and expanding its purposes to allow for expedited reduction of hazardous fuels in our forests. This renewal and significant expansion of the existing authority to harvest and salvage insect and disease infested timber in forests will reduce the wildfire threat to our communities. The conference report also expedites treatment of federal land by authorizing a CE of up to 4,500 acres to protect and promote habitat for the Greater Sage Grouse and Mule Deer.

Empowers state and local decision making—Good Neighbor Authority (GNA): The conference report also promotes forest management by empowering non-federal partners to remove timber. The 2014 Farm Bill allowed the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) to enter into cooperative agreements or contracts with states and Puerto Rico to perform watershed restoration and forest management services on National Forest System lands. Improving on the 2014 Farm Bill, the conference report expands that authority to include counties and Indian Tribes to provide more localized forest management and timber removal on our federal forests.

This expanded authority also codifies the current practice of allowing the states to keep any receipts from these timber sales, much of which is used for additional forest management and fuel load reduction. Failure to act on this fix could have jeopardized the entire Good Neighbor Authority.

Utility infrastructure rights-of-way vegetation management pilot: The conference report authorizes the USFS to create a privately-funded pilot program to conduct limited and selective vegetation management near electricity infrastructure outside of a right-of-way. This pilot program will help reduce fuel load, decrease wildfire risk associated with tree contact with power lines, and promote electricity reliability.

Community Wood Energy (and Wood Innovation) Program: Markets are essential for forest management and healthy forests. The conference report modifies the Community Wood Energy Program to support grants for new infrastructure, new mills, and added capacity that will use low-value, small-diameter material.

Timber Innovation Act: For successful construction, tall wood buildings require research to ensure their safety and compliance with all building standards. The conference report establishes a performance-driven research and development program to help advance tall wood building construction in the United States.

Report on wildfire, insect infestation, and disease prevention on federal land: The conference report directs USDA to update Congress on federal forest management efforts to address forest health.

State and Private Forest Landscape-Scale Restoration Program: The conference report expands existing authorities to focus the Landscape Scale Restoration Program on cross-boundary restoration to address concerns such as watershed restoration, wildfire risk reduction, and wildlife habitat conservation.

Promotes cross-boundary wildfire mitigation: The conference report authorizes new collaborative tools to treat hazardous fuel loads on bordering non-federal lands.

Resource Advisory Committees (RAC): The conference report empowers local governments and local decision making by streamlining the RAC appointment process to allow more effective local collaboration on management projects and to expedite results.

Land transfers: The conference report gives the USFS additional authority for sale or exchange of small parcels of land and authorizes several land transfers, including in the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest, the Kisatchie National Forest, the NRCS Riverside County California Property, and the Okhissa Lake Rural Economic Development Conveyance.

Title IX: Energy

The conference report reauthorizes successful energy programs that help diversify our nation's energy supply, promote energy efficiency, and create new economic opportunities in rural America.

Rural Energy for America Program (REAP): REAP provides financial assistance to agricultural producers and rural small businesses for the development of renewable energy systems or for energy efficiency improvements. The conference report provides \$50 million per year and authorizes funding to be used for the purchase and installation of energy efficient equipment systems.

Biobased Markets Program: The Biobased Markets Program was designed to promote biobased products through mandatory purchasing requirements for federal agencies and their contractors and a voluntary product certification and label. The conference report modernizes this program by clarifying renewable chemical eligibility and streamlining the process required to use the biobased label. The conference report also ensures that mature markets for biobased products made from forestry materials and other biobased products are not put at a competitive disadvantage. The Biobased Markets Program is funded at \$3 million per year.

Biorefinery, Renewable Chemical, and Biobased Product Manufacturing Assistance: Improved in the 2014 Farm Bill, this program provides loan guarantees to assist in the development of new and emerging technologies for the development of advanced biofuels, renewable chemicals, and biobased product manufacturing. The conference report expands project eligibility and provides \$75 million in funding.

Bioenergy Program for Advanced Biofuels: The conference report reauthorizes the Bioenergy Program for Advanced Biofuels while ensuring the equitable distribution of payments to feedstocks. The Bioenergy Program for Advanced Biofuels is funded at \$7 million per year.

Biomass Crop Assistance Program (BCAP): BCAP assists agricultural and forest land owners with the collection, harvest, storage, and transportation of eligible material for use in a biomass conversion facility. The conference report reauthorizes this program and adds algae as an eligible crop.

Biodiesel Fuel Education Program: The conference report reauthorizes the Biodiesel Fuel Education Program which provides competitive grants to educate individuals about the benefits of biodiesel fuel use.

Carbon Utilization and Biogas Education Program: The conference report establishes the Carbon Utilization and Biogas Education program to educate producers and rural businesses on biogas systems and utilization of carbon dioxide.

Repealed programs: The conference report repeals the Repowering Assistance Program and the Rural Energy Self-Sufficiency Initiative.

Title X: Horticulture

Specialty crops play an important role in the success of U.S. agriculture and are an essential component of our nation's food supply. Diversity among the crops—ranging from fruits and vegetables to tree nuts, nursery crops, and floriculture—makes the task of developing the specialty crop safety net particularly challenging. The conference report includes investments and reforms made in the House-passed farm bill to ensure that the specialty crop safety net remains strong.

Specialty Crop Block Grants Program: The Specialty Crop Block Grants Program provides state departments of agriculture with resources to award promotion and marketing grants to enhance the competitiveness of the specialty crop industry. The conference report maintains \$85 million per year and—at the insistence of the House—ensures that federal bureaucracy does not unnecessarily interfere with project implementation at the state level.

Plant Pest & Disease Management Program & National Clean Plant Network: The conference report maintains the significant advances made in the 2014 Farm Bill for the Plant Pest & Disease Management Program and the National Clean Plant Network. The programs will continue to be funded at \$75 million per year.

National Organic Program: Consumer demand for organically produced goods continues to provide market incentives for U.S. farmers and ranchers across a broad range of products. However, increases in domestic production have not been enough to keep up with increases in demand. Inadequate organic certification programs among our trading partners has led to fraudulent imports of organic products, undercutting domestic producers and creating distrust among consumers. To maintain program integrity, the conference report provides the National Organic Program with authority to require additional documentation, to access available data from cross-border documentation systems administered by other federal agencies, and to provide oversight and approval for certifying agents operating in foreign countries.

The conference report also requires USDA to modernize the trade tracking and data collection systems of the National Organic Program and provides funding to maintain and upgrade technology systems and data collections.

National Organic Standard Board (NOSB): The National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) is a federal advisory board made up of 15 public volunteers from across the organic community. Established by the Organic Foods Production Act (part of the 1990 Farm Bill) and governed by the Federal Advisory Committee Act, the NOSB considers and makes recommendations to USDA on requirements for the production, handling, processing, and marketing of organic agricultural products. The NOSB also has special responsibilities related to the National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances.

The conference report improves the structure and functioning of the NOSB. First, it allows for an employee of an owner or operator of an organic farming operation to represent the owner or operator on the NOSB and requires an annual authorization. Second, it clarifies that a 2/3 vote proposing to amend the national list shall be considered decisive. The conference report also encourages the NOSB to consult with the FDA or EPA when deciding on a substance that FDA has determined is safe or the EPA has determined will not cause harm, and encourages the NOSB to develop procedures for the timely consideration and review of materials directly related to food safety compliance for inclusion on the national list.

Hemp: The conference report legalizes the production of hemp as an agricultural commodity and removes it from the list of controlled substances. The conference report strikes a common-sense balance between proper enforcement and the flexibility many agricultural producers seek to produce hemp.

Local Agriculture Market Program (LAMP): The conference report combines the existing Farmers Markets and Local Food Promotion Program and the Value-Added Producer Grant Program under one umbrella. LAMP is provided \$500 million in funding over 10 years and is authorized through fiscal year 2023.

Title XI: Crop Insurance

At the request of virtually every farmer, rancher, rural business owner, and lender in the country, the conference report protects crop insurance. Crop insurance, which is consistently under budget and today covers 311 million acres (or 90 percent of insurable acres) with more than \$100 billion in liability protection, is vital to ensuring farmers have the ability to recover from natural disasters and secure annual operating loans.

The conference report maintains the existing structure of crop insurance, allowing for private sector delivery in coordination with the Risk Management Agency (RMA). The conference report also rejects misguided proposals to apply means tests or payment limitations, invests in expanding options for underserved commodities and producers, and expands the premium discount for new and beginning farmers to assist in getting their farms and ranches up and running.

Insurance for forage and grazing: Crops that can be both grazed and harvested—like winter wheat—are now eligible for separate policies on each intended use to provide livestock producers and pasture owners with additional insurance options.

Research and development priorities: RMA is instructed to focus research and development activities on improving insurance for crops affected by hurricanes and tropical storms, farms that utilize more efficient irrigation systems, losses in crop quality, grain sorghum, different irrigation practices for rice, citrus, hops, greenhouse products, and high-risk, highly-productive Batture land.

Whole Farm Revenue Protection (WFRP): WFRP discounts for beginning farmers and ranchers are expanded to 10 years (from 5 years in current law). The conference report also requires the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation (FCIC) Board to review modifications to improve the effectiveness of WFRP policies, including reducing paperwork burdens on producers and agents, removing caps on nursery and livestock production, allowing waivers to expand operations, and using alternative record keeping like geospatial imaging to document planting and production history.

Rebating: The conference report reaffirms that rebating is strictly prohibited, whether in the form of discounts, incentives, or other inducements, ensuring fair treatment for all producers. The conference report commends RMA for taking the rebating prohibition seriously and carrying out the prohibition in a manner that is consistent with Congressional intent and current law. Grandfathered rebating activity is strictly limited to the current list of entities in the current list of states.

Hemp: The conference report makes hemp eligible for crop insurance and directs the FCIC Board to streamline the process for developing hemp policies.

Crop insurance education grants: The conference report streamlines crop insurance education grants, primarily by requiring they be delivered through the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA).

Title XII: Miscellaneous

Livestock

Animal disease prevention and management: Strong food security directly impacts national security. The animal agriculture sector faces disease threats capable of devastating the rural economy and our nation’s food supply. The conference report takes a historic step toward ensuring USDA and its partners have the tools necessary to identify, diagnose, and respond to a potential outbreak, by addressing three critical components of a robust animal health protection system. The conference report provides \$300 million over 10 years to be allocated amongst these animal disease prevention and management programs in addition to authorizing supplemental funding through the appropriations process.

- ***National Animal Health Laboratory Network:*** The conference report reauthorizes the National Animal Health Laboratory Network for rapid disease diagnosis.
- ***National Animal Vaccine and Veterinary Countermeasures Bank (FMD Vaccine Bank):*** The conference report establishes a U.S.-only vaccine bank to respond to the accidental or intentional introduction of animal diseases—foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) in particular.
- ***National Animal Disease Preparedness and Response Program:*** The conference report establishes the National Animal Disease Preparedness and Response Program to leverage local, state, and national resources to prevent and respond to threats such as FMD, cattle fever tick, avian influenza (AI), porcine epidemic diarrhea virus (PEDv) and more.

Feral Swine Eradication and Control Pilot: According to USDA, feral swine cause an estimated \$1.5 billion in damage to property, crops, and natural resources annually and present a risk for the transmission of African Swine Fever (ASF) and other potentially catastrophic diseases. The conference report establishes the Feral Swine Eradication and Control Pilot with \$75 million for threat assessment, control methods, and land restoration.

Sheep Production and Marketing Grant Program: The conference report reauthorizes and provides funding to strengthen and enhance the production and marketing of sheep and sheep products in the United States through improvements to infrastructure, business operations, and resource development.

Study on livestock dealer statutory trust: The conference report requires a study on the feasibility of establishing a statutory livestock dealer trust to protect unpaid sellers of livestock in instances of livestock dealer default.

Definition of livestock: The conference report include alpacas, llamas, live fish, and crawfish in the definition for livestock under the Emergency Livestock Feed Assistance Act. This change clarifies the types of livestock that are covered under Department of Transportation regulations.

Veterinary training: The conference report encourages the Secretary to maintain veterinary teams capable of providing effective services before, during, and after emergencies in all regions of the United States.

Report on FSIS guidance and outreach to small meat processors: The conference report directs USDA to evaluate and report on the effectiveness of FSIS outreach and guidance to small meat processors.

Regional cattle and carcass grading correlation and training centers: The conference report authorizes AMS regional cattle and carcass correlation and training centers to limit subjectivity in cattle grading nationwide, ensuring accurate reporting and transparency.

Beginning Farmers

Farming Opportunities Training and Outreach (FOTO) Program: The conference report combines two existing programs, the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BFRDP) and the Outreach and Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers Program, under one umbrella. FOTO is provided \$435 million in funding over 10 years and is authorized through 2023.

Commission on Farm Transitions – Needs for 2050: The conference report establishes the *Commission on Farm Transitions – Needs for 2050*. This commission—first proposed in the House-passed farm bill—will address needs relative to maintaining and strengthening a vital farm sector for the future. By 2050, we will need to more than double our productive capacity to feed the world’s population. Ensuring the next generation of farmers and ranchers are in place to meet that need is the key goal in the creation of the Commission.

Agricultural Youth Organization Coordinator: In early 2017, USDA announced a partnership with the National FFA Organization to help youth prepare for careers in agriculture. Part of that agreement was the creation of an Agricultural Youth Organization Coordinator to be the main point of contact for USDA programs aimed at helping youth enter the agricultural workforce. The conference report formally establishes this position.

Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement: The conference report reauthorizes the USDA Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement and makes clarifying edits to reflect the administration’s reorganization efforts. The office was established by the 2008 Farm Bill to improve access to USDA programs and to improve the viability and profitability of small farms and ranches and beginning/socially-disadvantaged farmers and ranchers.

Other Key Provisions

Pima Cotton Trust Fund and Wool Apparel Manufacturers Trust Fund: The conference report reauthorizes and fully funds these textile trust funds which compensate for a tariff schedule that favors importers of finished fabric goods over domestic manufacturers. These trust funds help ensure the domestic textile industry remains viable and competitive.

Grain Standards: The conference report includes House-passed language to allow certain grain handling facilities to restore prior exception agreements that were unilaterally terminated by USDA, a practice that Congress did not intend or agree with.

Added Sugars: The conference report directs FDA to not require the added sugar declaration on the nutrition facts label of any single-ingredient product, including sugar, honey, agave, and maple syrup.

National Oilheat Research Alliance (NORA): The conference report includes a 10-year reauthorization for NORA, an industry-funded checkoff program that provides resources for consumer education and research to improve energy efficiency and safety.