



**INSTITUTE FOR
AGRICULTURE AND TRADE POLICY**
PRESS RELEASE

**For immediate
release May 3, 2012**

Press Contact

Andrew Ranallo
Communications Associate
+1 (612) 870-3456
andrew@iatp.org

About IATP

Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy works locally and globally at the intersection of policy and practice to ensure fair and sustainable food, farm and trade systems. IATP is headquartered in Minneapolis, Minnesota with an office in Washington D.C.

Senate Agriculture Committee falls short on the Farm Bill

Major cuts coming for farmers, rural communities, conservation and those facing hunger

MINNEAPOLIS – The Farm Bill approved by the Senate Agriculture Committee last week makes \$23 billion in cuts to critical programs including those for Americans struggling to put food on the table, farmers employing conservation practices and rural communities, said the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP). Overall, the bill represents a step backwards for efforts to bring about a more fair, sustainable and healthy food and farm system.

The bill included a major overhaul of commodity programs, shifting money from direct payments toward an expanded insurance program. The shift does not address fundamental challenges in agriculture, where corporate concentration and extreme price volatility continue to put farmers at risk. A National Farmers Union proposal for a Market-Driven Inventory System would help ensure fair prices for farmers, reduce commodity program costs and dampen price volatility.

The expanded crop insurance program does not include conservation compliance measures which were required under direct payment programs, and under crop insurance provisions in previous Farm Bills. Crop insurance payouts are climbing dramatically, and are expected to continue to increase as extreme weather events associated with climate change become more common. The bill completely ignores the effects of climate change on agriculture.

Despite more than 46 million Americans participating in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) due to the struggling economy, the bill slashed \$33 billion in spending from the program. The SNAP program makes up 70 percent of the Farm Bill costs. It's unconscionable that the Senate Agriculture Committee would make such big cuts of this effective and essential program.

The bill also includes deep cuts for valuable programs for Disadvantaged Farmers and Beginning Farmers, Conservation and Rural Development, while doing nothing to address competition issues linked to increasing corporate concentration in agriculture.

The bill does include some positives, including funding for important energy programs like the Biomass Crop Assistance Program, a whole farm insurance provision that will help smaller, diversified farmers, a Sodsaver provision that will protect native prairie, additional support for organic farmers, the expansion of local and regional procurement practices for international food aid, and some programs linked to community and local food systems.

When the Farm Bill comes to the Senate floor as expected later this month, there will be another critical opportunity to address the major, and fundamental, shortcomings in the bill.

To learn more about IATP's take on the Farm Bill, see our What's at Stake in the 2012 Farm Bill series and more at www.farmbill2012.org.

The Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy works locally and globally at the intersection of policy and practice to ensure fair and sustainable food, farm and trade systems.

<30>