

Farm Bill Update, by Lowell Randell

On April 12th, House Agriculture Committee Chairman Conaway released the committee's draft language for the 2018 Farm Bill. The bill is subject to partisan controversy due to proposed changes in nutrition programs. The House draft would place stricter requirements on work and work training for able-bodied program recipients. House Democrats have strongly criticized this approach.

While nutrition is likely to be one of the biggest controversies, there are several important animal related programs included in the language.

The following high priority programs for animal agriculture are included:

- **National Animal Disease Preparedness and Response Program** - The bill creates this new program to develop and implement strategies and technologies to prevent and mitigate impacts of pest and disease threats. \$70 million in mandatory funding in FY 2019 and \$30 million each year for years 2020-2023.
- **Vaccine Bank** - The bill establishes a new U.S.-only vaccine bank with priority for stockpiling Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD) vaccine. \$150 million in mandatory funding in FY 2019. \$20 million in mandatory funding each year for years 2020-2023 (to be allocated between the bank and NAHLN).
- **National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN)** - Reauthorizes the NAHLN and provides \$30 million in mandatory funding in FY 2019. \$20 million in mandatory funding each year for years 2020-2023 (to be allocated between the bank and NAHLN).
- **Expanded Sec. 1433** - Reauthorizes the expanded program, including the competitive grants mechanism through 2023. No mandatory funding provided.

While the committee draft does not include all of the mandatory funding that has been requested for these programs, it marks a strong start to the 2018 Farm Bill process by highlighting the critical importance of animal agriculture and animal health. The committee's "Top Ten Highlights" includes mention of the new programs.

There is one Research Title provision that has raised questions and concerns in the animal science community. The draft includes language that would amend the current Agricultural Genome Initiative. The program would be renamed the Agricultural Genome to Phenome and focus exclusively on plant science. The language provides budget authority of \$30 million annually for the program, but would be subject to the annual appropriations process.

The new program would not impact current animal genome programs supported by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA). The majority of animal genome support comes from the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI). While those programs would not change, the proposed language does set a negative precedent of supporting only plant genome research and not including animal genomics. Efforts are underway to communicate the importance of animal genomics research as the Farm Bill

process moves forward. The House Agriculture Committee is scheduled to consider the Farm Bill legislation on Wednesday, April 18th.

The following links provide additional details about the bill text, section-by-section summary and highlights:

- [CLICK HERE](#) to read the full legislative text of the Agriculture and Nutrition Act of 2018.
- [CLICK HERE](#) to read the section-by-section summary of the Agriculture and Nutrition Act of 2018.
- [CLICK HERE](#) to read policy highlights in the Agriculture and Nutrition Act of 2018.