

Shaping a farm bill: Historical context and issue expansion

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EESI briefing: The process and path forward for passing a bipartisan farm bill

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Farm bills are negotiated within a context, and that context matters

- ▶ 1933 Great Depression



- ▶ 1973 “fencerow to fencerow”



- ▶ 1985 conservation focus



- ▶ 1996 trade context



Policy change – key points



- ▶ Most policy change is incremental, with occasional bursts of change
 - ▶ Punctuated equilibrium (Baumgartner & Jones 1993)
- ▶ Situational context is part of what shapes opportunities for policy change/stability
 - ▶ Policy windows (Kingdon 2003)

Historical/situational context

- Commodity prices
- Trade interests
- Regional dynamics
- Party control
- Political dynamics
- Current events
- Public mood
- National crises



2005-2007 Trade and the farm bill



Agrinews 2005, 2006, 2007;
Minneapolis Star Tribune 2005

2006-2008: Ethanol and the farm bill



Agrinews 2007

[Biofuels are] important for our national security... good for the economy and the environment. For rural America, it is the greatest opportunity for new markets, new investment, new jobs and wealth creation in our lifetimes.

Tom Dorr, USDA, 2006

My sense is the biofuels revolution that has hit this country is the most profound change in agriculture in 200 years.

Boyden Gray, USTR, 2006

Factors favoring biofuels provisions in 2008

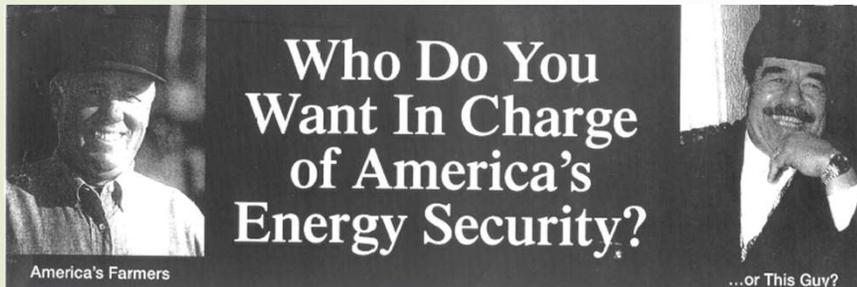
- ▶ Suspension of WTO negotiations
July 2006
- ▶ Congressional elections,
November 2006
- ▶ Rising gas prices, increased
interest in ethanol
- ▶ Associated budget impacts
(higher corn prices = lower
countercyclical payments)
- ▶ Political, public mood



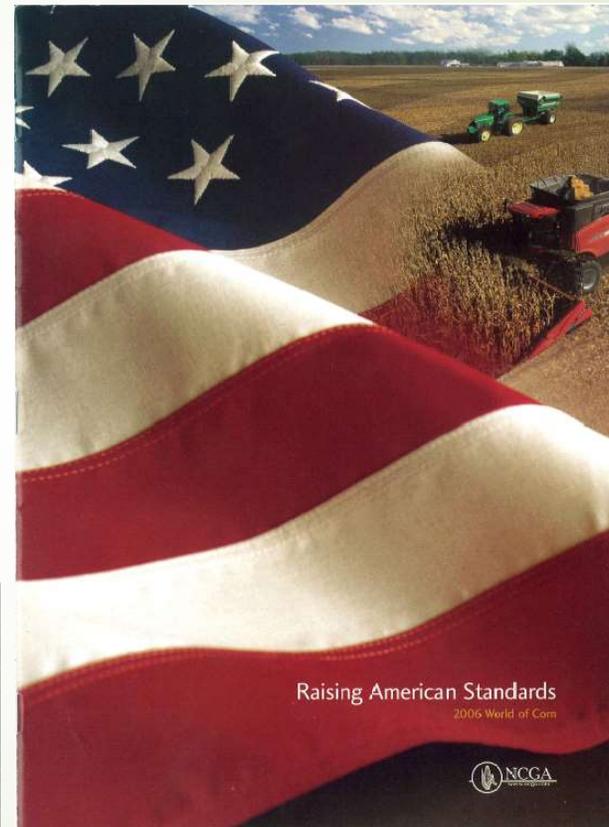
Situational context: “energy independence”



Stephen Brooks/News Tribune photo 2006



NCGA, no date



NCGA 2006

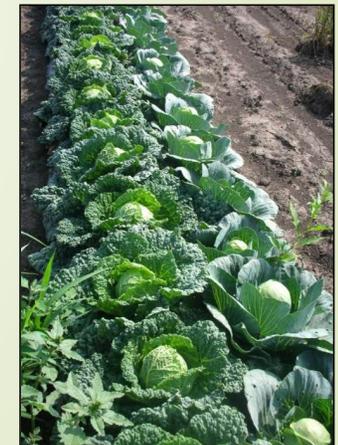
Issue expansion (and stakeholder growth)

- 1950s
 - Trade programs
 - From managing to absorbing supply
- 1970s
 - Nutrition programs
 - Rural/urban alliance
- 1980s
 - Conservation programs
 - Commodity/environment synergy
- 1990s
 - Sustainable agriculture
 - Working lands programs
- 2000s
 - Energy provisions
 - Specialty crops programs



Conservation / sustainable agriculture

- ▶ 1933 Soil Erosion Service (now NRCS)
- ▶ 1956 Soil Bank (first CRP)
- ▶ 1981 first farm bill Conservation Title
- ▶ 1985 Conservation Reserve Program
- ▶ 1985 Low Input Sustainable Agriculture (now SARE)
- ▶ 1990 Wetlands Reserve Program, other set-aside programs
- ▶ 1996 Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)
- ▶ 2002 Conservation Security (now Stewardship) Program
- ▶ Proliferation of conservation programs, 2010s consolidation of programs



Programs in conservation, sustainable agriculture, beginning farmer, healthy and local/regional food systems, organics, rural development, etc.

- Agricultural Conservation Easement Program
- Conservation Innovation Grants
- Conservation Loans
- Conservation Reserve Program and subprograms
- Conservation Stewardship Program
- Environmental Quality Incentives Program
- Regional Conservation Partnership Program
- Community Food Projects
- Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program
- Farmers Market and Local Food Promotion Program
- Farm to School Grants
- WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program
- Healthy Food Financing Initiative
- Value-Added Producer Grants
- Specialty Crop Block Grants
- Organic Certification Cost Share Program
- EQIP Organic Initiative
- Organic Crop Insurance
- Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiatives
- Organic Transition Program
- CRP Transition Incentives Program
- Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program
- Direct and Guaranteed Farm Loans, Down Payment Loans, Direct Contract Guarantees, Microloans
- Outreach and Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged and Veteran Farmers and Ranchers
- Whole Farm Revenue Protection for Diversified Farms
- Sustainable Agricultural Systems Research Program
- Agriculture and Food Research Initiative
- Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education
- Specialty Crop Research Initiative

See CRS <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R40763/42> and NSAC <https://sustainableagriculture.net/publications/grassrootsguide/farm-bill-programs-and-grants/>

Farm bill renewable energy programs

- Biobased markets program
 - Biorefinery, renewable chemical, and biobased product manufacturing assistance program
 - Bioenergy program for advanced biofuels
 - Biodiesel fuel education program
 - Rural energy for America program (REAP)
 - Rural energy savings program
 - Biomass research and development initiative
 - Feedstock flexibility program for bioenergy producers
 - Biomass crop assistance program
 - Community wood energy and wood innovation programs
 - Sun grant program
 - Carbon utilization and biogas education program
- See CRS report <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF10288>



Renewable energy and biofuels

- ▶ Farm bill energy titles
 - ▶ 2002 first farm bill Energy Title
 - ▶ Programs reauthorized and expanded in 2008, 2014, 2018
 - ▶ Shift from mandatory to discretionary funding

- ▶ Agricultural-related energy bills
 - ▶ Energy Security Act of 1980
- ▶ Renewable Fuels Standard
 - ▶ Energy Policy Act 2005
 - ▶ Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007
- ▶ Tax incentives for biofuels
 - ▶ Volumetric Ethanol Excise Tax Credit (expired 2011)
 - ▶ Biodiesel Tax Credit in American Jobs Creation Act of 2004
 - ▶ Inflation Reduction Act 2022



See CRS report <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF10639>

2023 farm bill

- ▶ Situational context matters
 - ▶ This includes Congressional dynamics – partisanship, bipartisanship
 - ▶ This includes regional dynamics around farm bill commodity programs
 - ▶ Also, stakeholder positions, IRA, current events, public mood, etc.
- ▶ History and trajectory of issue expansion is part of this situational context
 - ▶ Sustainable agriculture
 - ▶ Renewable energy

Thank you!!

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