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2018 Farm Bill (P.L. 115-334) Primer Series: A Guide to Omnibus Farm and Food Legislation

October 25, 2019

Congressional Research Service
https://crsreports.congress.gov
R45984

CRS REPORT
Prepared for Members and
Committees of Congress

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Introduction

This report summarizes a series of In Focus products prepared by CRS on many of the programs and policies in the enacted Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (2018 farm bill; P.L. 115-334). The President signed the 2018 farm bill into law in December 2018. Many of the programs authorized under prior law, the 2014 farm bill (Agricultural Act of 2014; P.L. 113-79), were scheduled to expire in 2018. In this event, some key commodity support programs would have reverted to permanently authorized legislation from the 1930s and 1940s had new legislation not been enacted. The 2018 farm bill continues the general thrust of farm and food policies in the 2014 farm bill by reauthorizing many of the existing programs through 2023. In some cases, Congress modified existing programs, while also exercising its discretion to create new programs, and not to reauthorize certain other programs.

The 2018 farm bill defines the federal government's role in the agricultural sector and in rural economic development. It also establishes the parameters for key domestic and foreign nutrition assistance programs. The series of primers summarized in this report are organized under descriptive headings to facilitate accessibility for those who may be unfamiliar with the structure and broad topical reach of the farm bill and its 12 individual titles.

These primers are intended to serve as a quick-reference resource on the farm bill for Members of Congress, committees, and congressional staff. To this end, these products generally address the leading programs and policies within individual titles of the farm bill.

The primers listed herein also provide references to additional CRS reports for those who want to explore a specific farm bill topic area in greater depth, or who seek additional analysis on an individual program or policy. For title-by-title summaries of the farm bill and descriptions of all of its provisions, see CRS Report R45525, *The 2018 Farm Bill (P.L. 115-334): Summary and Side-by-Side Comparison*, coordinated by Mark A. McMinimy.

This report summarizes the 2018 farm bill primers listed below while also providing hyperlinks to the full product. This report is not comprehensive. Summaries of additional primers will be added as they become available.

- *2018 Farm Bill Primer: What Is the Farm Bill?*
- *2018 Farm Bill Primer: The Farm Safety Net*
- *2018 Farm Bill Primer: Title I Commodity Programs*
- *2018 Farm Bill Primer: ARC and PLC Support Programs*
- *2018 Farm Bill Primer: Marketing Assistance Loan Program*
- *2018 Farm Bill Primer: Program Eligibility and Payment Limits*
- *2018 Farm Bill Primer: Dairy Programs*
- *2018 Farm Bill Primer: Title II Conservation Programs*
- *2018 Farm Bill Primer: Agricultural Trade and Food Assistance*
- *2018 Farm Bill Primer: SNAP and Nutrition Title Programs*
- *2018 Farm Bill Primer: Beginning Farmers and Ranchers*
- *2018 Farm Bill Primer: Veteran Farmers and Ranchers*
- *2018 Farm Bill Primer: Support for Indian Tribes*
- *2018 Farm Bill Primer: Rural Development Programs*
- *2018 Farm Bill Primer: Support for Urban Agriculture*
- *2018 Farm Bill Primer: Support for Local Food Systems*
- *2018 Farm Bill Primer: Agricultural Research and Extension*
- *2018 Farm Bill Primer: Energy Title*

- *2018 Farm Bill Primer: Hemp Cultivation and Processing*
- *2018 Farm Bill Primer: Specialty Crops and Organic Agriculture*

Overview of Individual Reports

Farm Bill Overview

CRS In Focus IF11126, *2018 Farm Bill Primer: What Is the Farm Bill?*, by Renée Johnson and Jim Monke

This primer provides an overview of the farm bill. In particular, it describes the breadth of agriculture and nutrition policy that the farm bill authorizes, while also providing a brief history of the evolution of the farm bill to the present day. The primer further reviews estimated costs of the current 2018 farm bill by title and breaks out past actual spending and projected outlays by major categories of mandatory program spending.

Commodity Programs and Farm Support

CRS In Focus IF11163, *2018 Farm Bill Primer: The Farm Safety Net*, by Randy Schnepf

The federal "farm safety net" provides risk protection and financial support to U.S. farmers. The three components of the farm safety net are (1) farm commodity programs, (2) crop insurance, and (3) disaster assistance programs. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) administers the farm safety net programs. The 2018 farm bill makes several modifications to existing farm programs but leaves the farm safety net largely intact.

CRS In Focus IF11164, *2018 Farm Bill Primer: Title I Commodity Programs*, by Randy Schnepf

Commodity programs have historically been an essential part of U.S. farm policy, providing various forms of revenue support. The specific program design and the list of eligible commodities have varied over time with changing market and policy conditions. Provisions of Title I of the 2018 farm bill authorize commodity revenue support programs for crop years 2019-2023. Producers must meet eligibility requirements to participate in the Title I commodity programs and are subject to annual payment limits.

CRS In Focus IF11161, *2018 Farm Bill Primer: ARC and PLC Support Programs*, by Randy Schnepf

The 2018 farm bill extends the Price Loss Coverage (PLC) and Agricultural Risk Coverage (ARC) programs with certain modifications. These programs provide income support to covered commodities at levels above the price protection offered by the Marketing Assistance Loan (MAL) program's loan rates. Participation is free for both ARC and PLC. However, a producer must sign up and elect ARC or PLC for a farm's historical base acres.

CRS In Focus IF11162, *2018 Farm Bill Primer: Marketing Assistance Loan Program*, by Randy Schnepf

The MAL program has been a significant feature of U.S. farm policy since the 1930s. USDA operates MAL, which provides both a floor price and interim financing for certain commodities. The 2018 farm bill extends the MAL program for 2019-2023 but with upward adjustments to the loan rates for selected crops.

CRS In Focus IF11165, *2018 Farm Bill Primer: Program Eligibility and Payment Limits*, by Randy Schnepf and Megan Stubbs

Since 1970, Congress has used various policies to address who should be eligible for farm program payments and how much an individual recipient should be permitted to receive in a single year. The 2018 farm bill amends both eligibility requirements for benefits under current farm programs and annual payment limits that vary across different combinations of farm and conservation programs.

CRS In Focus IF11188, *2018 Farm Bill Primer: Dairy Programs*, by Joel L. Greene

U.S. dairy producers have faced low milk prices in recent years, leading to financial stress and significant departures from dairy farming. The 2018 farm bill establishes a new dairy program—Dairy Margin Coverage (DMC)—which is designed to improve the safety net for milk producers. DMC replaces the Margin Protection Program and is authorized for calendar years 2019-2023.

Conservation

CRS In Focus IF11199, *2018 Farm Bill Primer: Title II Conservation Programs*, by Megan Stubbs

The 2018 farm bill authorizes programs and provisions that assist farmers and ranchers in addressing environmental resource concerns on private land. The enacted bill reauthorizes and amends a number of existing programs, directs existing program resources, shifts funds within the conservation title, and authorizes a budget-neutral level of funding for the title.

Trade, Export Promotion, and Food Aid

CRS In Focus IF11223, *2018 Farm Bill Primer: Agricultural Trade and Food Assistance*, by Anita Regmi and Alyssa R. Casey

Title III of the 2018 farm bill includes programs designed to alleviate hunger and improve global food security, while also expanding foreign markets for U.S. agricultural producers and food manufacturers. Title III covers international food assistance programs, export credit guarantee programs, export market development programs, and international science and technical exchange programs and provisions.

Domestic Food Assistance

CRS In Focus IF11087, *2018 Farm Bill Primer: SNAP and Nutrition Title Programs*, by Randy Alison Aussenberg and Kara Clifford Billings

The Nutrition title of the farm bill reauthorizes a number of nutrition or domestic food assistance programs through FY2023. These food assistance programs include the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly the Food Stamp Program) and certain other programs administered by USDA's Food and Nutrition Service.

Beginning and Veteran Farmers and Ranchers

CRS In Focus IF11227, *2018 Farm Bill Primer: Beginning Farmers and Ranchers*, by Renée Johnson and Tadlock Cowan

The 2018 farm bill reauthorizes and expands programs that support new and beginning farmers and ranchers (BFRs). Although BFRs are eligible for all USDA programs, the 2018 farm bill

specifically addresses the needs of BFRs. It also provides targeted support to related producer groups, including those based on certain demographic characteristics (e.g., age, race, and gender) as well as groups that have historically been underserved (e.g., limited resource and socially disadvantaged farmers).

CRS In Focus IF11093, *2018 Farm Bill Primer: Veteran Farmers and Ranchers*, by Renée Johnson

The 2018 farm bill provides additional support for U.S. military veterans transitioning into agriculture by expanding on existing programs. This primer discusses programs administered by USDA that provide financial and resource management support to help U.S. veterans transition into farming or ranching and to assist them in maintaining successful businesses as part of a larger effort to support BFRs.

Indian Tribes

CRS In Focus IF11287, *2018 Farm Bill Primer: Support for Indian Tribes*, by Renée Johnson and Tadlock Cowan

The 2018 farm bill expands on existing programs administered by USDA to support production, economic and community development, and nutrition for Native American communities and producers. In general, Native American producers and ranchers are eligible for programs available to all farmers, ranchers and residents living in rural areas. This primer identifies provisions in the 2018 farm bill that are aimed specifically at supporting Indian tribes.

Rural Development

CRS In Focus IF11225, *2018 Farm Bill Primer: Rural Development Programs*, by Tadlock Cowan

The Rural Development title of the 2018 farm bill addresses rural and regional development issues. The 2018 farm bill amends and reauthorizes a wide variety of existing programs for rural businesses, rural infrastructure development, and housing and community facilities, and authorizes several new initiatives, all of which are addressed in this primer.

Urban Agriculture and Local Food Systems

CRS In Focus IF11210, *2018 Farm Bill Primer: Support for Urban Agriculture*, by Renée Johnson and Tadlock Cowan

Over the past decade, food policy in the United States has responded to ongoing shifts in consumer preferences and producer trends that favor local and regional food systems, which has facilitated increased agricultural production in urban areas. The 2018 farm bill provides additional support for urban, indoor, and other emerging agricultural production systems by creating new programs and authorities and by providing additional funding.

CRS In Focus IF11252, *2018 Farm Bill Primer: Support for Local Food Systems*, by Renée Johnson, Tadlock Cowan, and Randy Alison Aussenberg

In recent years, changes in consumer preferences and agricultural production have increasingly emphasized local and regional foods, and U.S. food policy has responded to these changes. The 2018 farm bill combines and expands existing programs administered by USDA that provide financial and technical assistance for local and regional food production. The enacted bill also

provides additional support for urban agriculture, thus further expanding support for local food systems.

Agricultural Research and Extension

CRS In Focus IF11319, *2018 Farm Bill Primer: Agricultural Research and Extension*, by Genevieve K. Croft

Title VII of the 2018 farm bill reauthorizes, amends, and adds new programs and requirements to USDA research, education, and extension activities. This primer identifies specific policy changes and program initiatives the 2018 farm bill makes in these three mission areas.

Agricultural Energy

CRS In Focus IF10639, *2018 Farm Bill Primer: Energy Title*, by Kelsi Bracmort

The Energy title in the 2018 farm bill focuses primarily on support for renewable energy—particularly agriculture-related energy—as well as energy efficiency and bioproducts. The 2018 farm bill reauthorizes eight energy programs and one initiative, and establishes one new program—the Carbon Utilization and Biogas Education Program. It repeals the Repowering Assistance Program and the Rural Energy Self-Sufficiency Initiative. The primer discusses funding the 2018 farm bill provides for these programs and how this has evolved over time.

Horticulture

CRS In Focus IF11088, *2018 Farm Bill Primer: Hemp Cultivation and Processing*, by Renée Johnson

The 2018 farm bill includes a number of provisions intended to facilitate the commercial cultivation, processing, marketing, and sale of industrial hemp in the United States. Among these provisions, one excludes hemp with low levels of the psychoactive chemical in marijuana from the statutory definition of marijuana, another creates a USDA-administered hemp program, and another prohibits states and Indian tribes from interfering with the transport of hemp or hemp products produced in accordance with new USDA requirements.

CRS In Focus IF11317, *2018 Farm Bill Primer: Specialty Crops and Organic Agriculture*, by Renée Johnson

The 2018 farm bill reauthorizes and expands existing programs and policies administered by USDA that support fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, and greenhouse and nursery products, among other specialty crops. A range of initiatives support specialty crops, including market promotion, plant pest and disease prevention, and public research. The 2018 farm bill also reauthorizes and expands existing support for USDA-certified organic agricultural production.

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