

People often ask 'Why do we need a Farm Bill?' Most of us on the Central Coast understand how important a stable agriculture community is to our lives and our economy. But still many people do not fully understand exactly what the Farm Bill does.

The Farm Bill is a comprehensive piece of legislation that drives federal spending and policies on agriculture, nutrition and conservation programs. If Congress failed to pass a Farm Bill, the impact would echo across urban and rural America. Without an agreement, key provisions of U.S. food policy would revert to standards written before 1933 that are radically different from modern policy. If that were to occur, our new agriculture policy would be inconsistent with today's farming practices, marketing systems and international trade agreements. All of this would be costly to the federal government and detrimental to our nation.

I have some reservations with the current House version of the Farm Bill – primarily cuts to nutrition programs, such as the SNAP food stamp program. However, there are many provision of the bill that would benefit the Central Coast. This includes enhancements to promote the competitiveness and sustainability of specialty crop agriculture:

- Specialty Crop Block Grants at \$70 million per year;
- Specialty Crop Research Initiative at \$25 million in FY13; \$30 million in FY14-15; \$65 million in FY16; and \$50 million in FY17;
- Plant Pest and Disease programs at \$71.5 million starting in FY13. This is an increase over the Senate version;
- Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program at 2008 Farm Bill levels;
- Farmers' Market and Local Food Promotion program;
- Section 32 specialty crop purchases at 2008 Farm Bill levels; and
- DoD Fresh Program at 2008 Farm Bill levels.

Unfortunately, rather than passing a comprehensive Farm Bill that would benefit us here on the Central Coast, the House voted to advance H.R. 6233, the Agricultural Disaster Assistance Act of 2012. This bill is only a temporary measure to provide some disaster relief to ranchers who have suffered loss from drought or wildfires. It fails to offer Americans and our agriculture community the sort of certainty that only a five-year Farm Bill can. Additionally, the legislation cuts conservation programs of great value to California agriculture. I opposed the measure because it is not an acceptable replacement for the comprehensive Farm Bill that was crafted by leaders on both sides of the aisle.

During the debate, I supported an amendment offered by Congressman Costa to protect American taxpayers and farmers by guaranteeing that all assistance would be limited to American owned agriculture producers. It also called on Congress to finish a real Farm Bill

before the current one expires at the end of September. Unfortunately, the amendment failed on a largely party line vote.

Congress must complete its work on this bill to help provide certainty for Central Coast farmers and to provide the needed resources for those unable to meet their own food needs.