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Daily Mail editorial: The farm bill needs to be put out to pasture

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As reliable as the cows coming home every evening, Congress is once again working on a five-year renewal of the “farm bill.” This process has repeated itself with minor variation regularly since the Great Depression.

How nice. Everyone is for farms. The farm bill protects farmers by keeping them financially healthy and helps Americans have affordable food on the table, right?

That’s the dreamy perception, but the quinquennial farm bill is about pork — and lots of it. But not just ham and bacon. We are talking about government subsidies that enrich those who are already doing well, price supports that make food more expensive, regulations that add trouble and expense, and a government “central planning” system that puts Congress and government bureaucrats in command of farm production, prices and consumption instead of markets.

The farm bill is “a multi-billion-dollar tangle of agriculture subsidies, welfare payments, and environmental patronage,” wrote Daren Bakst, a senior research fellow in agricultural policy for The Heritage Foundation in 2013, the last time the bill was up for renewal.

This year, the Cato Institute’s [Colin Grabow](#) wrote: “Just like in years past, [the farm bill] is likely to produce a legislative morass in which the primary beneficiaries are lobbyists and the business interests they serve.”

“The farm bill is an unfocused mess, with the legislation covering everything from subsidies to food stamps to wildlife conservation and contains so many programs that even experts cannot keep track,” Grabow said.

Adds Jim DeMint of the Heritage Foundation: “Subsidies for politically connected industries prop up businesses and insulate them from foreign competition, disproportionately favoring big agricultural producers.

“Sometimes this has nothing to do with the food we eat, like the government handouts to make inefficient ethanol from corn.

“An oppressive regulatory regime [the U.S. Department of Agriculture] drives up costs for farms and consumers, while mandatory labeling requirements and other faddish fears of modern farming techniques sacrifice plentiful, safe food to the altar of pseudo-science.”

So, as the farm bill proceeds, who ultimately will get the most benefit? Will it be American farmers? American taxpayers?

“Ultimately the lobbyists win,” wrote Cato’s Grabow. “The legislation’s big winners are not family farms, but rather large agricultural concerns who don’t need the help. Losers from the farm bill, meanwhile, are not merely small and medium-sized farms, but the taxpayers who are forced to pay for this agricultural extravagance.”

Instead of continuing this ritual of waste and disorder, Congress would better serve the taxpaying and food-buying America public by developing a five-year plan to phase out the farm bill so it doesn’t come up again in 2023 — or ever.