



Farm Pig-Out Moves Forward in the Senate

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Republicans and Democrats have reached a deal that substantially increases the prospects for passage of a massive farm bill in the Senate. The Senate will vote on 73 amendments and then vote on passage. According to Senate Agriculture Committee chairwoman Debbie Stabenow (D-MI), the deal “is really an example of the Senate coming together to agree to get things done.”

It’s also an example of Republicans and Democrats coming together to fleece taxpayers. Chris Edwards and I noted this in an op-ed we penned yesterday for [The Hill](#):

Pundits claim that partisanship is creating gridlock in Washington. But in the Senate, the two parties still know how to make bipartisan deals on big government subsidy legislation. That chamber may move ahead with a massive agriculture bill that would spend almost \$1 trillion over the next decade. Supporters are calling it a “reform” bill because it would trim a measly two percent from projected spending over the period.

Sen. Stabenow crowed that “We are now closer than ever to achieving real reform in America’s agriculture policy.” Here’s our response to that claim:

This year, Farm Bill supporters are claiming that their bill represents major a “reform.” It is true that the Senate bill would end some types of subsidies, such as “direct payments.” However, it would replace them with new subsidies, such as a “shallow loss” program to deliver more aid if farm revenues fell below the high levels of recent years. This new program could end up costing as much or more than direct payments, and may cause more distortions to agricultural markets...Real reform would entail abolishing farm subsidy programs and not replacing them with anything—except with the natural entrepreneurial skills of farm businesses.

Assuming that Stabenow & Co. have to votes for passage, attention is going to turn to the Republican-controlled House. Edwards and I note that thus far Speaker John Boehner (R-OH) and his lieutenants have been silent on the Senate version of the farm bill, which is curious because the House leadership has made its intentions clear on other major bills that the Senate wants to pass before the November elections:

Perhaps the House leadership is hoping that the Senate bill goes down in flames before they have to make any decisions on it. After all, House Republicans that favor major cuts to farm

subsidies will face internal opposition. The House Agriculture Committee chairman, for example, is Rep. Frank Lucas of Oklahoma, who is a National Association of Wheat Growers "Wheat Champion." For the passage of the last major Farm Bill in 2008, 100 House Republicans helped the Democrats override President Bush's veto of that spending monstrosity.

Now that it appears that the Senate bill won't be going down in flames, here's the big question: Will the more conservative House go along with the taxpayer-funded farm pig out?