



Cost of Farm Bill Important to Note

By: Richard Rider – April 4, 2013

Regarding "Why the Farm Bill Matters to San Diego":

Funny. This booster article (is it an op-ed or an article?) touting the joys of farm subsidies never mentions the cost of the "farm bill." It neglects to mention that not only taxpayers but consumers end up paying more for these subsidies — disbursed primarily to wealthy agri-businesses. In essence, we are borrowing from our offspring (via deficit spending) to pay for this largess.

Piddling details, I know. Still, consider this article from The Cato Institute from last year: "Farm Subsidies and Reverse Robin Hood," that includes testimony to the U.S. House of Representatives from Cato employees:

Farm subsidies redistribute wealth from taxpayers to often well-off farm businesses and landowners. "Farm income stabilization" payments have recently fluctuated between about \$13 billion and \$33 billion annually. This is a welfare hand-out like food stamps, yet it goes to higher-income households. In 2010, the average income of farm households was \$84,400, or 25 percent above the \$67,530 average of all U.S. households. Moreover, the great bulk of farm subsidies go to the largest farms.

For balance, consider this more detailed critique from the Environmental Working Group:

From 1995-2009 the largest and wealthiest top 10 percent of farm program recipients received 74 percent of all farm subsidies with an average total payment over 15 years of \$445,127 per recipient — hardly a safety net for small struggling farmers. The bottom 80 percent of farmers received an average total payment of just \$8,682 per recipient.

Sadly, apparently these insane subsidies are supported by a majority of legislators of both the "free market" GOP and the "redistribute the wealth" Democrats. I'm not sure which political party is more hypocritical regarding farm subsidies.

Richard Rider is the chairman of San Diego Tax Fighters.