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FD 36744

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Senator Jeanne Shaheen
506 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Senator Jeanne Shaheen:

The reason for this letter is to request your assistance with pending legislation and a finance docket that is before the Surface Transportation Board (STB).

Attached is information from the Congressional Research Service relative to H.R. 8467 known as the Farm Bill, a major piece of legislation poised at the agriculture complex. It's a large bill and I'm concerned about the commerce and credit sections of this legislation, and more specifically, the access to all types of credit and direct federal and state grants not only in support of agriculture but the infrastructure used to support agriculture such as crop irrigation systems and railroad transportation for access to resources and markets.

I'm asking you to consider the impact of this legislation throughout the Northeast.

As an example, not long ago I was in Barton, Vermont on the tracks of the Vermont Rail System watching lengthy 263,000 carloads of bulk grains from the Midwest such as barley, hops and malt used for an increasing microbrewery industry in New Hampshire and Maine. Agriculture and rail is decisively why legislation like H.R. 8467 is important.

As you may know and I think strategically related to this legislation is finance docket 36744 before the Surface Transportation Board which is the proposed acquisition of the Iowa Northern Railway by the Montreal, Canada based Canadian National Railway (CN). I'm opposed to this acquisition for numerous reason(s) ranging from the corporate history of the CN to the tariff rates of this carrier, to its questionable implementation of Precision Scheduled Railroading and finally what I believe will be a most negative irreversible impact to the agricultural complex and the needed movement of agriculture via rail.

As I'm sure you remember. When you were Governor of New Hampshire the paper manufacturing industry that defined the North Country and had defined it since about 1890 was entering its final decline and fall. Places like Northumberland, Berlin and Gorham would be severely impacted and changed forever with thousands of papermakers losing their careers and a few, their lives. History cannot speak but if it could it would reveal that the Canadian National Railway which was one of the rail carriers serving this historic industry definitely had some corporate involvement in the life changing events in the North Country.

On this basis I'm asking your office to oppose Finance Docket 36744.

Sincerely,

Attachments

/S/ Steven Connolly

Certification:
I certify that copies of this letter have been sent to Senator Jeanne Shaheen at 506 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, DC 20510 and Senator Chuck Grassley at 135 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, DC 20510. By U.S. Mail, Regular Delivery.

cc. Parties of Record.

Congressional Research Service

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Expiration of the 2018 Farm Bill and Extension for 2024

Updated September 13, 2024

Congressional Research Service
https://crsreports.congress.gov
R47659

CRS REPORT
Prepared for Members and
Committees of Congress

SUMMARY

R47659

September 13, 2024

Jim Monke
Specialist in Agricultural Policy

Randy Alison Aussenberg
Specialist in Nutrition Assistance Policy

Megan Stubbs
Specialist in Agricultural Conservation and Natural Resources Policy

Expiration of the 2018 Farm Bill and Extension for 2024

The farm bill is an omnibus, multiyear law that governs an array of agricultural and food programs. It provides an opportunity for policymakers to address a broad range of agricultural and food issues about every five years. On November 19, 2023, Congress enacted a one-year extension (P.L. 118-22, Division B, §102) of the current farm bill (the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018; P.L. 115-334). The 2018 farm bill expired on September 30, 2023, and with the 2023 crop year (crops harvested in 2023). The extension continues authorizations until September 30, 2024, and for the 2024 crop year.

The House Committee on Agriculture ordered reported H.R. 8467 to reauthorize the farm bill on May 23, 2024. The Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry has not released bill text for a farm bill. Depending on further action by the end of the 118th Congress, Congress may consider another extension. Recent farm bills have faced legislative hurdles for enactment, such as insufficient votes to pass the House floor, presidential vetoes, and delays resulting in short-term extensions. The 2002 farm bill expired at the end of 2007, and parts were extended in the spring of 2008. The 2008 farm bill expired at the end of 2012 and was extended for one year in 2013. The 2014 farm bill was not extended because the 2018 farm bill was enacted during the period between the end of the fiscal year and the end of the calendar year.

The timing and consequences of the farm bill expiring vary by program across the breadth of the act. There are two new principal expiration dates: September 30, 2024, and December 31, 2024. The major issues and consequences for expiration are the following:

- For programs with mandatory funding that is provided by the farm bill and for provisions that expire at the end of FY2024, authority to operate may cease.
- For programs with a fiscal year authorization that are funded with discretionary appropriations, or for programs with mandatory spending authorized but not appropriated by the farm bill—such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)—an appropriations act or continuing resolution could allow operations to continue.
- For the farm commodity and dairy support programs that expire after the 2024 crop year, the consequences of expiration begin on January 1, 2025, when inactive and outdated laws—commonly called "permanent law"—would be restored for dairy, the first commodity affected in the new crop year.
- Some programs had their expiration dates extended beyond the expiration of the farm bill by other legislation. P.L. 117-169, commonly known as the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022, extended some—but not all—conservation programs through FY2031.
- Some programs, such as crop insurance, are permanently authorized, do not expire, and would not be affected by farm bill expiration.

For the farm commodity programs that face consequences after January 1, 2025, permanent law refers to a set of non-expiring provisions from the 1938 and 1949 farm bills that remain in statute but are temporarily suspended by each recent farm bill. Permanent law does not recognize relationships in productivity gains and technological advances in agriculture. It is inconsistent with modern government policies that reduce the effects of market intervention and that meet U.S. obligations in the World Trade Organization. Permanent law would support dairy, wheat, rice, cotton, and corn but would not support soybeans, peanuts, and sugar, among other commodities. If the permanent law suspension were to expire, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) would be required to implement permanent law, which is likely more expensive to the government and consumers than the current farm bill. Under permanent law, USDA would be required to support eligible commodities at levels that exceed 2024 market prices. USDA has found during previous farm bill reauthorizations that billions of dollars of additional government expenditures could occur if the suspension were to expire.

The one-year extension during 2024 continues all of the 2018 farm bill authorities that were in effect at the end of FY2023 for all of FY2024 and the 2024 crop year. The extension provided $177 million of mandatory funding, with offsets, to 19 of the 21 programs from the 2018 farm bill that did not have continuing funding.