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Higher fuel prices likely here to stay

Although Hurricane Isaac's Labor Day trip to the Gulf Coast shut oil refineries in the region down for only a little while, the resulting higher prices at the pump are likely to stick around, according to Matt Erickson, an American Farm Bureau Federation economist.

In the two weeks following the storm, the average regular gasoline price increased 7.85 cents to \$3.84 cents per gallon, according to the Lundberg Survey of 2,500

fueling stations. The price survey, which covered the two weeks through Aug. 31, showed a 17-cent increase from the previous year.

Heading into harvest season, farm diesel is about \$3.70 per gallon.

"To fill a 277-gallon tank combine, it would cost a farmer about \$1,025," Erickson said. "That's a 6 percent jump from last year's average and a whopping 37 percent increase from 2010."

Whether you're driving a car or a combine, the increased fuel prices aren't good news for anyone's pocketbook, Erickson said.

"Higher fuel prices mean it will not only cost more to harvest crops, but also to process and package the food and transport it to processors and stores," he explained. "Along with the drought, fuel prices may certainly be another factor that drives up some food costs."

House adjourns, pushes expiring farm bill to lame duck session



AT THE FARM BILL NOW RALLY on Capitol Hill, American Farm Bureau Federation President Bob Stallman was joined by hundreds of Americans calling for passage of a five-year farm bill before current farm programs expire on Sept. 30. With the House's adjournment last week, action on the measure will wait until after the election.

Despite the looming Sept. 30 expiration of the current farm bill, the drought magnifying the needs for a reliable farm safety net and the urging of the thousands of Americans who depend on the farm, ranch, nutrition and conservation programs the bill contains, the new farm bill will not be done before the November election.

The Senate passed its version of the farm bill in June and the House Agriculture Committee approved its own legislation the following month. Farmers and ranchers had hoped to see Congress compromise on the two measures but the House's adjournment last week without a vote ultimately punts the measure to the expected post-election lame duck session.

As of Oct. 1, the law states that much of the commodity title will revert to a 1949 farm law that in-

cludes provisions related to parity, supply management and quotas.

"We're talking about the government telling farmers what they can plant and how many acres, sky-high subsidies and price controls," said Dale Moore, American Farm Bureau Federation policy specialist.

In reality, farmers won't see many changes. The 2008 farm bill covers the 2012 crops, not just fiscal 2012, so much of the commodity title will still be operational. The biggest exception is the Milk Income Loss Contract program, which expires on Sept. 30.

At a mid-September Farm Bill Now rally on Capitol Hill hundreds of Americans, including farmers, congressional members and leaders from agriculture, conservation, energy, consumer and nutrition organizations, called on

Congress to pass a new, comprehensive, five-year farm bill before the end of the month. Such a bill, Farm Bureau says, is necessary to ensure stability for growers and allow them to plan for the future.

"Perhaps never in the history of farm legislation have so many diverse farmer and rancher voices joined together for such a common call for action on a farm bill," American Farm Bureau Federation President Bob Stallman said during the event, held the week before the House adjourned. "We gather here under a banner adorned with three words. FARM. BILL. NOW. And we are here to raise our voices toward Capitol Hill...for a shared purpose."

The farm bill isn't just a bill for farmers. One in every 12 Ameri-

Farm bill Continued on Page 2

Cap gains tax prevents farmers from passing torch

The American Farm Bureau Federation last week urged Congress to reform the capital gains tax because of its detriment to young and beginning farmers. In a statement submitted to the House Ways and Means and Senate Finance committees' joint hearing on tax reform, AFBF said the cumbersome tax makes it difficult for current farmers to pass the torch to a new generation of growers.

Capital gains taxes apply when land and buildings from a farm or ranch are transferred to a new or expanding farmer while the owner is still alive. This occurs most often when a farmer wants to expand his or her farm or ranch to take in a son or daughter, or when a retiring farmer sells his or her business to a beginning farmer.

"Since approximately 40 percent of farmland is owned by individuals age 65 or older, capital gains taxes provide an additional barrier to entry for young farmers and ranchers at a time when it is already difficult for them to get in to the industry," AFBF said in the statement. "Capital gains tax liabilities encourage farmers to hold onto

their land rather than sell it, creating a barrier for new and expanding farms and ranches to use that land for agricultural purposes."

This added cost also increases the likelihood that farm and ranch land will be sold outside of agriculture for commercial uses to investors who are willing to pay more, causing agricultural land and open space to be lost forever.

The capital gains tax especially hurts farmers because agriculture requires large investments in land and buildings that are held for long periods of time and account for 76 percent of farmers' assets. Further, 40 percent of all farmers report some capital gains; nearly double the share for all taxpayers. And the average amount of capital gains reported by farmers is about 50 percent higher than the average capital gain reported by other taxpayers.

"Because capital gains taxes are imposed when buildings, breeding livestock and land are sold, it is more costly for producers to shed unneeded assets to generate revenue to adapt, expand and upgrade their operations," said the statement. "This is neither good for the long-term prosperity of farm and ranch operations or for the rural economies their

operations help sustain."

While farm and ranch families comprise just 2 percent of the U.S. population, 21 million workers, or 15 percent of the workforce, are involved in producing, processing and selling the food and fiber produced on farms and ranches, Farm Bureau noted.

Further emphasizing farmers' and ranchers' contributions to the economy, the group also pointed out that in 2010, approximately \$109 billion worth of American agricultural programs were exported around the world, creating a positive agricultural trade balance. That same year, U.S. agriculture generated more than \$352 billion in total output.

"Capital gains taxes not only affect the current economic well-being of the agriculture industry, but also impact the long-term outlook of food, fiber and energy production in the U.S.," the testimony said.

The top capital gains tax rate will increase by a third on the first of the year, from 15 percent to 20 percent. Farm Bureau supports a permanent extension of the 15 percent rate.

House adjourns, pushes expiring farm bill to lame duck session

Continued from page 1
can jobs is directly related back to the farm, USDA says.

The farm bill has a broad impact on all citizens and the U.S. economy, according to the 88 organizations involved in the Farm Bill Now coalition. It provides healthy food to millions of schoolchildren and nutritious options to families in need, as well as develops and expands trade with valuable foreign markets. By

reducing spending significantly compared to prior farm bills, the proposals pending in Congress address the need to get the nation's fiscal house in order.

Congressional members who spoke at the Farm Bill Now event included Sen. Debbie Stabenow (D-Mich.), chairwoman of the Senate Agriculture Committee; Sen. Jerry Moran (R-Kan.); Rep. Collin Peterson (D-Minn.), ranking member of the House Agri-

culture Committee; and Rep. Kristi Noem (R-S.D.).

The Farm Bill Now coalition represents a broad range of commodity

and specialty crops, livestock, dairy, state and local governments, energy and biobased products, farm cooperatives and financial groups.



At the Farm Bill Now rally, American Farm Bureau President Bob Stallman noted how this is probably the first time in the history of farm legislation that so many diverse voices have joined together to urge action on a farm bill. The broad range of agriculture, energy and financial groups and state and local governments involved in the Farm Bill Now coalition is telling of the farm bill's broad impact on all citizens and the U.S. economy.

'Farmer's Market Challenge' expanded for K-2 students

The popular agricultural gaming site MyAmericanFarm.org now includes a revised version of the "Farmer's Market Challenge" game, updated to include K-2 learners. The changes give K-5 grade level students the opportunity to practice essential math skills while learning about food and healthy choices.

The Farmer's Market Challenge game, which is aligned to Common Core State Standards for Mathematics, also now includes an "Easy Reader" e-Comic book that takes young readers on a virtual trip to a farmer's market with their friends. Both the game and e-Comic book can be found at http://www.myamericanfarm.org/games/farmers_market_challenge/.

The My American Farm educational gaming resource is a special project of the American Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture. Its mission is to build awareness, understanding and a positive public perception of

agriculture through education. My American Farm currently has educator resources, fun family activities, videos, e-readers and 16 online games, including its first pre-kindergarten-kindergarten game, "In My Barn."

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Decision 2012: Presidential contenders weigh in on issues important to farmers, ranchers

Every four years, FBNews asks the Democratic and Republican presidential nominees to address the issues that concern farmers and ranchers the most.

This year, President Barack Obama and Republican nominee Mitt Romney go into detail about their positions on energy, environmental regulations, farm labor and more. In closing, each candidate

was given the opportunity to make a pitch to the farmer and rancher voters they will need to carry the day.

That the candidates took the time in the throes of this very competitive election season to go into such detail in their responses says as much about the importance of these issues and the farmers and ranchers who care about them as it does about

Obama's and Romney's political platforms.

The importance of the rural vote is not lost on either candidate. Every vote will count. Obama and Romney know that as well as they know how engaged Farm Bureau members are in policy and politics and the prominent roles you play in your communities.

If your decision 2012 has yet to

be made, FBNews hopes the information the candidates provide here will help you make a choice you're confident in. If you're ready to step into the voting booth today, perhaps the information will strengthen the conviction of your decision, and at least give you what you need to hold the winner's feet to the fire over the next four years.

Agriculture is an energy-intensive industry and volatile prices significantly affect the cost of growing crops. What policies will you support to meet our energy needs and strengthen energy security? What role do you see for agricultural-based biofuels in the nation's energy supply?

Our rural communities, farmers, and ranchers can increase our energy independence and boost the transition to a clean energy economy. U.S. biofuel production is at its highest level in history.

Last year, rural America produced enough renewable fuels like ethanol and biodiesel to meet roughly 8 percent of our needs, helping us increase our energy independence to its highest level in 20 years. We are increasing the level of ethanol that can be blended into gasoline, and the new Renewable Fuel Standard helped boost biodiesel production to nearly 1 billion gallons in 2011, supporting 39,000 jobs.

In the context of regulating water quality, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has increasingly encroached on states' authority, from nutrient loadings in Florida to total maximum daily loads in the Chesapeake Bay to overall regulatory reach through proposing "guidance" that essentially gives EPA regulatory control over all waters. Do you support reaffirming the primary role of states in regulating both non-navigable waters and non-point source runoff?

Farmers are some of the best stewards of our environment, which is why my administration is working with more than 500,000 farmers and ranchers on more than 30 million acres of land to help conserve our lands and protect our waters. I have seen how we can bolster growth of our nation's agricultural economy while protecting our environment. Now there is a lot of misinformation out there about changes to clean water standards. We are not going to be applying standards to waters that have not been historically protected. And all existing exemptions for agricultural discharges and waters are going to stay in place. I believe that we can work together to safeguard the waters Americans rely on

every day for drinking, swimming, and fishing, and those that support farming and economic growth.

A new farm bill will be enacted and implemented over the next four years during a time of significant evolution in agriculture. What policy and risk management tools do you propose to ensure that agriculture is a profitable, competitive and viable industry?

Obama

Continued on Page B

Agriculture is an energy-intensive industry and volatile prices significantly affect the cost of growing crops. What policies will you support to meet our energy needs and strengthen energy security? What role do you see for agricultural-based biofuels in the nation's energy supply?

An affordable, reliable supply of energy is crucial to America's economic future. I have a vision for an America that is an energy superpower, rapidly increasing our own production and partnering with our allies, Canada and Mexico, to achieve energy independence on this continent by 2020. Taking full advantage of our energy resources will create millions of jobs, but this revolution in U.S. energy production will not just expand economic opportunity within the energy industry. Upstream businesses that supply the industry will experience a surge in demand, and perhaps the greatest benefit will occur downstream as agricultural businesses and manufacturers gain access to a more affordable and reliable supply of energy and feedstock. America's energy resources can be a long-term competitive advantage for American agriculture and their development is key to the success of the industry.

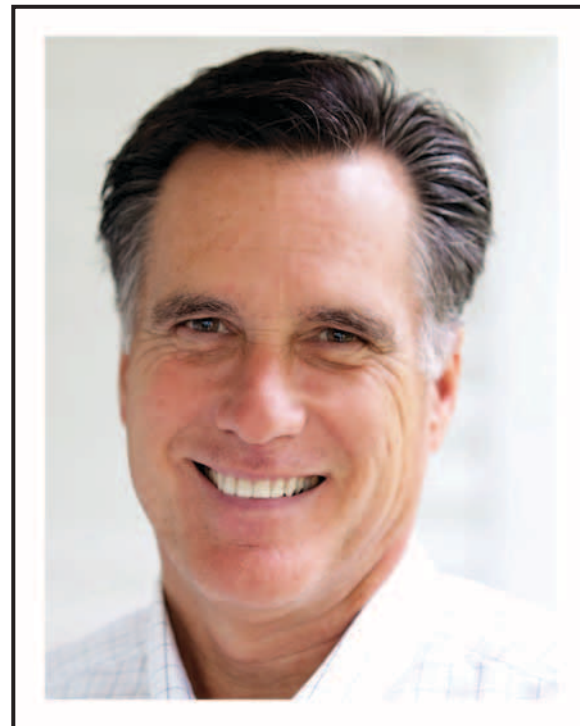
The increased production of biofuels plays an important part in my plan to achieve energy independence. In order to support increased market penetration and competition among energy sources, I am in favor of maintaining the Renewable Fuel Standard. I also support eliminating regulatory barriers to a diversification of the electrical grid, fuel system, and vehicle fleet. My policies broadly aim to ensure that all of our energy industries can sustainably become competitive, innovative, and efficient.

In the context of regulating water quality, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has increasingly encroached on states' authority, from nutrient loadings in Florida to total maximum daily loads in the Chesapeake Bay to overall regulatory reach through proposing "guidance" that essentially gives EPA regulatory control over all waters. Do you support reaffirming the primary role of states in regulating both non-navigable waters and non-point source runoff?

Government oversight is of course crucial to the protection of our environment. But statutes and regulations that were designed to protect public health and the environment have instead been seized by environmentalists as tools to disrupt economic activity and the enjoyment of our nation's environment altogether. President Obama's administration has embraced this approach, his EPA embarking on the most far-reaching regulatory scheme in American history.

Romney

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Obama

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I understand the need for a strong farm safety net. That's why I increased the availability of crop insurance and emergency disaster assistance to help over 590,000 farmers and ranchers keep their farms in business after natural disasters and crop loss. My administration expanded farm credit to help more than 100,000 farmers struggling during the financial crisis to keep their family farms and provide for their families. And as farmers continue to go through hard times because of this drought, we are expanding access to low-interest loans, encouraging insurance companies to extend payment deadlines and opening new lands for livestock farmers to graze their herds.

And I know that any farm bill passed this year—and there needs to be a farm bill passed this year—needs to have adequate protections for America's farmers. That's why I have called for maintaining a strong crop insurance program and an extended disaster assistance program. We can reduce the deficit without sacrificing rural American economic growth, as the Romney-Ryan budget would do. Instead of making a farmer pay more for crop insurance, we will do it by cutting subsidies to crop insurance companies and better targeting conservation funding.

There are many factors involved in the economic downturn, but federal budget policy and the gridlock that is prohibiting restoration of sound fiscal policy are important factors. What would be your proposed foundation for reforming federal fiscal and budgeting policy?

We can't grow our economy in the long run if we don't start taking our fiscal and budgeting policy seriously. That's why earlier this year, I put forward a detailed plan for over \$4 trillion in deficit reduction—including \$1 trillion in spending cuts enacted last year—that finds savings in every part in the budget, brings domestic spending to its lowest level as a share of the economy in about 50 years, reforms Medicare and Medicaid, and asks the wealthiest Americans to pay their fair share. The independent Congressional Budget Office has confirmed that my plan would reduce deficits over time, and stabilize the federal debt.

We faced a more than \$1 trillion deficit on the day I took office—overwhelmingly caused by a bad economy and the policies of the prior administration—including two tax cuts weighted towards the wealthy, two wars, and the Medicare drug benefit, none of which were paid for. Paul Ryan voted for these policies, and Mitt Romney supported them. Now, Romney and

Ryan are proposing \$5 trillion in tax cuts without describing how they'd pay for them, returning us to those same failed policies of the past.

U.S. agriculture has a long history of relying on temporary workers to help plant and harvest crops, tend orchards and manage livestock. What would you do to solve agriculture's labor shortage problem?

To contribute to the vitality of our agricultural economy, we must design a system that provides legal channels for U.S. employers to hire needed foreign workers. This system must protect the wages and working conditions of U.S. workers and only be used when U.S. workers are not available. I have called on Congress to pass and implement the AgJOBS Act, which allows farmers to hire the workers they rely on, and provides a path to citizenship for those workers.

But we cannot wait for Congress to act, which is why my administration is already taking action to improve the existing system for temporary agricultural workers. We are also starting up a new Office on Farmworker Opportunities at the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the first office for farmworkers in the agency's history. These measures are helping to identify the challenges faced by farmworkers and address the need for a reliable labor force.

What priorities will you set for reforming the tax code? How should tax reform deal with the estate tax and capital gains taxes, two critical concerns for farmers and ranchers?

The tax code has become increasingly complicated and unfair. While many tax incentives serve important purposes, taken together the tax expenditures in the law are inefficient, unfair, duplicative, or even unnecessary. That's why I'm calling for comprehensive tax reform. First, we must extend the middle class tax cuts for the 98 percent of Americans making less than \$250,000 for another year. In fact, my proposal extends tax cuts for 97 percent of all small business owners in America. But at the same time, we need to ask the wealthiest to pay their fair share. I remain opposed to the extension of tax cuts for those whose household income is above \$250,000 and support the return of the estate tax exemption and rates to 2009 levels. These policies were unfair and unaffordable when they were passed, and they remain so today. Governor Romney would take the opposite approach—his tax plan would require an average tax increase of \$2,000 on middle class families with kids, to pay for a new round of tax cuts for

multi-millionaires, who would get an average break of \$250,000.

My proposal would return the top tax rate on estates to 45 percent and reinstate the \$7 million per-couple estate tax exemption, which exempts all but the wealthiest three in 1,000 decedents from the tax, but still helps us reduce the deficit. Independent experts estimate that under this plan, only 60 small farm and business estates in the entire country would owe any estate tax in 2013. I'd also return capital gains taxes to the rates they were when Bill Clinton was president. But I'm calling for the permanent elimination of capital gains taxes on key small business investments.

Expanded export opportunities are essential for agriculture's continued growth. What are your views on enforcing existing trade agreements and pursuing new trading opportunities for the United States?

I have expanded markets for American goods that help support over a million agriculture jobs here at home. In 2011, American farm income reached a record high, with a record number of agricultural exports and a record agriculture trade surplus that means more of our products are being sold in markets around the world. I signed three historic trade agreements with Panama, Colombia, and South Korea which will increase exports by \$2.3 billion—supporting nearly 20,000 American jobs. And I am working to expand local and regional food markets, a multi-billion dollar industry. We've increased the number of farmers' markets by 53 percent since 2008. Through these policies, we are expanding markets for American goods abroad and at home.

Why should farmers and ranchers vote for you?

I am committed to building the foundation for a renewed rural economy so that future generations can enjoy the way of life in rural America. I am building a rural economy built to last—one focused on reclaiming the security of the rural middle class by growing products that the rest of the world buys, and restoring the basic values of hard work and fair play that made our country great.

Farmers and ranchers should vote for me because I am the only candidate who is committed to strengthening the farm safety net, strengthening rural economic growth, and supporting rural investments in clean energy.

Not only am I committed to providing farmers the safety they need to grow America's food, but I am also planning for a strong agricultural future, by increasing funding for agricultural research and development by over 20 percent.

My administration is boosting rural small businesses by making it easier for them to access the capital they need to sell their products, expand operations and hire workers.

And we are investing in a 21st century infrastructure—expanding broadband service for nearly seven million rural residents. We are working aggressively with our nation's rural communities, farmers, and ranchers to increase our energy independence and boost the transition to a clean energy economy.

We are also partnering with over 13,000 farmers and ranchers to support renewable energy and energy efficiency projects that help save energy and improve their bottom line. Unlike my opponent, I understand that clean energy can provide farmers with additional income and economic security, which is why I have called on Congress to extend tax incentives for wind energy, which Mitt Romney would let expire.



PHOTO COURTESY OF USDA.GOV

President Barack Obama (left) is joined by Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack during an August visit to the McIntosh family farm in Missouri Valley, Iowa, to view the drought-stricken crops.



Romney

Continued from Page A

Modernizing America's complex environmental statutes, regulations, and permitting processes is crucial to ensuring that the nation can develop its resources safely and efficiently. Laws should promote a rational approach to regulation that takes cost into account. Regulations should be carefully crafted to support rather than impede development. Repetitive reviews and strategic lawsuits should not be allowed to endlessly delay progress or force the government into imposing rules behind closed doors that it would not approve in public. Energy development, economic growth, and environmental protection can go hand-in-hand if the government focuses on transparency and fairness instead of seeking to pick winners and repay political favors.

A new farm bill will be enacted and implemented over the next four years during a time of significant evolution in agriculture. What policy and risk management tools do you propose to ensure that agriculture is a profitable, competitive and viable industry?

I support passage of a strong farm bill that provides the appropriate risk management tools that will work for farmers and ranchers throughout the country. In the near term, immediate priority should be given to enacting disaster relief for those not traditionally covered by crop insurance as this year's drought has worsened. My running mate, Paul Ryan, voted for this relief in the House. Unfortunately, the Democratic-controlled Senate went home for August break without enacting them.

On the broader question of farm programs, we must be cognizant that our agricultural producers are competing with other nations around the world. Other nations subsidize their farmers, so we must be careful not to unilaterally change our policies in a way that would disadvantage agriculture here in our country. In addition, we want to make sure that we don't ever find ourselves in a circumstance where we depend on foreign nations for our food the way we do with energy. Ultimately, it is in everyone's interest to achieve a level playing field on which American farmers can compete.

There are many factors involved in the economic downturn, but federal budget policy and the gridlock that is prohibiting restoration of sound fiscal policy are important factors. What would be your proposed foundation

for reforming federal fiscal and budgeting policy?

Getting reckless government spending under control is one of my top priorities. I'll implement a basic test that looks at every program and asks whether it is so critical that it's worth borrowing money from China to pay for it. We'll work to empower states by sending programs that are currently controlled by the federal government back to the state-level where local solutions can be tailored to meet local needs. And lastly, we will reduce the size of the federal government to make sure it's more efficient and productive.

U.S. agriculture has a long history of relying on temporary workers to help plant and harvest crops, tend orchards and manage livestock. What would you do to solve agriculture's labor shortage problem?

I understand and appreciate the critical role that foreign temporary workers play in the agriculture industry. I also understand that our current system for issuing visas to temporary, seasonal workers is broken. Too often, harvest or tourist season passes before temporary worker visas are approved. Indeed, in 2006 and 2007, 43 percent of all applications for temporary agricultural workers were not processed on time. As president, I will make the system for bringing in temporary agricultural workers and other seasonal workers functional for both employers and workers. I will get rid of unnecessary requirements that delay issuance of a visa and will speed the processing of applications. A legal immigration system that works will provide a lawful alternative to workers who would otherwise enter illegally and employers who face the choice of either reducing operations or turning to illegal labor to address labor shortage problems.

Additionally, let me add what my administration will not do in this area. We will not propose heavy-handed regulations that will limit opportunities for our youth to be involved in agriculture. This is a stark contrast to what the Obama administration proposed in their regulations to prohibit those under the age of 16 from working on farms, in some cases even one owned by their family. The impacts of this rule would have negatively affected our next generation of farmers, ranchers, and rural leaders. That's why even the National FFA Organization opposed this misguided regulation. While the Obama administration has since retreated on this ill-advised regulation, it demonstrates how out of touch they are with our nation's family farms and their possible agenda if

given another four years unhindered by re-election.

What priorities will you set for reforming the tax code? How should tax reform deal with the estate tax and capital gains taxes, two critical concerns for farmers and ranchers?

We must pass fundamental tax reform that lowers tax rates, broadens the base, achieves revenue neutrality, and maintains the progressivity of the tax code. This will help jumpstart an economic recovery that will help create 12 million jobs in my first term in office. Regarding the estate tax and capital gains taxes, we must work to help all working families, including farmers and ranchers, keep more of what they earn. As president, I will eliminate the estate tax, helping keep family farms and ranches intact when businesses pass on from one generation to the next. I will also maintain the current 15 percent capital gains rate for wealthier Americans, while totally eliminating capital gains, dividend, and interest taxes for those who earn less than \$200,000 per year. This will help middle-class families save tax-free for long-term costs like college tuition and retirement, and to generally enjoy the freedom that accompanies financial security.

Expanded export opportunities are essential for agriculture's continued growth. What are your views on enforcing existing trade agreements and pursuing new trading opportunities for the United States?

As the United States is the largest agricultural exporter in the world, I understand that agricultural trade is incredibly important to our economy and to job creation in our country. A thriving ag-

riculture sector is a key to getting our economy going again. We must continue to encourage this sector to grow, not stifle its success with ineffective trade policies that linger in bureaucracy and do not advance our economic interests. As president, I will work to promote multilateral trade agreements and reverse the course of the Obama Administration which has only enacted three trade agreements – all initiated in the Bush Administration. As president, I will work with Congress to gain Trade Promotion Authority in order to facilitate the negotiation and completion of trade agreements. I will also stress that the World Trade Organization should reassert itself in order to resolve and restrict non-science-based trade restrictions prohibited by the overriding agreements, and I will value the important roles of the USDA and USTR as they provide focused attention and resources important to agricultural trade issues.

Why should farmers and ranchers vote for you?

As the breadth of your questions indicate here, American agriculture needs relief from the Obama administration's crushing onslaught of unnecessary regulations; a commonsense energy policy that develops our resources right here at home; a renewed focus on opening new markets; and a pro-growth tax policy that encourages investment and recognizes that death should not be a taxable event. On day one of my administration, farmers and ranchers would have something they've lacked over the past several years—an advocate.

Farmers and ranchers are the backbone of America and play a critical role in ensuring Americans across the country have access to safe and affordable food.

Romney Continued on Page D



In August, Republican presidential nominee Mitt Romney (right) met with Des Moines corn and soybean farmer Lamar Koethe (left), and Bill Northey, the Iowa secretary of agriculture.



Presidential candidates court critical farm, ranch vote

Farming and ranching and all that they entail are big issues in the numerous small towns in presidential battleground states like Iowa, Colorado and Wisconsin. No one has to tell that to President Barack Obama, whose success at the polls four years ago was due in part to a large uptick in support—11 percent—for Democrats in rural areas.

Republican nominee Mitt Romney is equally aware. In the midterm elections two years ago, rural voters showed strong support for Republicans, with two-thirds of all the seats the GOP picked up coming from the country's 125 most rural districts.

Both presidential candidates are working hard to get some mud on their tires and gain traction with rural voters.

"For growers in more than 2,000 counties across 30 states, as well as those who feed livestock, the drought has probably been the greatest challenge they faced this year," said Mark Maslyn, American Farm Bureau Federation executive director of public policy. "But for them, as well as for those not directly impacted by the drought, there are some big unresolved policy issues—estate and capital gains taxes, a farm bill, pending environmental regulations and the long-term effects of the federal debt—that contribute some uncertainty to the business side of farming and ranching. These are important issues we expect candidates to address."

Earlier this month, the Farm Foundation, NFP and the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture hosted a presidential forum focused on agriculture. Each candidate was represented by a proxy, with Nebraska Sen. and former USDA Secretary Mike Johanns standing in for the Romney campaign and former Iowa Lt. Governor and Iowa Secretary of Agriculture Patty Judge representing the Obama campaign.

Both campaigns said passage of a new farm bill is a must to allow farmers and ranchers to plan for the future, but they parted ways on farm policy spending.

According to Judge, Obama wants a bill that works for both Republicans and Democrats and that serves a diversified agriculture. She criticized Romney's support of running mate Rep. Paul Ryan's (R-Wis.) spending plan, which she said "will balance the budget on the backs of farmers."

Johanns countered that it was Obama who proposed \$30 billion in cuts and wants to do away with eight USDA programs for renewable energy.

Judge and Johanns also addressed drought, tax policy and trade.

On the topic of regulations, Johanns said he thought that as president, Romney would be inclined to take a step back.

"Let's take a time out from these regulations, we are way overdoing [it]," he speculated Romney would say. "Let's do the right cost

analysis to make sure this is the right approach."

Judge countered Johanns' statement that there would be a number of new regulations released soon after the election.

"I don't believe they (administration officials) are sitting out there with a fistful of regulations just waiting for the election."

Romney and Obama have well-established positions on estate taxes, which were discussed at the forum. While the president would like to see a 45 percent top tax rate in place, with a \$3.5 million per person exemption, Romney would eliminate the tax altogether.

Both candidates have made it a point to see firsthand Iowa's shriveled corn fields. During a visit to Boone in August, Obama highlighted the administration's efforts to help drought-stricken growers.

Romney, who stopped at a Des Moines farm, said he's aware of how tough the drought is for farmers and ranchers nationwide, as well as for the many other industries and employers who are tied to agriculture.

"Whether the candidates are at the debate podium, behind the camera for a television interview or standing in a parched pasture, farmers and ranchers are listening carefully," Maslyn said. "The candidates will do the talking for now and growers will do the walking—to the polls on Election Day."

"Regardless of your views, elections ultimately have policy con-

sequences," he added. "Whether it's for president or the U.S. Senate or House, farmers and ranchers are encouraged to exercise one of the most hard-earned freedoms, the right to vote."

Romney

Continued from Page C

The fruit of your labor nourishes the world, and I admire your hard work in harvesting our country's bountiful resources. I also admire our farmers and ranchers for the critical role you play in the health of our economy, employing millions of Americans.

I'm honored to have interacted with so many farmers and ranchers during this campaign, and I'm grateful to have them supporting our efforts to turn around the economy and strengthen the middle class. If you haven't yet signed-up to help with the campaign or just want to learn more, please visit my website at www.mittromney.com. Much is held in the balance of this election for all Americans, but particularly for farmers, ranchers, and rural communities, and I hope I can count on your vote this November 6th.

Making Agriculture's Voice Heard This November

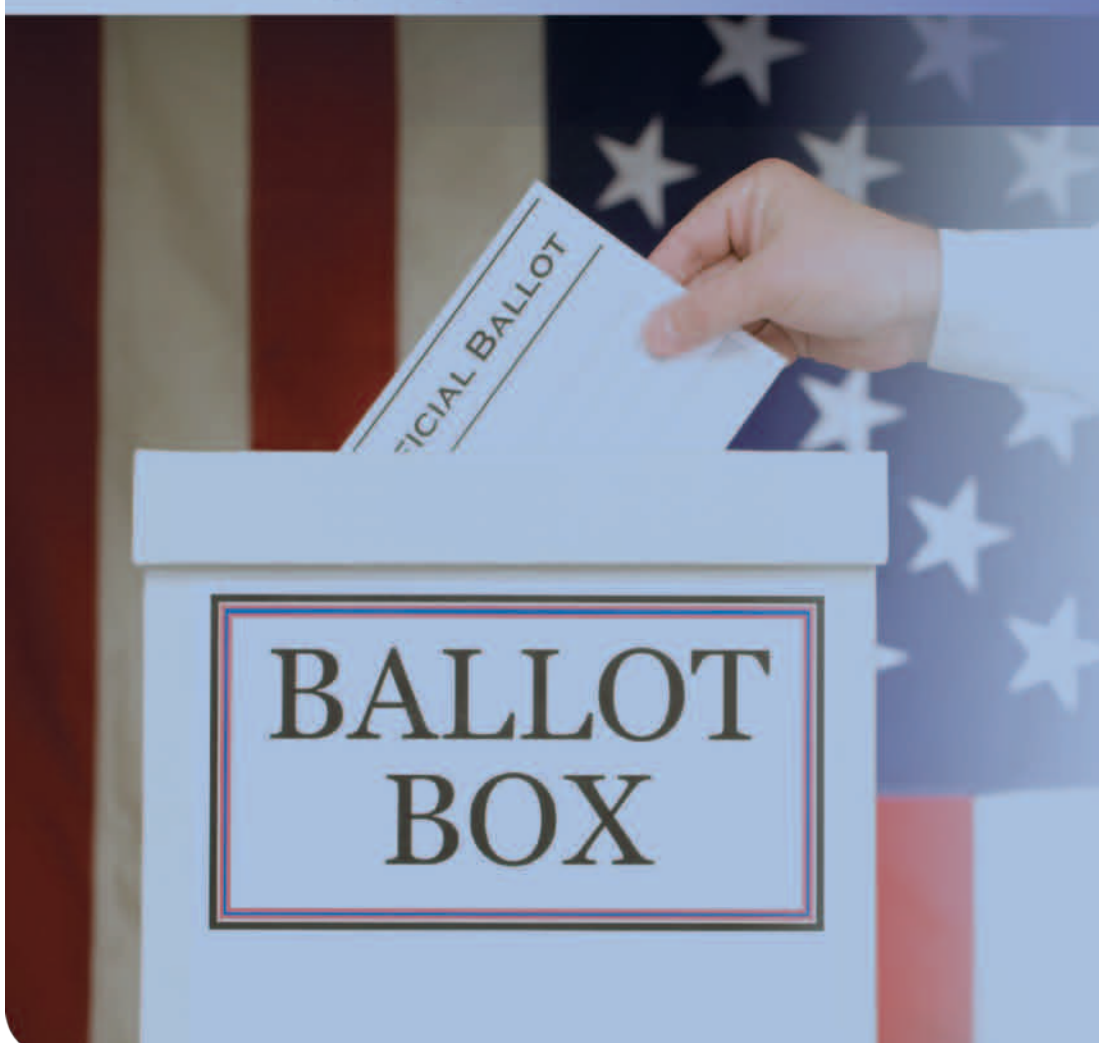
Election Day is Nov. 6, 2012

Voting is more than just showing up at the ballot box this November; it is about making a thoughtful, educated choice.

As farmers, ranchers and rural Americans, it's important that we elect candidates who are supportive of agriculture and rural issues.

Many issues in the next year will affect Farm Bureau members. Farm bill, budget, energy, taxes and environmental policy will hinge on this election. Farm Bureau members and other rural Americans will determine the direction our government moves by electing government officials from the president to the city council.

Go to www.fbactinsider.org for more information on Farm Bureau's priority issues.



Hurricane Isaac menaces Louisiana crops, cattle

Until Hurricane Isaac set its sights on the Gulf Coast, Louisiana farmers were looking at near-record yields for several commodities. However, 2012 should be far from a total wash for growers in the state, especially if the weather holds, according to Kurt Guidry, Louisiana State University agriculture economist.

"Weather conditions that follow the storm tend to be as significant, in terms of the final impact, as the storm itself," explained Guidry.

Guidry's early estimates show about \$100 million in damage to crops and cattle, but the final total will probably be revised upwards as livestock numbers are finalized and crop quality degradation and delayed harvests are taken into consideration.

Still, Isaac, which was downgraded to a tropical storm less than 12 hours after making landfall, could have been much worse, Louisiana Farm Bureau President Ronnie Anderson noted.

"I know for the farmers and ranchers impacted by the storm it's a trying time and we're going to do what we can to help them. But when you look at what other hurricanes over the past seven years have done to Louisiana agriculture, this storm was mild in comparison," said Anderson, who toured coastal and sugar-growing parishes just two days after the storm.

Unlike Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005, Isaac will be remembered as the storm that could have

been. Together, Katrina, Rita and Hurricane Gustav in 2008 caused more than \$4 billion in crop, livestock, timber and farm infrastructure losses across Louisiana.

Guidry's crop damage estimates include rice, corn, cotton, citrus, grain sorghum, sweet potatoes, pecans and sugarcane, which was the hardest hit with close to a \$60 million loss—7 percent of its pre-storm value.

The current sugarcane crop experienced wind damage, and farmers were still planting next year's crop.

"This will result in either a change in planting methods—going from whole-stalk planting to billet planting—or a change in the planting ratio," Guidry said.

For St. James Parish grower Greg Gravois, a hurricane is all in a day's work. He expects his cane will bounce back with "a little sunshine and some dry weather."

"We'll be able to pick this cane up once the sun comes out and it begins to stand itself back up," said Gravois. "It might be a little slower harvest, but hurricane season and grinding season go hand in hand."

For other farmers and ranchers though, recovery will take more than a stretch of decent weather.

When water breached the levees in Plaquemines Parish it had nowhere to go, and neither did the many of the cattle in the region. Approximately 40 percent of the 1,000 cattle on the parish's Citrus Lands drowned in 10 feet or more



PHOTO COURTESY OF PLAQUEMINES PARISH SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Thousands of cattle in Plaquemines Parish drowned during or after Hurricane Isaac. Flooding in the parish, a narrow piece of land that runs along the Mississippi River, left few places for cattle to ride out the storm and its aftermath.

of salty water. And only about 1,000 of the 2,500 to 3,000 cattle survived near the parish's west bank, according to Agriculture and Forestry Commissioner Mike Strain and ranchers' reports.

The Louisiana Air National Guard dropped hay bales to stranded cattle, while the state Department of Agriculture and Forestry distributed donated grain. Mother Nature was not completely working against the livestock though. Early tests of the floodwater indicated it was not too salty for the cattle to drink.

The salinity of the water is a

concern for orchards, too. Flooding kept citrus trees under water for days, hurting not only the current crop, but probably causing longer-term problems.

According to Louisiana Farm Bureau's Mike Danna, the citrus crop experienced the greatest proportional loss with 49 percent of the citrus trees and infrastructure damaged by the storm.

About 37 percent of the citrus crop was damaged in Plaquemines, Lafourche and Terrebonne parishes. The three parishes combined raise about 50 percent of the state's citrus.

State Focus



Indiana workshops help natural resource-based start-ups

Landowners interested in developing businesses that take advantage of the natural resources on their property were offered two workshop opportunities this month through the Natural Resource Enterprise program, which was established to educate non-industrial private landowners about sustainable natural resources enterprises and compatible habitat management practices. "The program is designed to give participants the chance to learn about starting their own value-added business or find out how to improve on existing ventures," said Justin Schneider, Indiana Farm Bureau staff attorney. In Indiana, the Natural Resource Enterprises program is coordinated by Purdue University and INFB in partnership with Mississippi State. The first workshop took place in Indianapolis. It included information on business plan development and legal considerations for outdoor enterprises. The second, held in Milltown, addressed how landowners can manage their resources, reduce their liability and create a unique agritourism enterprise.



Push for legalization of industrial hemp in Kentucky

U.S. Sen. Rand Paul (R-Ky.) recently spoke to the Kentucky Farm Bureau about his interest in removing federal restrictions on industrial hemp. Kentucky Agriculture Commissioner James Comer joined Paul at the Kentucky State Fair to promote their efforts to legalize industrial hemp farming. Paul is a co-sponsor of a bill in the U.S. Senate that would take industrial hemp out of the control of the Drug Enforcement Administration so it could be treated like other agricultural crops. Comer, who plans to restart the Kentucky Hemp Commission to advocate for the elimination of the federal restrictions, said he hopes a similar bill will be filed in the Kentucky General Assembly. Federal regulations control and prohibit production of the plant that can be used to make products including twine, paper and clothing. Comer and other supporters say allowing hemp farming could help diversify Kentucky's agricultural economy. "The rest of the world can grow hemp and we're not, so we're losing out on that product," Paul said.



Oregon FB pursues answers in federal 'hot goods' labor cases

Nearly two months after U.S. Department of Labor officials charged three Oregon blueberry growers with labor violations, Oregon Farm Bureau is still waiting for the federal government to explain its actions. In late July, DOL said it found record-keeping and wage violations at the farms and charged all three with "hot goods" orders, forcing them to pay penalties and sign confessions while their fresh berries were "held hostage," according to OFB. Three weeks after a congressional inquiry into the charges, DOL said it still needed more time to respond. "Good behavior typically doesn't take five weeks to explain," said Dave Dillon, OFB executive vice president. "It is troubling that DOL took only 48 hours to demand \$170,000 from one farmer in return for release of his fresh berries. How can it take five weeks to explain a decision it took only hours to make? DOL would have been better off taking five weeks to do a credible investigation, and then it could have explained itself more quickly." OFB has only just begun looking into DOL's actions, Dillon warned.

AFBF announces promotions

Lynne Finnerty has been promoted to director, project management, in the American Farm Bureau Federation's executive office. Finnerty will be responsible for executive communications and management of executive projects.



Finnerty

Finnerty joined the AFBF staff in 2001 as editor of Farm Bureau News. She was previously the director of legislative affairs for USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service. Before that, Finnerty worked for Secretaries of Agriculture Dan Glickman and Mike Espy, managing USDA's executive communications.

Erin Anthony succeeds Finnerty as editor of FBNews. Anthony rejoined the AFBF staff as assistant editor of FBNews in 2005. She originally served as assistant editor from 1999-2001, before leaving to work as an editor for Nursing Executive Watch, as an account manager for a legislative tracking service and as a government relations consultant. She first joined the AFBF staff in 1998 as a public relations assistant.



Anthony

States announce congressional 'Friends of Farm Bureau'

The Friend of Farm Bureau award is given at the end of each Congress to those members of Congress who were nominated by their respective state Farm Bureaus and approved by the American Farm Bureau Federation board of directors. This award is based upon voting records on AFBF's priority issues established by the board of directors, number of bills that a member has sponsored and co-sponsored, specific leadership role for Farm Bureau on priority issues, and how accessible and responsive that member is to Farm Bureau members and leaders. In addition, the state Farm Bureau lists any other specific reasons why that member should receive this award.

• ALABAMA

Sen. Richard Shelby (R)
Rep. Mo Brooks (R)
Rep. Martha Roby (R)
Rep. Mike Rogers (R)

• ARIZONA

Rep. Jeff Flake (R)
Rep. Ben Quayle (R)
Rep. David Schweikert (R)
Rep. Trent Franks (R)
Rep. Paul Gosar (R)

• ARKANSAS

Sen. Mark Pryor (D)
Sen. John Boozman (R)
Rep. Rick Crawford (R)
Rep. Tim Griffin (R)
Rep. Steve Womack (R)
Rep. Mike Ross (D)

• COLORADO

Sen. Mark Udall (D)
Sen. Michael Bennet (D)
Rep. Cory Gardner (R)
Rep. Scott Tipton (R)
Rep. Mike Coffman (R)
Rep. Doug Lamborn (R)

• FLORIDA

Sen. Bill Nelson (D)
Rep. Jeff Miller (R)
Rep. Steve Southerland (R)
Rep. Ander Crenshaw (R)
Rep. Richard Nugent (R)
Rep. Cliff Stearns (R)
Rep. John Mica (R)
Rep. Daniel Webster (R)
Rep. Gus Bilirakis (R)
Rep. C.W. Bill Young (R)
Rep. Dennis Ross (R)
Rep. Vern Buchanan (R)
Rep. Connie Mack (R)
Rep. Bill Posey (R)
Rep. Tom Rooney (R)
Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R)
Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart (R)

Rep. Allen West (R)

Rep. Sandy Adams (R)
Rep. David Rivera (R)

• GEORGIA

Sen. Saxby Chambliss (R)
Sen. Johnny Isakson (R)
Rep. Jack Kingston (R)
Rep. Austin Scott (R)

• IDAHO

Sen. Michael Crapo (R)
Sen. Jim Risch (R)
Rep. Mike Simpson (R)
Rep. Raul Labrador (R)

• ILLINOIS

Rep. Judy Biggert (R)
Rep. Robert Dold (R)
Rep. Randy Hultgren (R)
Rep. Timothy Johnson (R)
Rep. Adam Kinzinger (R)
Rep. Donald Manzullo (R)
Rep. Peter Roskam (R)
Rep. Bobby Schilling (R)
Rep. Aaron Schock (R)
Rep. John Shimkus (R)
Rep. Joe Walsh (R)

• INDIANA

Sen. Richard Lugar (R)
Sen. Dan Coats (R)
Rep. Larry Bucshon (R)
Rep. Mike Pence (R)
Rep. Todd Rokita (R)
Rep. Marlin Stutzman (R)
Rep. Todd Young (R)

• IOWA

Sen. Charles Grassley (R)
Rep. Tom Latham (R)
Rep. Steve King (R)

• KANSAS

Sen. Pat Roberts (R)
Sen. Jerry Moran (R)
Rep. Lynn Jenkins (R)
Rep. Tim Huelskamp (R)

Rep. Kevin Yoder (R)
Rep. Mike Pompeo (R)

• KENTUCKY

Sen. Mitch McConnell (R)
Rep. Ed Whitfield (R)
Rep. Brett Guthrie (R)
Rep. Geoff Davis (R)
Rep. Harold Rogers (R)

• LOUISIANA

Sen. David Vitter (R)
Sen. Mary Landrieu (D)
Rep. Rodney Alexander (R)
Rep. Charles Boustany (R)
Rep. Bill Cassidy (R)
Rep. John Fleming (R)
Rep. Jeff Landry (R)
Rep. Steve Scalise (R)

• MAINE

Sen. Susan Collins (R)

• MARYLAND

Rep. Andy Harris (R)
Rep. Roscoe Bartlett (R)

• MICHIGAN

Sen. Debbie Stabenow (D)
Rep. Dan Benishek (R)
Rep. Bill Huizenga (R)
Rep. Justin Amash (R)
Rep. Dave Camp (R)
Rep. Fred Upton (R)
Rep. Tim Walberg (R)
Rep. Mike Rogers (R)
Rep. Candice Miller (R)

• MINNESOTA

Sen. Al Franken (D)
Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D)
Rep. John Kline (R)
Rep. Erik Paulsen (R)
Rep. Michele Bachmann (R)
Rep. Collin Peterson (D)
Rep. Chip Cravaack (R)

• MISSISSIPPI

Sen. Thad Cochran (R)
Sen. Roger Wicker (R)
Rep. Gregg Harper (R)
Rep. Alan Nunnelee (R)
Rep. Steven Palazzo (R)

• MISSOURI

Sen. Roy Blunt (R)
Rep. Todd Akin (R)
Rep. Jo Ann Emerson (R)
Rep. Sam Graves (R)
Rep. Vicky Hartzler (R)
Rep. Billy Long (R)
Rep. Blaine Luetkemeyer (R)

• MONTANA

Sen. Max Baucus (D)
Rep. Denny Rehberg (R)

• NEBRASKA

Sen. Mike Johanns (R)
Rep. Jeff Fortenberry (R)
Rep. Lee Terry (R)
Rep. Adrian Smith (R)

• NEVADA

Rep. Mark Amodei (R)
Rep. Joe Heck (R)

• NEW MEXICO

Rep. Steve Pearce (R)

• NEW YORK

Sen. Kristin Gillibrand (D)
Rep. Ann Marie Buerkle (R)
Rep. Chris Gibson (R)
Rep. Michael Grimm (R)
Rep. Richard Hanna (R)
Rep. Nan Hayworth (R)
Rep. Peter King (R)
Rep. Bill Owens (D)
Rep. Tom Reed (R)
Rep. Bob Turner (R)

• NORTH CAROLINA

Sen. Richard Burr (R)
Sen. Kay Hagan (D)
Rep. Howard Coble (R)
Rep. Renee Ellmers (R)
Rep. Virginia Foxx (R)
Rep. Walter Jones (R)
Rep. Larry Kissell (D)
Rep. Patrick McHenry (R)
Rep. Mike McIntyre (D)
Rep. Sue Myrick (R)

• NORTH DAKOTA

Sen. John Hoeven (R)
Rep. Rick Berg (R)

• OHIO

Sen. Rob Portman (R)
Rep. Steve Austria (R)
Speaker John Boehner (R)*
Rep. Steve Chabot (R)
Rep. Bob Gibbs (R)
Rep. Bill Johnson (R)
Rep. Jim Jordan (R)
Rep. Bob Latta (R)
Rep. James Renacci (R)
Rep. Jean Schmidt (R)
Rep. Pat Tiberi (R)
Rep. Michael Turner (R)
Rep. Steve Stivers (R)

• OKLAHOMA

Sen. James Inhofe (R)
Rep. Frank Lucas (R)
Rep. Dan Boren (D)
Rep. Tom Cole (R)
Rep. James Lankford (R)
Rep. John Sullivan (R)

• OREGON

Rep. Greg Walden (R)

• PENNSYLVANIA

Rep. Lou Barletta (R)
Rep. Mark Critz (D)
Rep. Charlie Dent (R)
Rep. Michael Fitzpatrick (R)
Rep. Jim Gerlach (R)
Rep. Tim Holden (D)
Rep. Mike Kelly (R)
Rep. Tom Marino (R)
Rep. Patrick Meehan (R)
Rep. Tim Murphy (R)
Rep. Joe Pitts (R)
Rep. Todd Platts (R)
Rep. Bill Shuster (R)
Rep. Glenn "GT" Thompson (R)

• SOUTH CAROLINA

Sen. Lindsey Graham (R)
Rep. Jeff Duncan (R)
Rep. Trey Gowdy (R)
Rep. Mick Mulvaney (R)
Rep. Tim Scott (R)



• SOUTH DAKOTA

Sen. Tim Johnson (D)
Sen. John Thune (R)
Rep. Kristi Noem (R)

• TENNESSEE

Sen. Lamar Alexander (R)
Sen. Bob Corker (R)
Rep. Diane Black (R)
Rep. Marsha Blackburn (R)
Rep. Scott DesJarlais (R)
Rep. John Duncan (R)
Rep. Stephen Fincher (R)
Rep. Chuck Fleischmann (R)
Rep. Phil Roe (R)

• TEXAS

Sen. John Cornyn (R)
Rep. Louie Gohmert (R)
Rep. Ted Poe (R)
Rep. Sam Johnson (R)
Rep. Ralph Hall (R)
Rep. Jeb Hensarling (R)
Rep. Joe Barton (R)
Rep. John Culberson (R)
Rep. Kevin Brady (R)
Rep. Michael McCaul (R)
Rep. Michael Conaway (R)
Rep. Kay Granger (R)
Rep. Mac Thornberry (R)
Rep. Bill Flores (R)
Rep. Randy Neugebauer (R)
Rep. Lamar Smith (R)
Rep. Pete Olson (R)
Rep. Francisco Canseco (R)
Rep. Kenny Marchant (R)
Rep. Michael Burgess (R)
Rep. Blake Farenthold (R)
Rep. Henry Cuellar (D)
Rep. John Carter (R)
Rep. Pete Sessions (R)

• UTAH

Rep. Rob Bishop (R)
Rep. Jim Matheson (R)
Rep. Jason Chaffetz (R)

• VERMONT

Sen. Patrick Leahy (D)

• VIRGINIA

Sen. Mark Warner (D)
Rep. Eric Cantor (R)
Rep. Randy Forbes (R)
Rep. Robert Hurt (R)
Rep. Bob Goodlatte (R)
Rep. Morgan Griffith (R)
Rep. Scott Rigell (R)
Rep. Rob Wittman (R)
Rep. Frank Wolf (R)

• WEST VIRGINIA

Rep. Shelley Moore Capito (R)
Rep. David McKinley (R)

• WISCONSIN

Rep. Sean Duffy (R)
Rep. Tom Petri (R)
Rep. Reid Ribble (R)
Rep. Paul Ryan (R)
Rep. James Sensenbrenner (R)

• WYOMING

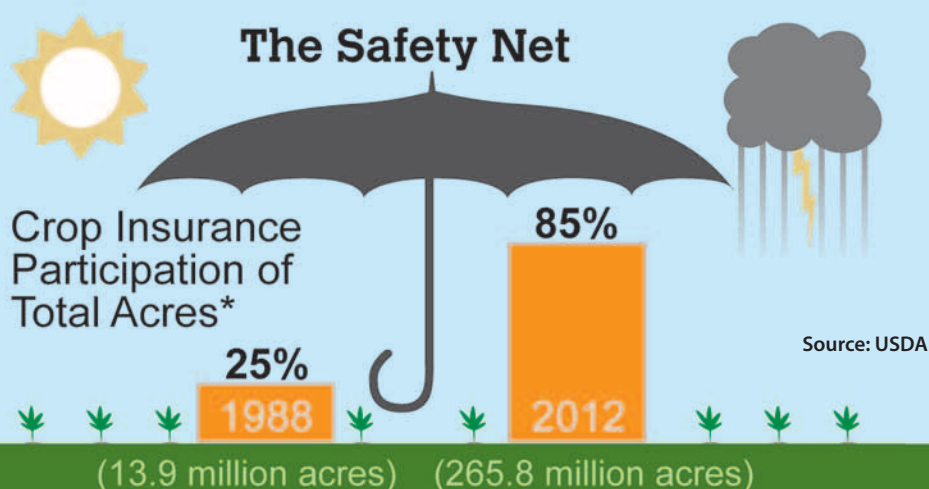
Sen. Michael Enzi (R)
Sen. John Barrasso (R)
Rep. Cynthia Lummis (R)

* Denote Special Circumstance Nominee

Corner Post

Resilience of American Agriculture

The drought of 2012 is the most serious to impact U.S. agriculture since 1988. The illustration below helps to show the resiliency of the U.S. agriculture sector and how it is better positioned today to endure this natural disaster.



*Note: The Federal Crop Insurance Program currently insures 265 million acres, 1.14 million policies and \$114 billion worth of liability on about 500,000 farms.