

## ADVOCATING FOR THE 2018 FARM BILL

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For the past few weeks there has been a kerfuffle in Congress regarding the creation of the 2018 Farm Bill. In May, the House presented their most recent version for a vote, and it failed to pass. Now they have until June 22 to produce a revised version and submit it for a new vote. The Senate is also working on their version of the Bill and its budget. As you might imagine, there are some very divisive issues contained within the Farm Bill, including immigration (farm labor), SNAP funding (known more commonly as food stamps), etc.

As members of the equine industry, you might ask how the Farm Bill would impact horses and the equine lifestyle. The Farm Bill, which is administered by the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), contains a number of “Titles”, or programs which provide and regulate funding for agriculturally related areas of our economy. One or more of these will be of great interest to horsemen and women. These Titles include:

- Title I: Commodities – Provides farm income assistance under conditions of yield or price-based losses
- Title II: Conservation – Protection of farmland soils and, more recently, of farms themselves
- Title III: Trade - Food for Peace Program (humanitarian) and the Market Access Program (trade development).
- Title IV: Nutrition – SNAP
- Title V: Credit – With new focus on Beginning Farmers and Ranchers
- Title VI: Rural Development – Provides services to underserved rural areas, such as utilities
- Title VII: Research and Extension – Brings new research and training to farmers and ranchers
- Title VIII: Forestry – Small segment of Forestry budgeting; mostly in the Dept. of the Interior
- Title IX: Energy – Biofuels, carbon sequestration, energy efficiency
- Title X: Horticulture – specialty and organic crops
- Title XI: Crop Insurance – multi-peril
- Miscellaneous - livestock production, job training outreach and technical assistance to disadvantaged and military veteran farmers and ranchers.



The Farm Bill is not just about farmers. As citizens, we should be concerned about all facets of the Farm Bill – feeding the nation as well as the hungry (food security); bringing new farmers into the agricultural industry, helping rural communities and conserving prime farmland and soils. The last is especially important to the equine industry.

Protecting farm and ranch land in perpetuity also helps the horse industry to thrive. Development, accompanied by poor urban, suburban and rural planning contribute greatly to the loss of open land for

horse activities. Organizations nationwide are recognizing the importance of the Conservation title, and the equine community must recognize the same and have their voices heard as the building and funding of the 2018 Farm Bill progresses this year.

### The Land Trust Alliance



According to the Land Trust Alliance, the various programs of the Title II, Conservation element of the Farm Bill provide the “largest single federal source of funding for private land conservation”... and “create major opportunities for land trusts to protect high-priority farm and ranch lands, grasslands, wetlands and forests.” These programs are critical to the protection of agricultural and horse lands throughout the US.

Land Trust Alliance has recently supported the Charitable Conservation Easement Program Integrity Act of 2017, which you can see here: <https://www.landtrustalliance.org/hr-4459-s-2436>, and provide comment to your Representatives.

Land Trust Alliance’s stated goals for the 2018 Farm Bill include:

1. “Authorize Agricultural Conservation Easement Program Funding at \$500 Million Per Year.”  
“The current Farm Bill funds ACEP at this level in FY17, but funding drops to \$250 million annually in FY 18 and beyond. That is a 66% decline compared to the historic average of \$732 million. At a recent Senate Agriculture Committee hearing, USDA said \$250 million per year would only fund 7% of demand for this vitally important program”.
2. Streamline the Agricultural Land Easement program (ALE) “to ease administrative burdens, and provide flexibility for producers, land trusts and NRCS”.
3. The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) and Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) are all critical to water conservation, soil and farmland protection, creation of wetlands and creation and maintenance of fish and wildlife habitat in order to produce the food and fiber needed. These and several other, more specific goals may be seen here:

<https://www.landtrustalliance.org/topics/federal-programs/farm-bill-conservation-programs>

This is the full version of the House Bill as voted upon in May:

[https://agriculture.house.gov/uploadedfiles/agriculture\\_and\\_nutrition\\_act\\_of\\_2018.pdf](https://agriculture.house.gov/uploadedfiles/agriculture_and_nutrition_act_of_2018.pdf)

### The American Farmland Trust

According to The American Farmland Trust’s President John Piotti, the Conservation Title Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) saw “disproportionately large cuts in the 2014 Farm Bill. As a result, 70 percent of applications for funding” for protecting land are turned away. ACEP needs greater funding and



more streamlined administration.

The Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCP), “an innovative program that brings together a diverse array of partners with technical and scientific expertise and leverages private sector dollars”, needs to be strengthened. “More information about measuring and reporting the actual environmental, social, and economic outcomes of the conservation practices used (rather than the simple number of practices put into place) should be provided to demonstrate “that voluntary conservation is working”.

If you subscribe to AFT’s goals for the Conservation Title programs, contact your Representative and Senator and Take Action here:

[http://action.farmland.org/site/PageNavigator/No-Farms-No-Food/FY17\\_FarmBill\\_Action1.html?\\_ga=2.150854262.1576902039.1528213976-2017806417.1528213976](http://action.farmland.org/site/PageNavigator/No-Farms-No-Food/FY17_FarmBill_Action1.html?_ga=2.150854262.1576902039.1528213976-2017806417.1528213976) (Create a google shortcut)

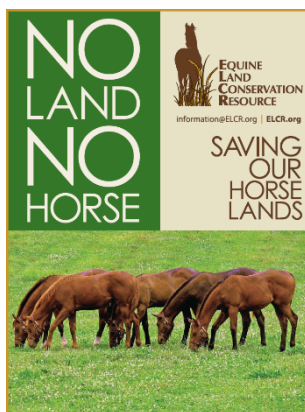
Numerous organizations and groups have developed recommendations for the Farm Bill and give advice on advocacy. These include:

The American Forest Foundation, The Wildlife Society, the American Farm Bureau Federation, the Center for Rural Affairs, the American Horse Council, the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, Land For Good, the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy plus many state, regional, commodity and food security organizations.

Organizations that have vested interests in the outcome of the 2018 Farm Bill process and funding are easily found on the internet. Write or call your House and Senate representatives to voice your opinion. Their contact information can be found at <https://www.usa.gov/elected-officials> and many other search sites.

To read more about the various land conservation programs that are administered through NRCS, visit - <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/programs/farmland/?cid=stelprdb1244022> (create a google shortcut)

or see ELCR’s new guide, Purchase of Development Rights in the US, which explains many of the land protection programs. <https://elcr.org/purchase-of-development-rights-programs-in-the-u-s/>



If you have questions on this complex Farm Bill, please call ELCR at 859-455-8383, or email Denise O’Meara at [domeara@elcr.org](mailto:domeara@elcr.org).