

Kentucky farmers, leaders push for new Farm Bill

Producers seek financial stability, certainty amid Senate delay

BY ZOE LEWIS
FOR THE MESSENGER

After the Agricultural Act of 2026, also known as the Farm Bill 2.0, did not pass out of the U.S. Senate’s Agriculture Committee last week, farmers and other leaders are advocating for lawmakers to pass the bill to help farmers financially and plan for the future.

According to the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, the Farm Bill is a multi-year federal package of legislation that impacts many parts of agriculture, including programs providing crop insurance, further agricultural research, loan options, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and more. It was created in 1933 and is usually passed every five years. However, the last Farm Bill passed in 2018 and was extended until 2025.

The latest draft had an 11-to-10 vote, and two senators were missing from the vote, including Sen. Mitch McConnell (R-KY), who has been out of the office for weeks due to health issues.

Although he was missing from the committee hearing, he sent a statement to Chairman John Boozman (R-AR). He said the current draft furthers efforts of White Oak conservation, “which will help ensure a lasting supply of materials needed for barrels in the commonwealth’s signature bourbon industry,” and added language to support equine research. McConnell adds he is proud of his colleagues and the current draft of the bill.

“Over my 42-year career in the Senate, I’ve had the honor of working on significant and consequential legislation to help provide necessary security for our farmers and their livelihood so they could keep feeding our country. I’m proud to say that this is my 8th Farm Bill in the last four decades, and there are major provisions in this bill that will help Kentucky,” McConnell said in a statement.

Will Snell, an agricultural



File Photo

Ag leaders advocate for a new Farm Bill. Photo taken in Mayfield, Ky., Sept. 4, 2024.

economist at the University of Kentucky, said the bill was stalled due to SNAP error rates, which require states to pay a share of SNAP benefits if their payment error rate is 6% or more, with Republicans wanting to extend states’ deadline to only a year and Democrats wanting a two-year extension.

“The debate right now is a lot over E15, the SNAP error rate; these conservation, rural development [and] trade promotion programs that were not completely addressed by the One Big Beautiful Bill Act that was passed last year,” Snell said.

However, while farmers acknowledge the SNAP program is a large portion of the Farm Bill, they say it’s important for lawmakers to work together and push the bill past the finish line.

“Agriculture should not be a partisan issue, but unfortunately, more often than not, things are becoming more and more polarizing, it seems, and ag policy is not exempt from that,” Caleb Ragland, a farmer in Magnolia and chairman of the American Soybean Association, said.

Snell said the new legislation will create a safety net of price and income support for producers that wasn’t

addressed in the OBBA, which the U.S. House of Representatives reports the Farm Bill builds on.

“It can provide that safety net for agricultural producers out there, given the risk they have from geopolitical events to weather events to just international competition. It can provide that baseline or safety net for farmers,” Snell said.

Snell said the Farm Bill could address new loan limits for farmers.

“There are components in this Farm Bill dealing with increasing the loan limits. We know that input prices have gone up considerably, and this provides an increase in USDA loans,” Snell said.

Ragland is one of many advocates of a new Farm Bill, and he said reinstating programs and increasing loan limits will help out his farming neighbors, especially in the volatile economy.

“It’s really a struggle right now. A combination of record-high production, coupled with sale prices for our commodities. Outside the cattle market, there’s not a lot of bright spots right now. Unfortunately, the result is we have a lot of farmers that are operating in the red ink right now,” Rag-

land said. “If you’re not able to be profitable, you’re not going to be able to be sustainable and stay solvent long-term. That’s a huge thing on the front of most farmers’ minds right now, and we’re just trying to do policy work to help and make that opportunity a little better in the future.”

Michael Williford, a farmer in Hickman County and vice president of the Kentucky Pork Producers, said a new Farm Bill “sets the stage” for future farming operations and would help create certainty for farmers like him.

“Without a Farm Bill and the way it’s been going, where they’ve kind of continued programs just from year to year, we don’t know what we’re going to be able to do next year until they figure something out,” Williford said. “Do you invest the money to put those programs in place, and then hope that you’re going to get reimbursed some kind of way, or do you invest the money, make it happen, and then find out that because you’re 10 feet off, you don’t qualify for those programs? It’s kind of put us all in limbo.”

Ragland shares that sentiment of a Farm Bill creating assurance for those in agriculture.

“With the amount of risk that is involved in production [and] agriculture in general, the more things that you can nail down to know this is the way this is going to be — we have a target out here to aim at, and we know for the next five years that we’re going to have this level of stability,” Ragland said.

Ragland also said new legislation is needed because of outdated data. He said data is used to utilize certain programs, “so we desperately need to have relevant data that is being to make decisions so that they can be made accurately.”

Another topic that was discussed in the committee, and was later added as an amendment to the bill, was the year-round use of E15, a gas that is 15% blended with ethanol. Snell said most of the gas that is purchased is 10% mixed with ethanol, and using E15 gasoline year-round would increase the demand for crops, like corn.

“Getting the details right within biofuels policy is vital for it being successful not only for corn farmers but also for soybean farmers and for agriculture in general,” Ragland said.

However, Ragland said the House’s draft of the Farm Bill had “major issues” with E15 gasoline for a variety of crops.

“For corn alone, it didn’t look too bad. Most farmers are growing corn, wheat and soybeans on their farms... All crops are important, and policy needs to be good for the comprehensive rotation that [we] grow,” Ragland said. “We need to make sure that we get the right policy in place where our farmers can win economically.”

Williford said, along with biofuel policy, he would like to see the Save Our Bacon Act added to the new Farm Bill, which would create a national standard for raising livestock.

Williford, Ragland and Snell all said it is critical to get the Farm Bill passed. Ragland said he encourages Kentuckians and their lawmakers to reach out to one another to see policy change.

The Senate is currently in recess and will meet again in September. The agriculture committee will vote on the Farm Bill again, and it’s unclear if McConnell will be back in office for that vote.

Taylor Farms recalls jalapeno products over salmonella concerns

BY MICHELLE CHAPMAN
ASSOCIATED PRESS

Taylor Fresh Foods, parent company of Taylor Farms, is voluntarily recalling some products that include jalapeños because of worries about a possible salmonella contamination.

The announcement comes a few weeks after Taylor Farms voluntarily recalled its iceberg lettuce products sourced from central Mexico because of a potential link to a multistate cyclospora outbreak that has sickened people across the U.S.

Taylor Fresh Foods said that it was pulling some products including jalapeños from stores shelves after finding out that Coast Citrus Distributors was voluntarily recalling fresh jalapeños due to

a potential salmonella contamination.

Guacamole, pico de gallo and taco dip are some of the prepared foods included in the recall. The list of recalled products were distributed by Taylor Farms in multiple states with a “Best If Used By” date up to and including Aug. 16, 2026. The products were sold at stores including Kroger, Stop & Shop, Target, Whole Foods, Trader Joe’s and Walmart.

Taylor Fresh Foods said that the Food and Drug Administration and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention were working with state and local partners to investigate illnesses in a multistate outbreak of salmonella infections linked to fresh jalapeños supplied by Coast Citrus Distributors. The compa-

Consumers who have any recalled product are advised to discard it immediately and not eat it. Refunds are available at the location of purchase.



AP Photo/Guillermo Arias

Taylor Farms boxes are loaded on a field in the town of Doctor Mora, on the central state of Guanajuato, Mexico, on March 26, 2008.

ny said that a grower in Sinaloa, Mexico, a supplier to Coast Citrus Distributors, was identified as the potential source in the outbreak.

Taylor Fresh Foods said that it is no longer sourcing products from

the farmer and will be filling orders from alternative suppliers. The company is currently not aware of any reported illnesses linked to its prod-

ucts containing jalapeños. Consumers who have any recalled product are advised to discard it immediately and not eat it. Refunds are available at

the location of purchase. Consumers with any questions can contact Taylor at 855-455-0098 Monday through Friday from 8am-5pm PT.

Mayfield FUMC community breakfast set for Saturday

A community breakfast will be offered Saturday, Aug. 15, at Mayfield First United Methodist Church from 8 a.m. to 10 a.m. The breakfast will be in the family life center, located at 1322 W. Broadway in Mayfield.

Congregation volunteers will be serving pancakes, sausage, biscuits and gravy, along with juice and coffee. There is no charge for the breakfast, though donations are welcome.

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The Graves County Health Department Fiscal Year 2026 financial statement is available by contacting the Graves County Health Department at 270-247-3553.