Nueces Agriculture

"IMPROVING FOOD & FIBER PRODUCTION"

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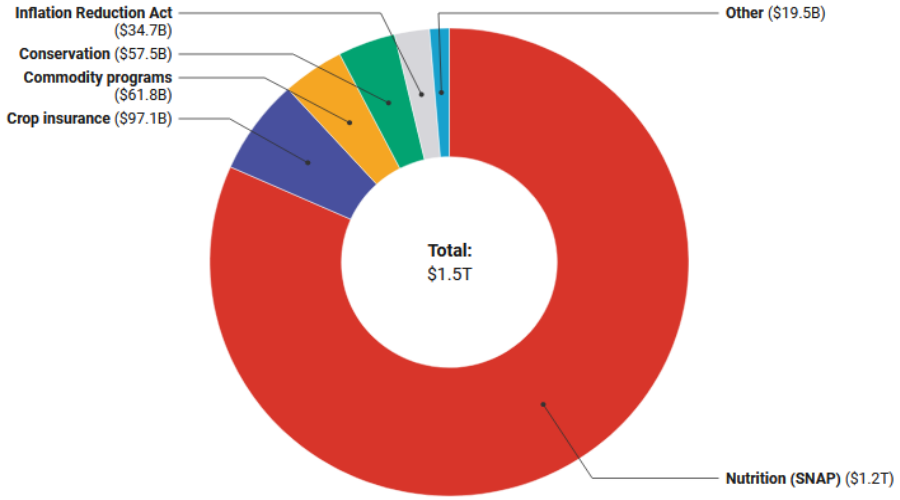
Inside this issue:

Farm Bill Stats:

For the 20th time since 1933, Congress is writing a multiyear farm bill that will shape what kind of food U.S farmers grow, how they raise it and how it gets to consumers. These measures are large, complex, and expensive. The next Farm Bill is projected to cost tax payers US$1.5 trillion over 10 years.

Food aid will account for 80% of the next farm bill

About 99% of farm bill outlays go to the "big four" titles: nutrition, crop insurance, commodities and conservation. The Inflation Reduction Act provided additional funding for farm conservation, forestry and rural development programs. "Other" includes many programs that support rural communities, including economic development and broadband access.



Ten-year projected outlays, 2024-2033

Chart: The Conversation, CC BY-ND • Source: American Farm Bureau Federation • Get the data • Download image • Created with Datawrapper

TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION

Find us on Facebook at NuecesCountyAgriculture

FARM WORKER PROTECTION SAFETY TRAINING

When …. September 1, 2023 Time …. 9:00 AM

Where. ……. A&M AgriLife Ext. Office,

710 East Main, Ste. 1, Robstown, TX

Pesticide handlers and workers must be trained every year unless they are certified applicators. All participants in this training will be issued cards verifying they have successfully completed the required training and given a copy of the sign-in roster for their employer's files.

PRIVATE APPLICATOR TRAINING

When …. September 5, 2023 Time …. 8:30 AM

Where. ……. A&M AgriLife Ext. Office, Pre Registration Required …. (361) 767-5223

710 East Main, Ste. 1, Robstown, TX

Fee: $50.00 *(Includes study manuals)*

A Private Applicator is defined by law as a person who uses or supervises the use of a restricted-use or state-limited use pesticide for the purpose of producing an agricultural commodity.

Tractor Safety: Tips for Avoiding Accidents

By: Safety Culture December 2022

What is Tractor Safety?

Farmers and other agricultural workers use tractors to perform various tasks, such as plowing fields, harvesting crops, and hauling equipment. While tractors are very useful machines, they can also be dangerous. Each year, there are a number of tractor-related accidents and fatalities

Tractor safety is the practice of operating a tractor in a safe manner. It involves being aware of the potential hazards while working around tractors and taking steps to avoid and prevent fatal injuries or accidents.

By understanding the basic principles of tractor safety, operators can help prevent accidents and ensure that everyone stays safe while using this powerful machine. In addition, operators should also be aware of the workplace safety hazards that are specific to the type of work they are doing.

Why Does Tractor Safety Matter?

When it comes to operating a tractor, safety is always the top priority. According to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), tractor accidents are the leading cause of death for farmers. So, whether you're a farmer, a rancher, or simply someone who uses a tractor for personal use, it's important to understand the potential hazards and take steps to avoid them.

Tractor accidents can often be very serious and even fatal. That's why it's important to take the time to learn about tractor safety and to follow all safety precautions when operating a tractor. By doing so, you can help prevent accidents and keep yourself and others safe.

What are Some Common Tractor Hazards?

Here are some of the common tractor hazards that often occur when working. Let's discuss each one:

Equipment Failures

Equipment failures can occur when parts of the tractor break or fail. This can happen due to poor maintenance, manufacturing defects, or wear and tear. Equipment failures can also occur if the operator is using the tractor for a task it is not designed for, such as towing a trailer that is too heavy.

Weather Conditions

Bad weather conditions can make it more difficult to operate a tractor and can increase the risk of accidents. This includes conditions such as fog, rain, snow, and ice. For example, heavy rains can result in muddy terrain and difficult visibility, which can cause serious accidents.

Older Tractor

Using older tractors can be dangerous because they might not have the same safety features as newer models. They also might not be as reliable and can have defects that might not be checked, causing an accident to the driver using them.

Falls

Falls can happen when a tractor hits a hole or other uneven surface, causing the operator to lose his balance and fall off the tractor. They can also occur if the operator is not properly secured in the tractor seat and ejected during a rollover or other accident.

Fires

Fires can occur if the tractor's engine overheats or the tractor's exhaust system is not properly vented. They can also be caused by sparks from the tractor's tires striking a flammable object. Remember to move immediately out of the vehicle if possible and get away as far as you can.

Most Common Causes of Tractor Accidents

Tractor accidents are a relatively common occurrence on farms and in other agricultural settings. While many of these accidents are minor, some can be quite serious and even put the operator's life at risk.

So what are the most common causes of tractor accidents? According to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), here are some of the most common causes of tractor accidents:

Rollovers

Rollovers occur when a tractor tips over on its side or roof. This can happen if the tractor hits a ditch or other uneven surface or goes over a steep embankment. It can also happen if the tractor is carrying a heavy load that shifts and causes the tractor to lose its balance.

Runovers

A runover occurs when a tractor runs over someone. This can happen if the operator is not paying attention and does not see someone in the path of the tractor. It can also happen if the tractor is backing up and the operator does not see someone behind the tractor.

Collisions

Tractor collisions can occur when two tractors collide with each other or when a tractor collides with a stationary object. This can happen if the operator is not paying attention and does not see the other tractor or object in time to avoid a collision.

Entanglements in Moving Parts

Entanglements in a tractor's moving parts are a hazard that can occur when the tractor's moving parts are not properly guarded or when the driver gets caught in it during operation. If the operator's clothing or body part gets caught in the vehicle, it will cause serious injuries or even death to the person.

If you are a tractor operator, it is important to be aware of these common causes of accidents and to take steps to avoid them. By being safety-conscious and following all the proper safety procedures, you can help prevent accidents and keep yourself and others safe.

Tractor Safety Tips

Working with tractors can be dangerous, so it's important to be aware of potential risks and take steps to avoid them. Here are some safety tips to keep in mind when using a tractor:

- Always wear proper protective equipment such as helmets, gloves, and eye protection when operating a tractor.
- Fasten your seatbelt before starting the tractor.
- Never stand or sit on the platform of a moving tractor.
- Do not try to repair a tractor while it is running.
- Keep your hands and feet away from moving parts.
- Be careful when attaching or detaching implements.
- Do not overload the tractor or its implements.
- Do not drive the tractor over unstable ground.
- Avoid driving during bad weather conditions, as it can cause serious accidents.
- Make sure to operate with proper lighting or in broad daylight to ensure that any obstacles can be seen properly.
- Take needed breaks to avoid over-exhaustion when driving tractors, especially during hot temperatures.
- Use safety messages and proper warning signs for workers.

Carbon Credits Farming (Everything You Need to Know)

By Jennifer L. , carboncredits.com February 17, 2023

If you're looking for new ways to make your farm profitable, generating carbon credits from farming has been the go-to solution that farmers opt for.

That's not surprising given that carbon farming enhances the organic matter content in the soil, minimizes costs, and gives extra income through carbon credits. Not to mention that it may also give farmers access to better financial incentives from banks or institutional investors.

With growing demand from businesses to buy carbon credits from farmers, it is now clear why carbon farming will be the future of agriculture. But some farmers are still in the dark when it comes to agricultural carbon credits.

And so the purpose of this article is to help clarify things by explaining how carbon credits in farming works, why it matters, and what are the key considerations you should make.

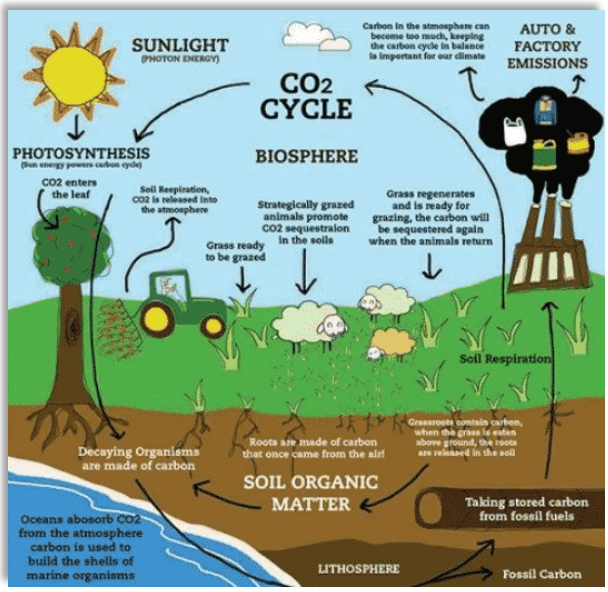
How Does Carbon Credits in Farming Work?

But first things first, let's define what a carbon credit is.

The idea behind carbon credits is that entities responsible for emitting CO2 have to reduce their emissions or pay for the efforts of farmers or others who are doing the work of removing CO2 from the air. The payment is in the form of a carbon credit, with each credit representing one metric ton of carbon reduced or removed.

Crops, grasses and other plants sequester CO2 from the air but they also release it when they decompose. Still, with proper soil carbon capture and farming practices, they can draw down CO2 very well.

Here is how soil captures CO2 in a natural carbon sequestration cycle.



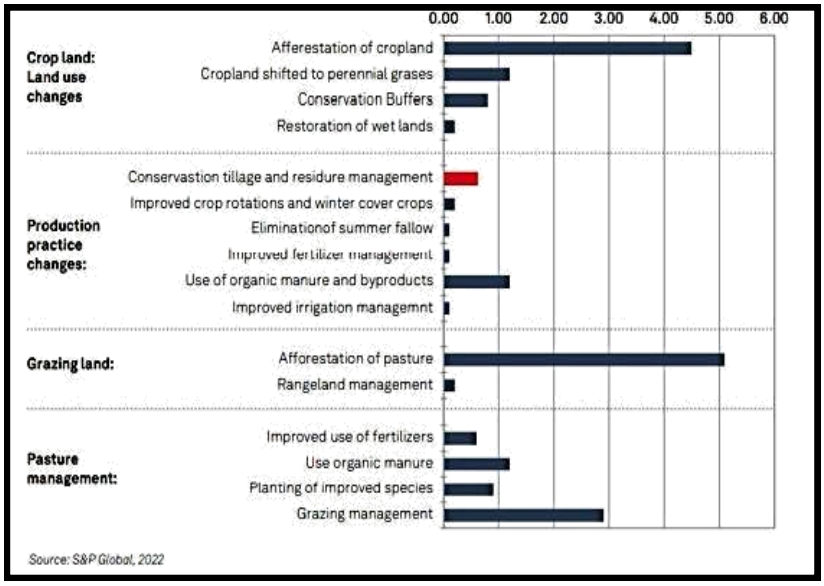
The length of time carbon stays in the soil before going back to the air varies. It depends on several factors such as climate and soil composition.

For example, disrupting the soil structure like converting forestland or grassland to farmland, can speed up the release of the captured carbon.

On the other hand, carbon farming methods like no-till farming and planting cover crops can slow down carbon loss. They can even help increase carbon levels in soil.

Studies show that the past 200 years of agriculture emitted ~100 billion metric tons of CO2 (GtCO2). That's far way over 3x as much carbon as all human activities released in 2019 – 43.1 GtCO2.

So, where do carbon credits come in?



Carbon credits in farming operate like crops in some ways.

For instance, if you produce soy to sell, the buyer will want to know its quality first. They will weigh your soy and test it for quality before buying it. And only by providing the buyers with important information can you convince them to buy your product.

- In the same manner, carbon credits measure and monitor the quantity of carbon sequestered in the farm's soil and the amount of carbon emissions reduced.

Some farming practices such as regenerative farming give farmers the potential to turn their farms' ability to sequester carbon into cash with carbon credits.

Specifically, carbon credits are created based on the amount of carbon sequestered by the soil and so represents the emissions reduced above the soil.

Why Do Farming Carbon Credits Matter?

Farmers and ranchers have many opportunities to reduce their own carbon footprint. But in order to meet the global net zero target, 22% of land needs to shift from traditional agricultural production to long-term carbon sequestration or carbon farming.

A range of market mechanisms are necessary to achieve anything near that level of land use change.

Schemes like carbon credits that allow landowners to generate new revenue streams through carbon farming are emerging. There's also high expectation that private investments in environmental measures that help mitigate climate change will be a significant market.

Farming practices that yield carbon credits offer financial incentives not just to reduce emissions but also create environmental and social co-benefits. They help extend benefits to farmers and society at large.

Financial benefits: With unpredictable yields caused by climate change, farmers welcome the extra income from carbon credits. More remarkably, the growing demand for credits from carbon farming spurred creation of programs and pledges by giant food retailers and agribusiness.

But it's crucial that they price carbon higher than implementation costs to attract farmers' attention. Current carbon prices vary widely, depending on the specific type of farming activity.

Data from S&P Global 2022 below shows carbon sequestration rates for different activities.

- Companies, governments, and other entities buy carbon credits for around $15/ton to $20/ton of carbon to offset their emissions.

Over time, we can expect to see carbon prices increase significantly to at least $70/tCO2e. That seems to be a lot of work given the current average of income farmers earn with carbon credits – $15/tCO2e.

But that should be the case if we are to prevent the planet from getting warmer, scientists say so.

Environmental and social co-benefits:

A study shows that farmers had increased attention towards programs that highlighted economic incentives from environmental and social co-benefits.

Carbon credit programs that consider co-benefits help ensure higher adoption rates by farmers. Examples of co-benefits include reduced use of fertilizers and increase in crop yields. Apparently, they're measurable and quantifiable.

Carbon farming also results in social co-benefits. For instance, there are more seasonal jobs for farmers to do conservation practices.

In other words, farming carbon credits create a new revenue stream for farmers that weren't there before. This even incentivizes them to transition to sustainable farming practices and adopt regenerative agriculture.

So the biggest winner at the end is the planet as the agriculture sector cut down its GHG emitting activities.

Carbon Credits And Farming: What You Need to Consider

As farmers embrace regenerative farming, their land goes from being a carbon emitter to sequestering carbon. In other words, their farms become a carbon sink which produces carbon credits.

Project developers then bring those credits to carbon markets where they sell them to emitters. They can be a business firm, an organization, or an individual wanting to offset their footprint and support farmers at the same time.

In return, farmers get additional income for each ton of CO_2 sequestered by their lands. There's a catch, though. Some may falsely claim to achieve certain carbon reductions without proper verification.

This is why it's important that farmers know what to consider to earn carbon credits and what farming practices can give them that. Speaking of, here are the top ways to generate credits from carbon farming.

How do farmers get carbon credits?

Farmers can get carbon credits from any of these five sources:

- Agroforestry
- Peatland restoration and management
- Enhancement of organic carbon content on soils
- Nutrient management on cropland and grasslands
- Livestock and manure management

For crop growers, in particular, credits are generated by shifting to carbon farming practices that enhance soil health and mitigate climate change by storing carbon in the soils.

On the buyers' side, companies like Cargill, Shopify, and Microsoft have committed to promoting carbon farming methods that regenerate the soil by buying carbon credits from farmers.

But adopting carbon farming practices is just one step in the process to generate carbon credits. So in the next section, we're outlining the general steps for you to get started if you want to earn carbon credits on top of your farming income.

Farming And Carbon Credits: How to Get Started

The first thing you should do, of course, is to find the right carbon program.

- **Finding the right carbon credit farming program**

Carbon farming takes full commitment to be successful right from the very beginning. A good place to start is to connect with the right carbon credit program provider with the expertise, tools, and support you need.

The right program helps you to implement farming practices that improve soil health, enhance its carbon sequestration, and reduce carbon emissions. This step often starts with consultations to know expectations.

After you agree to the terms, the provider oversees the next steps to guide you accordingly. There are providers that offer payments right at the start of the program.

- **Gathering initial farm data**

What makes carbon farming different from traditional agriculture is that it's a science-based approach. It deals with measuring initial data on the farm to know how change can be implemented best with verifiable results.

In the same way, carbon credits must also be based on robust measurement and assessment.

While measurements are done at various stages of farming and carbon credits programs, it usually starts by gathering baseline farm data. These include 3-5 years data on crops, yields, fertilizer rate application, farm practices, and so on. Getting all this data is crucial to know the best carbon farming practices to adopt as well as keep track of the progress to account for carbon credits generated.

- **Devising a plan**

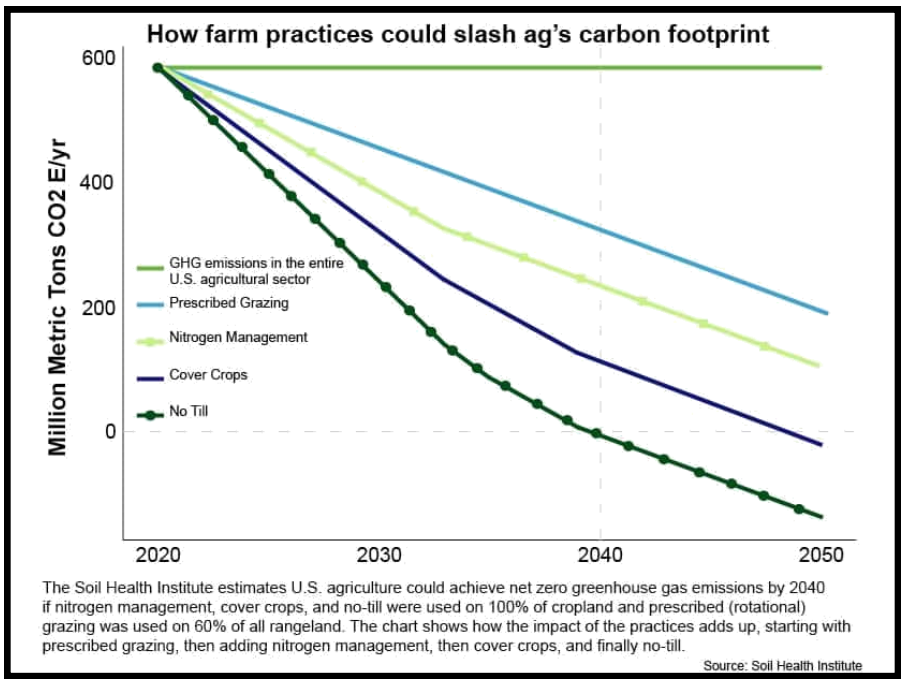
After assessment, together with your provider, you should develop a carbon farming plan. It outlines the practices that will eventually lead to creating carbon credits. Each farm is unique and so must have a custom plan based on baseline data gathered.

Common examples of carbon farming methods that produce carbon credits include any of the following:

- Reduced tillage or no-till farming
- Growing or increasing cover crops
- Reduced fertilizer application
- Efficient fuel use
- Improved residue management
- Prescribed (rotational) grazing
- Nitrogen management

Here's how various carbon farming techniques can slash agriculture's carbon emissions.

Carbon Farming Practices Projection in Cutting Carbon Emissions by 2050



- **Implementing practices and verifying results**

Each carbon farming practice has different requirements, depending on actual conditions. The baseline data is vital during implementation to review the practices that need improvement or changes.

This is where MRV – measurement, reporting, and verification – are vital in generating carbon credits through farming practices. Without proper MRV, it will be hard to say if there's real carbon reduction that happens. As such, no verification can take place.

Verifying results can be tricky. The carbon credit program provider or an independent 3rd-party body can perform the verification process. Calculations may include the amount of carbon reductions or removals generated by carbon farming.

- **Earning carbon credits with farming**

After verification comes the generation of carbon credits. Once they're issued, you can now trade the credits in a carbon market where buyers seek to offset their own emission reduction goals.

Successfully trading carbon credits results in a new revenue stream for you.

Again, it's worth noting that the prices of carbon credits vary and change. Currently, they trade at as low as $5 to as high as $75. And as companies and their stakeholders opt to invest in sustainable practices, carbon farming gets more attention.

Plus, the carbon credit market is estimated to grow to reach a value of $100 billion a year by 2050.

Carbon Farming Credits
The fact that carbon farming doesn't only help mitigate the climate crisis but also provides farmers another way to earn via carbon credits makes it an attractive undertaking. Let alone the environmental and social benefits it brings.

Moreover, some aspects of carbon farming are measurable and adoptable. This makes it possible to monetize the practices through carbon markets. Only via the carbon market mechanisms will major investments be driven into regenerative agricultural practices on a global scale.

But same with carbon credits in other sectors, there must be rigorous standards in place for quantifying, monitoring, and verifying the emissions reductions they promise. That's the only way that they can be real and impactful in the fight against climate change.

But the good news is that international carbon certifiers exist to ensure highest standards when it comes to carbon credit measurement and accounting. Verra, Gold Standard, and Climate Action Reserve are some popular names in this space. They're from the private sector but public programs are also available when dealing with carbon farming credits.

As long as you know who to partner with, what baseline data to gather, how to plan for the changes your farm needs, and how to implement them properly, you're good to go. You can turn your farm into a more profitable and climate-friendly endeavor.

The Farm Bill is Crucial. Here's Why.

By: Grace Hussain, Sentient Media June 2, 2023

The farm bill doesn't always grab headlines. Yet twice per decade or so, this crucial piece of legislation sets the standard for our food system. The farm bill has an impact on what farmers grow and how they grow it, and it also dictates implementation of the SNAP food assistance program which benefits more than 41 million people every year.

What Is the Farm Bill?

The farm bill is an omnibus — a collection of various smaller pieces of legislation that are voted on once as a collective instead of individually — and it comes before Congress roughly every five years. It outlines support programs for farmers like subsidies, and handles a variety of other agricultural and agriculture-adjacent programs and measures.

The most recent farm bill was passed in 2018, known as the Agricultural Improvement Act. Hearings on the upcoming farm bill started during the second half of 2022 across the country, and have continued into the first several months of 2023 as Congress begins the process that will lead to the bill's passage. Hearings are conducted by the Senate Congressional Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry.

The farm bill, in simple terms, is a collection of proposed laws that all relate either directly or indirectly to agriculture. The bill provides a way for numerous smaller initiatives to be passed and enacted at one time, which can enable a larger coalition of support than exists for an individual policy. Common farm bill measures include subsidies, food assistance programs and conservation efforts.

History of the Farm Bill

The first farm bill was passed in the 1930s and since then 17 of them have been enacted by Congress. Called the Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1933, that first piece of legislation was passed as part of the New Deal. The bill provided relief to farmers who had been struggling due to both the Dust Bowl and the Great Depression. In exchange for reducing the amount of certain crops they were producing, farmers were paid by the government. Since then, subsidies have remained a core part of farm bills.

The first farm bill to be considered an omnibus bill was that of 1973, which expanded the focus of the bill to policy areas that impacted agriculture but were not solely about farms and farmers. Since the Agricultural and Consumer Protection Act of 1973, renewal of and changes to food assistance programs have been a part of the farm bill. The 1977 version made permanent changes to food stamp eligibility, while the 2008 farm bill renamed the food assistance program the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). In 2022, this program helped to feed 12 percent of the U.S. population.

Though the 1938 farm bill included incentives for farmers to use practices that conserved arable land, more explicit conservation measures were first seen in the 1977 Food and Agriculture Act, which added a section on rural development and conservation. The 1985 bill built on this with specific measures that incentivized preservation of wetlands and prevention of soil erosion. Since then, conservation has been a mainstay in each farm bill.

How Does the Farm Bill Process Work?

The process of creating the 2023 farm bill is well underway. Below are the steps that the bill will go through as it is written, discussed and eventually passed into law.

Stakeholders are continuously making proposals. Throughout the process, stakeholders such as industry coalitions, farmers, conservationists and human rights groups carefully craft and pitch proposals directly to lawmakers, both in the media and at committee hearings. In other words, interest groups lobby for language that they want to see included in the language of the law.

- **A budget is set.** The first step is for the House Budget Committee to determine a budget. This budget is not necessarily final, but sets a goal and a starting point. However, any extra expenses beyond the farm bill's prescribed budget have to be accounted for with budget cuts or tax increases.

- **Committees meet and discuss.** Committees in both houses of Congress, the House and Senate, will debate, write and rewrite original bills. The responsible committees for the upcoming farm bill are the House Committee on Agriculture and the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry. Once the members of each of these committees have agreed on a bill, the language is presented to their respective chambers, members of which will also engage in lengthy discussions and debates about the topics contained therein. The Senate committee is currently hosting hearings on the farm bill, and accepting comments via online form or email. Meanwhile, the House committee is soliciting comments and proposals via online form.

- **A joint committee is formed.** Once each chamber has voted to approve their respective draft of the farm bill, a joint committee of both House and Senate members is appointed. Their job is to determine a compromise bill that adequately incorporates the language of both the House and Senate drafts.

Final vote by house and senate. Once the joint committee has written a farm bill draft that both chambers can agree upon, the House and Senate will vote to approve the measure.

Presidential signature. Following their approval, Congress delivers the farm bill to the president, who signs it and passes it along to the USDA which is responsible for implementing the new law.

Who in Congress Writes the Farm Bill?

Two farm bills are written: one by the House and one by the Senate. These bills are the result of months of debates in committees and then on the chamber floors. The final farm bill that is signed into law by the president is a compromise between the two bills. The compromise bill is the result of a joint committee of both House and Senate members meeting to discuss the details of each bill. The result of that joint committee is then voted upon and passed by each chamber and presented to the president for their signature.

What Does the Farm Bill Cover?

Each farm bill is broken up into different sections, called titles. Each section represents one policy area. The titles of the 2023 farm bill are likely to be similar to those that appeared in the 2018 version. The 2018 farm bill had 12 different titles:

1. **Commodities.** Governs major commodity crops such as soy and corn
2. **Conservation.** Encourages environmentally sound farmland stewardship
3. **Trade.** Governs exports and international food programs
4. **Nutrition.** Perpetuates food assistance programs
5. **Credit.** Provides government aid for food production and agricultural activities
6. **Rural Development.** Outlines loans and other programs that encourage rural development
7. **Research, Extension and related matters.** Supports academic knowledge building to increase productivity
8. **Forestry.** Supports forestry programs
9. **Energy.** Offers grants and loan guarantees with the goal of encouraging the adoption of renewable energy
10. **Horticulture.** Governs and supports specialty crops
11. **Crop insurance.** Maintains and governs the Federal Crop Insurance Program
12. **Miscellaneous.** Offers a variety of different programs, including assistance for raising livestock and support for new farmers

What Is Not Included in the Farm Bill?

The farm bill is a massive piece of legislation ultimately governed by the preferences, compromises and relationships of legislators and lobbyists representing hundreds of interest groups that all seek to have their voices heard. Though the process is extensive, the bill is not exhaustive. At the end of the process after each farm bill is passed, there are “winners” and “losers.”

In what was one of most controversial decisions in the 2018 farm bill, the legislation contained language that reduced the amount of SNAP benefits. The bill also cut the baseline of future funding for the Conservation Stewardship Program, which encourages farmers to consider the condition and quality of natural resources on their land.

How Much Does the Farm Bill Cost?

As of the date of this article, the final budget for the 2023 farm bill has not been announced. However, projections suggest that the five-year cost of the bill will be $709 billion, and the 10-year cost to reach $1.4 trillion. These estimates are largely determined by the programs that the farm bill is required to fund based on current law. Food assistance accounts for the greatest portion of the farm bill, potentially accounting for 85 percent of the total for 2023, up from 76 percent from the 2018 legislation.

What You Can Do

The farm bill is massive and complicated — yet the essential policies that govern our food system can be found within its pages. As the process of debating and enacting the 2023 farm bill gears up, pay close attention to the stakeholders and their demands. Many food system advocacy groups are closely tracking farm bill discussions — with events and newsletters to keep you informed of the latest developments.

What are Right to Farm Laws

By: Bjourn Olafsson, Sentient Media June 28, 2023

The business of farming is protected in ways that other types of industries in this country don't enjoy. From crackdowns on journalists (dubbed "ag-gag" laws) to large government subsidies, there are a wide range of regulations and exemptions on the books. One example are so-called "right to farm" laws, which now exist in every U.S. state. Initially designed to protect individual farmers, today they're increasingly used to protect industrial-scale factory farms against the complaints of their neighbors.

Let's dive into exactly what Right to Farm laws do, why they matter and why they're criticized.

What Is a Right To Farm Law?

There is no single type of Right to Farm law, but different types of regulations all meant to protect the practice of farming. The simplest explanation is that right to farm laws prohibit nuisance lawsuits against farmers, but what qualifies exactly as a nuisance varies from state to state. Examples include loud noises, egregious smells, expanded farming structures and even too much clutter on fields. Each state has different specifications in their Right to Farm laws, with each offering different types of protection.

Why Were Right To Farm Laws Enacted?

In the 1970s and 1980s, suburban neighborhoods expanded into rural areas, as a result encroaching on many farms and farming operations. New residents began to complain to authorities about odors and noises, even though the farms were there first. In response, lawmakers proposed protections that safeguarded the preexisting farms, protecting the so-called "right to farm." The first Right to Farm bill was passed in 1979 in Massachusetts, but today every single U.S. state has some version of these laws.

Over time, Right to Farm laws have become more powerful, protecting against more than complaints about odors and the sounds of animals. Farms today enjoy broad leeway to avoid crackdowns on their sewage and many other kinds of pollution. These types of laws have also become an important tool for supporting agricultural consolidation — protecting the contract farmers who raise animals in industrial operations to satisfy demand for cheap meat.

The legal language used in these regulations can make it confusing to understand, both for citizens and farming operations. The National Agricultural Law Center maintains a breakdown of state-by-state Right to Farm laws.

What Do Right To Farm Laws Protect?

Most Right to Farm statutes don't explicitly define what does and does not constitute a "nuisance," although we can look to past litigation for guidance. While the typical nuisance dispute is between neighbors, Right to Farm lawsuits usually concern a farm-related disturbance like manure odor, the sounds of slaughterhouses, pesticide drift or the appearance of farm buildings.

The exact breadth and depth of the laws vary from state to state, including how the rules define "agricultural operation," caps on legal damages and how much the Right to Farm statute exempts or limits the right in question.

For example, New York state defines what exactly constitutes a protected farm differently than does Texas. California only exempts agricultural operations from nuisance lawsuits that have been in operation for at least three years and only "if it was not a nuisance at the time it began."

What Are the Pros and Cons of Right To Farm Laws?

Pros

Food is a critical supply chain for any society. Without food, we starve. According to a publication of the state of Maryland, right to farm laws discourage the nuisance lawsuits that could be used to impede the business of farming and put the community on notice that agriculture is a priority in the state.

Cons

Critics of right to farm laws argue that the regulations put too much power in the hands of the large operations that control most of the food produced in this country, and harm local communities in the process.

Right to Farm laws also raise questions about the power of agriculture lobbyists over legislation. According to a 1996 Pulitzer Prize-winning investigation of pig farmers in North Carolina, one hog magnate pushed Right to Farm laws onto local politicians, essentially rewriting the legal code to benefit his farming operation. This is one extreme example of the corporate power many large-scale farming operations wield. Right to Farm laws also unfairly benefit large corporations, who can afford legal representation to assert their rights, over smaller farms.

Critics of Right to Farm laws also argue that adding right-to-farm laws to state constitutions elevates agricultural rights to a higher status, equivalent to the right to free speech and right to religion. No other for-profit industry is afforded this level of protection.

What You Can Do

Agricultural operations face little environmental oversight in the U.S. For example, factory farms and large animal feeding operations are not obligated to treat manure, and are instead allowed to dump the untreated waste in nearby fields. Not only does this create a horrific smell for neighboring communities, but it can also pollute waterways and soil. Homes near concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) can fall in value by up to 88 percent, leaving families stranded and unable to move. Right to Farm laws thwart lawsuits to change these conditions, leaving many families essentially trapped near large-scale animal operations.

If you are interested in reforming Right to Farm laws in the U.S., speak with your state's elected officials. Citizen organization can be one of the most important tools in creating agricultural reform.

Right to Farm Bill Passes Texas Legislature

By: Jacob Lehrer, Brownwood News June 2, 2023

While Texas is known as a rural area, there are also great urban areas around the state that are growing and expanding the more people move here. With the urban sprawl taking effect, it is vital to preserve one of Texas' top industries: agriculture.

The Texas Legislature has passed the Right To Farm Bill which will protect agricultural practices that have been in operation for at least a year or more from nuisance lawsuits. The original state law was created in 1981 to protect generally accepted agricultural practices. However, the law has not been updated since then, and there are many laws passed by local governments and the state that the old legislation has not kept up with. House Bill 2308 is set to make clear Texan's right to farm without being pushed out of business by a nuisance lawsuit.

According to House Bill 2308, "It is the policy of this state to conserve, protect, and encourage the development and improvement of its agricultural land for the production of food and other agricultural products. It is the purpose of this chapter to reduce the loss to the state of its agricultural resources by limiting the circumstances under which agricultural operations may be regulated or considered to be a nuisance."

House Bill 2308 makes clear that "A person who brings a nuisance action or other action to restrain an agricultural operation that is not prohibited by this section must establish each element of the action by clear and convincing evidence."

This law protects agricultural operations that have been in practice for at least a year or more. The exception is that the operation is not violating federal, state, and local laws that are designed to protect the health and safety of citizens. The operation cannot block water passages, air, and sunlight. If the operation makes significant changes to their practice, they must wait a whole year before they are protected by the law.

"It's a historic day for Texas and for Texas agriculture," Texas Agricultural Commissioner Sid Miller stated. "The proposed constitutional amendment will now go before the voters on November 7th where I believe it will pass comfortably, but we take nothing for granted."

Texas Crops are Cannibalizing Themselves in Heat Wave

By Mathew Impelli, Newsweek June, 26, 2023

Crops in Texas are essentially "cannibalizing" themselves to survive during the state's severe heat wave, according to one farmer.

"They are drying up a lot faster than they should, causing it to lodge and fall over. The plant is basically cannibalizing itself and eating itself up trying to survive," farmer James Faske told KRIS-TV in Corpus Christi.

His comments come as parts of Texas have experienced extremely high temperatures—in the triple digits in places like San Antonio, Del Rio and Laredo—and several weather advisories have been imposed. Parts of the state have experienced a yearly record number of hours of "dangerously high heat," according to the National Weather Service (NWS).

Newsweek reached out to Faske via direct message for further information.

On Sunday, the NWS in Austin and San Antonio said a "mix of excessive Heat Warnings and Heat Advisories will continue today through this upcoming week" and urged residents to take "heat precautions."

According to the tweet, temperatures exceeded 100 degrees Fahrenheit in numerous cities in the state.
On Monday morning, the NWS in Houston said that triple-digit temperatures are expected to continue throughout this week.

"Excessive Heat Warnings and Heat Advisories remain in effect throughout the area today with heat index values in excess of 110 possible in many locations. Heat safety remains critical!" the NWS tweeted.
Harris County's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Management urged residents to stay safe during the heat wave, as temperatures were expected to exceed 100 degrees in numerous areas across the state.

"Keep cool by staying inside when you can and stay hydrated throughout the day!" the office tweeted.
Speaking to KXAN-TV in Austin, Mau Morales, the agriculture manager of the Sweet Eats Fruit Farm in Georgetown, said his farm is responding to the heat wave by watering plants and other crops more frequently than normal.

"We used to irrigate them maybe once a week or every other week, but now we have to irrigate two times per week. That's for all our products," Morales told the local station.

Gary Joiner, a spokesperson for the Texas Farm Bureau, told KXAN that row crops such as corn and sorghum could be the most affected by the heat wave.

"Those varieties are planted in a timely way to hopefully avoid some of the most strenuous periods of high heat, but they are also victimized by high temperatures, dry conditions when moisture is not present. Those crops suffer," Joiner said.

Joiner told *Newsweek* that "new seed varieties for cotton, corn, wheat, grain sorghum and other crops offer improved drought tolerance traits that are beneficial in battling the Texas summer heat. These advances have proven to be successful, and drought tolerance continues to be a focus of research and development."

He continued: "Farmers maximize the amount of moisture in the soil by utilizing sound conservation practices on the land. The conversation practices allow plants to access whatever moisture is available, even in the driest of periods."

On Monday morning, the NWS's weather prediction center forecast extremely high temperatures in Texas as well as New Mexico, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Louisiana and Mississippi.

Texas Cotton Crop Look Uncertain

By: Agrilife Today, Texas Crop and Weather Report, June 27, 2023

Texas cotton growers whose crops held on through recent weather could find strong prices during a summer of uncertainty, according to a Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service expert.

John Robinson, Ph.D., AgriLife Extension cotton economist, Bryan-College Station, said the 2023 cotton season will be the most uncertain he has ever analyzed. This uncertainty will likely make prices volatile until the market has a good estimate of how many cotton bales will be produced.

The uncertainty stems from the Jekyll and Hyde weather across Texas – the nation's top cotton-producing state – that has left early U.S. Department of Agriculture planting estimates in shambles, Robinson said.

Texas had been mired in drought, and producers were not hopeful entering the warm-season crop planting period, which started in South Texas in February and March and ends in mid-June in the Panhandle.

Producers became more optimistic after cotton was planted in South Texas, spring rains benefited the young crop and forecasts turned away from a La Niña pattern. But widespread rains that started around May 1 and consistently fell over the next month prevented many producers from the South Plains to Panhandle from planting cotton fields.

Fields that caught rainfall after producers planted seeds into dry soil delivered a mixed bag of results. Some stands emerged well while some young plants were drowned out by standing water and excess moisture levels in the soil, and some never emerged as the topsoil crusted over in the sun and heat following rains.

Those issues were followed by severe storms that delivered flooding and widespread hail that damaged thousands of additional acres. One county in the Panhandle reported more than 5,000 acres of emerged cotton lost to hail.

Robinson said half to three-quarters of intended cotton acres in the Panhandle may not be harvested as cotton. Recent high temperatures have put cotton yields in South Texas in question. Temperatures in the upper 90s and exceeding 100 degrees arrived at a delicate time for cotton boll development. There were reports that plants were aborting bolls to survive, which could dramatically change the region's yield potential.

"The weather has been strange, and how to aggregate the multiple factors that have created so many wrinkles of uncertainty is beyond me," he said. "Last year, it was drought, and we had a pretty good idea it was going to be bad, and the market could digest that information, but this is the most uncertain season I can remember."

Texas cotton crop creates uncertain market

The USDA estimated U.S. cotton acres to produce 16.5 million bales, based on prospective planting surveys earlier this year. Robinson said those surveys typically put the cotton estimate in the ballpark of what the overall crop result will eventually be.

Texas has around 55% of the national cotton production acres and produces half the U.S. crop in a good year and one-third in a bad year. In a normal year, Robinson said the upcoming June 30 acreage report by the USDA would adjust the prospective planting report up or down based on new information. But this year, the picture in Texas is wildly unknown.

“It’s always challenging to forecast production at the state level because Texas is so big, but this year is the absolute most uncertain because of the extremes the potential crop has been through,” he said. “The USDA has probably not accounted for what has been lost. How big is the Texas crop? I have no clue.”

Robinson said there is less uncertainty about cotton crops outside Texas other than delayed plantings along the Mississippi Delta due to wetness. Some analysts believe actual planted acres may be lower than prospective planting estimates in the Southeast and California due to historically high corn prices.

But there is no way to say losses in Texas might be made up elsewhere, he said. That uncertainty could lead to volatile cotton prices until September, when the USDA will have survey data from certified acres.

“Cotton prices have been below 80 cents per pound, and I would think this type of change would mark an increase in prices,” he said. “I wouldn’t be surprised to see cotton over 90 cents, but I would be surprised if it stayed there. I don’t expect prices will be stable with this much uncertainty.”

Growers can expect opportunity, volatile prices

Uncertainty can drive price speculation, but speculation is likely to trigger roller coaster prices throughout the season, Robinson said.

Last year, three out of four cotton acres in Texas were not harvested, he said. The market reached $1.50 per pound in May and June before falling 50 cents and then rising again to around $1.15 per pound by late summer. Yet, when the 2022 crop production was clearer, prices settled down in the 80-cent per pound range.

Robinson said price increases are good news for Texas growers with crop potential. He doubts 80 cents per pound is a breakeven price due to inflation on inputs like seed, fertilizer, management chemicals and diesel.

Growers should lock in at prices they feel will be profitable for their operation, he said.

“The market will live with uncertainty all summer long, and there should be an opportunity or two for good prices,” he said. “But you don’t want to be holding on when the air goes out of the balloon.”

AgriLife Extension district reporters compiled the following summaries:

COASTAL BEND

Soil moisture and pasture conditions continued to decline with the intense heat and dry conditions throughout much of the district. Areas received trace amounts of up to 2 inches of rainfall during a heavy storm. High winds damaged grain sorghum and some corn. Corn and grain sorghum were drying down quickly. Grain sorghum and corn harvest were either underway or will begin by the first of July. The rice crop was doing well and heading out. Early planted cotton looked good and showed a good boll load, but fields need rain. Later planted cotton and sorghum began to show stress and needed rain soon to reach desired yields. Extreme heat caused some corn and sorghum to mature 10-14 days ahead of schedule, and yield losses were expected. Summer grasses and forages were slowing down and going dormant with the high heat and lack of moisture. Parts of the region reported pasture conditions deteriorated rapidly, with the clay soil drying out and cracking, and available grass being dry and losing its nutritional value. Hay harvest continued, and some hay fields were fertilized but needed rain for a second cutting. Producers were concerned about heat stress on livestock over the coming weeks. Calves may be weaned at a younger age to help maintain cow conditions, which could mean lighter calf weights when marketing this year’s calf crop. The cattle market held strong.

SOUTH PLAINS

Temperatures were in the upper 90s-100s, and some hail was reported. The extended forecast called for temperatures above 100 degrees and no rain. Crops under irrigation looked better than dryland, which needed a good soaking rain to continue developing. Some wheat was still being harvested for grain. An AgriLife Extension agent was surprised by the small number of cotton acres planted this year.

PANHANDLE

Continued rain and very wet conditions halted all farming activities across some parts of the district. Most counties reported adequate subsoil moisture, with some reporting a surplus of topsoil moisture. Many acres of corn and sorghum still need to be planted. Wheat acres left to harvest were taken over by weeds. There were big losses in cotton crops after extended wet and cool weather. Cotton will need high amounts of heat units to make a yield, with first bloom predicted for Aug. 1. Planting and replanting continued, with many producers trying to get in sorghum silage and grain sorghums. Small grain fields matured rapidly. Growers were planting alternative crops in fields too wet to plant cotton. Corn and early planted sorghum progressed well, but rain will be needed soon. Pastures and rangelands were in fair to excellent condition.

WEST CENTRAL

Conditions were hot and humid, with highs over 100 degrees and a few scattered showers. Heat indexes were between 110-119 degrees. Soil profiles were declining, and row crops were showing heat stress. Irrigated producers were struggling to keep up with crop water demand. Some producers continued to cut and bale hay and follow with fertilizer. Good hay yields were reported. Most wheat was harvested with yields averaging over 30 bushels per acre. Producers were plowing fields behind the wheat harvest. High winds damaged some cotton fields. The heat was taking a toll on young cotton recently planted or replanted, but early planted cotton looked good. Producers were wrapping up cotton planting. The heat was also taking a toll on corn and sorghum during pollination. Walnut caterpillars were destructive in pecan orchards that were not treated. Pecan trees were being irrigated. Grasshopper numbers were increasing. Temperatures and no rain were impacting rangeland and pasture conditions. Pastures were browning in some areas and improving in others, but weed pressure was heavy. Stock tanks needed more runoff water. Cattle prices remained strong, and livestock were mainly in good condition.

SOUTHWEST

No measurable precipitation was reported. Hot weather continued with daytime temperatures exceeding 110 degrees almost daily with dangerously high heat indexes. Nighttime temperatures stayed above 90 degrees until after midnight. Everything was showing signs of heat stress, and pastures were turning brown. Crop yields likely suffered from the effects of high temperatures. High temperatures were contributing to the further deterioration of rangeland conditions. Burn bans could soon return. Increasing numbers of livestock were being sent to auctions. Livestock and wildlife were still in fair to good shape. Long-range forecasts indicated hot and dry conditions were expected through the July 4 holiday.

SOUTH

Topsoil and subsoil conditions had deteriorated due to the heat wave. All crops were under irrigation due to high temperatures and no rainfall. Every facet of agriculture was suffering due to the extreme heat. Cotton crops continued to develop under irrigation and were in the blooming stage. Corn crops were reaching maturity and in the denting stage. Hay grazer and Bermuda grass fields were being cut and baled. Wildlife and cattle were finding enough to eat to maintain good body condition but could need supplemental feeding soon. Pasture and rangeland grasses burned up rapidly, and some producers were already beginning to supplemental feed. Ponds were beginning to dry up. Producers had to supply livestock with water in some areas. Earlier planted row crops were reaching maturity quickly. Forage conditions and grazing availability were declining. Cattle prices were high and consistent, but some markets reported lower sale volumes. Feed prices remained high. Row crop producers were harvesting. Whitetail does were fawning, and quail hatchlings were seen scurrying along and across rural roads.

5 Tips for Protecting Livestock During a Disaster

Fema.gov June, 27, 2023

Here are five steps you can take to make sure you have a plan in case of a disaster.

1: **Know about different types of emergencies**
In addition to severe disasters like hurricanes and flooding, conditions such as drought and extreme cold or heat are day-to-day health and safety concerns for animals under your care. You never want to be caught off-guard.

Knowing the types of emergencies that could happen where you live and whether you need to make any specific preparations for them is an important first step to take.

2: **Get an emergency kit**
Your animals need an emergency kit just like you do. Here's some items you should consider:

- Feed and water.
- Supplements.
- Veterinary records.
- Proof of ownership.
- Supplies such as rope, halters, cleaning supplies, knives, etc.
  You should review the kit regularly to ensure the contents are fresh.

3: **Plan for evacuations**
During a disaster, officials may tell you to evacuate. Depending on the disaster and the stability of the shelter you have for your livestock, you may need to evacuate them.

First, determine where you will go. Do you have friends or relatives who are capable of housing livestock during the disaster? You can also consider fairgrounds or other livestock evacuation locations. Another thing you will need to do ahead of time is arrange how livestock will be transported.

4: **Plan for leaving livestock behind**
If you have no way to evacuate your livestock, there are some steps you can take to keep them safe.

- Identification. Make sure each animal has a form of identification such as a microchip, ear/leg tag, brand, etc.
- Build a strong shelter. Make sure you have a sturdy shelter that can protect them from the elements. It should be able to sustain high winds and heavy rains and keep them all dry. Consider building it on high ground to avoid flooding.
- Have adequate food and water. You may not be able to reach your livestock for days depending on damage to the surrounding area. You should provide them with plenty of food and a steady supply of water to sustain them for several days.
- Provide warm bedding. During extreme cold or heavy rain, each animal needs warm, dry bedding.

Provide cooling options. During excessive heat, you want to make sure animals can access shade and have enough water to drink. Other options include leaving barn doors open, installing fans or using sprinklers.

5: **Know where to go for help**
If you are not home when a disaster occurs, it's important to have a designated neighbor who can tend to your livestock, knows your evacuation procedure, knows where your emergency kit is and has your emergency contact information available.

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TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION

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http://nueces.agrilife.org

Individuals with disabilities who require an auxiliary aid, service, or accommodation in order to participate in any Extension event are encouraged to contact their County Extension Office at 361-767-5223 at least one week in advance of the program in order for proper arrangements to be made.

In the event of a name, address or phone number change please contact the office at:

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