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OKLAHOMA FARM BUREAU

Perspective

June 22, 2018



America needs a farm bill now

By Stewart Truelsen, AFBF

The United States has a land area of 2.3 billion acres, with half used for agricultural purposes — cropland, forestland, pasture and range. The farm bill is vitally important legislation affecting this enormous, valuable resource and its rural population.

The farm bill comes up for reauthorization every few years. There have been 17 farm bills passed by Congress since the first one in 1933. They are sometimes called omnibus farm bills because of the numerous titles and subtitles. The current law, the Agricultural Act of 2014, expires at the end of September.

The first farm bill, The Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1933, was signed by President Franklin Roosevelt during the Great Depression. It was called an adjustment act because the primary objective was to reduce farm surpluses in hopes of raising agricultural prices. During the depression farm prices and income fell by more than half.

Since then, farmers have relied on the farm bill for help in dealing with the risks of farming. The farm bill provides a measure of protection from the instability inherent in agriculture. Don Paarlberg, a distinguished farm economist of the last century, said,

“Agriculture is notoriously unstable.”

Paarlberg said that vagaries of weather and market behavior are major causes of this instability, but they are not the only ones. Another factor, he said, is the uncertainty of what government officials are going to do. This is certainly true now with trade agreements under review and possibly cancelled and tariffs imposed on American farm exports.

Tough times have returned once more to agriculture, and farm income again has been cut in half over the last five years. One difference today is that so many farm families have off-farm income. It's one way they themselves mitigate risk. Farm financial indicators such as debt-to-asset ratios are also better than during previous downturns – even though trends in lending such as interest rates and loans denied are moving in the wrong direction.

Obviously, a farm bill is not a cure for instability, or instability would have been ironed out of agriculture by now, but it does help farmers manage risk. As American Farm Bureau Federation President Zippy Duvall said, “The 2018 farm bill would protect federal crop insurance and address challenges facing dairy and cotton farmers. The bill continues the work of streamlining

and improving programs that encourage our conservation work and promote critical research and development of farming practices.”

Duvall noted that farmers are resilient and will get through this latest downturn. However, it would be totally unfair to drag out the farm bill debate and leave them guessing as to what the future holds. To do so only ratchets up the instability inherent in farming.

The Food Stamp Program, now the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or SNAP, was added to the farm bill in 1973 to help gain support from members of Congress in urban districts. It now accounts for some 80 percent of farm bill spending on an annual basis. The food and nutrition component essentially makes the farm bill a “food bill.”

The fact of the matter is the farm bill is one of the most important pieces of legislation that Congress deals with. It affects half of the land resources of the United States and all of the rural population. It ensures all Americans that we will have the food, fuel and fiber we need for the future, and it is good for the nation's economy.

An analysis of SQ 788

After deep consideration of grassroots policy, the Oklahoma Farm Bureau board of directors last week voted to join the SQ 788 is Not Medical Coalition, which is made up of business, medical, faith and community leaders and organizations. Oklahomans will vote on the measure on next week's state primary ballot.

State Question 788 amends state statutes to "legalize the licensed use, sale and growth of marijuana in Oklahoma for medical purposes," according to language found in the ballot initiative.

If passed, Oklahoma would have the most liberal medical marijuana law in the nation. To receive a medical marijuana license, applicants must be 18 years or older, be an Oklahoma resident, and receive approval by a state board-certified physician. Yet the opposition coalition argues SQ 788 grants prescribing authority to veterinarians, dentists, optometrists, podiatrists and chiropractors – none of which are required to attend medical school. Unlike a normal doctor's prescription, a medical marijuana license under SQ 788 lasts two years.

The measure does not contain any constraints on medical conditions, allowing anyone over the age of 18 to receive a two-year marijuana license for any supposed condition or problem. A patient only has to "articulate a medical need" to receive the license.

Under SQ 788, marijuana sales will be taxed at 7 percent. But the opposition coalition argues the tax is not nearly enough to cover administrative and social

service costs from the measure. Many states tax marijuana at rates exceeding 20 percent. The measure also burdens the Oklahoma State Department of Health with immediate new responsibilities by requiring the agency to develop and release an application process on its website within 30 days of the vote.

The ability of employers to maintain a drug-free workplace, or even test for marijuana usage, is questionable under SQ 788. "An employer may not discriminate against a person in hiring, termination... or otherwise penalize a person based upon status as a medical marijuana license holder" or "based upon the results of a drug test showing positive for marijuana or its components," according to the state question. The only exception to this mandate would be unless it causes an employe to "imminently lose a monetary or licensing related benefit under federal law." With a potential for increased need to

fund mental health and substance abuse services, SQ 788's passage could also strain funding for other core services of state government.

Oklahoma Farm Bureau policy, which is written and voted on by members statewide, opposes the legalization of marijuana.

The vagueness of the measure leads OKFB to find concerns with SQ 788's impact on the state, especially in rural areas of Oklahoma.

To read the full ballot title, visit the Oklahoma Secretary of State's website at www.sos.ok.gov.

“Oklahoma Farm Bureau policy opposes the legalization of marijuana.”
– *OKFB 2018 Policy*

OKFB joins coalition against SQ 788

Oklahoma Farm Bureau last week joined a group of statewide business, medical, faith and community leaders in opposing State Question 788 on the upcoming June 26 primary ballot.

SQ 788 would amend Oklahoma state statutes to legalize medical marijuana. OKFB joined the SQ 788 is Not Medical Coalition, following a vote by the organization's board of directors.

OKFB policy, which is written and voted on by grassroots members across the state, opposes the legalization of marijuana.

"After deep consideration of our grassroots policy and the language of the state question, the Oklahoma Farm Bureau board voted to oppose State Question 788," said Rodd Moesel, OKFB president. "We have tremendous concerns about the impact of the measure on our state, especially in rural areas. Though we understand the arguments for medicinal marijuana, we believe State Question 788 is essentially recreational marijuana, is bad policy for our state and lacks significant regulations."

Read the full SQ 788 ballot title on the Oklahoma Secretary of State's website at www.sos.ok.gov.

Oklahoma Farm Bureau Online



Wheat harvest in Oklahoma

With wheat harvest happening through much of the state over the past few weeks, OKFB staff recently had an opportunity to take photos with some Kiowa County Farm Bureau members during harvest. Make sure to check out the photos on OKFB's Facebook page at [Facebook.com/okfarmbureau](https://www.facebook.com/okfarmbureau).



Oklahoma Farming and Ranching Foundation still accepting Bushels for Books donations

Help the Oklahoma Farming and Ranching Foundation and the OKFB Women's Leadership Committee donate bushel baskets of accurate agriculture books to schools across the state! Donate some harvested crops to the Bushels for Books program. Learn how to donate at okfarmingandranchingfoundation.org/bushels-for-books/.



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WLC to host fall conference Sept. 28-29 in Edmond

Oklahoma Farm Bureau women are invited to gather for the OKFB Women's Leadership Committee Fall Conference to be held Sept. 28-29 at the Hilton Garden Inn and Conference Center in Edmond, Oklahoma.

The two-day conference will feature special speakers, educational breakout sessions, a trade show, entertainment, fellowship and more.

Find a tentative agenda and the conference registration form on the OKFB website at okfarmbureau.org/applications.

To attend the conference, complete and return the registration form to WLC Coordinator Marcia Irvin by Aug. 27.

Hotel rooms are available at the Hilton Garden Inn through Aug. 27. To make a reservation, call 405-285-0900 and mention OKFB WLC fall conference.

For more information, contact Marcia Irvin at 405-523-2405 or 405-323-7602.

2018 August Area Meetings

Oklahoma Farm Bureau members are invited to attend the upcoming annual August Area Meetings held across the state. The meetings signify the kickoff of the OKFB grassroots policy development process. Find a schedule below.

District One

August 6 | 6 p.m.
Guyton

August 7 | 6 p.m.
Woodward

District Two

August 14 | 6 p.m.

August 16 | 6 p.m.

District Four

August 9 | 6 p.m.

District Five

August 21 | 12 p.m.

District Six

August 21 | 6 p.m.

District Seven

August 13 | 6 p.m.

District Eight

August 20 | 6 p.m.

District 9

August 23 | 6 p.m.

Register for 2018 YF&R Summer Conference by June 25

The Oklahoma Farm Bureau Young Farmers and Ranchers will host its annual summer conference July 13-15 at the Quartz Mountain Resort in Lone Wolf.

To attend, OKFB members ages 18-35 must submit the registration form and payment no later than Monday, July 25. The registration form may be found at okfarmbureau.org/yfr.

The three-day conference is an opportunity to meet fellow young farmers

and ranchers from across the state, tour local agricultural facilities, and learn more about YF&R leadership opportunities.

All conference participants will be entered into a drawing to win a free trip to Washington, D.C. for the 2019 OKFB Congressional Action Tour.

Conference registration is \$20 per person, and includes three meals, tours, entertainment and childcare. Hotel rooms are \$130 per night, including breakfast.

Those interested in attending should contact their county Farm Bureau for sponsorship opportunities. County Farm Bureaus sponsoring first-time attendees of the conference will be reimbursed by the OKFB YF&R committee.

For more information, please contact YF&R Coordinator Zac Swartz at 405-205-0070 or zac.swartz@okfb.org.

Find a tentative agenda and the registration form at okfarmbureau.org/yfr.

Member Benefits

AgBoost

What if you could breed for what you really need? AgBoost shows ranchers the genetic profile and attributes of a single animal or the entire herd. Oklahoma Farm Bureau members receive special offers and discounts on AgBoost technology. Compare the profiles of all your animals, clearly see where your herd is strongest and breed what you really need. Visit www.ag-boost.com

www.okfarmbureau.org/benefits

Calendar

Nurse's Scholarship Application Deadline

July 1

Contact: Marcia Irvin 405-523-2405

YF&R Summer Conference

July 13-15 • Altus

Contact: Zac Swartz 405-205-0070

YF&R High School Discussion Meet

July 17 • Stillwater

Contact: Zac Swartz 405-205-0070

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OKFB announces AgBoost® software as new member benefit

Oklahoma Farm Bureau members now can receive special offers and discounts from Agric-Bioformatics' AgBoost®, a cloud-based software for livestock producers that will process and streamline data for selective breeding, health, market value and nutrition management.

AgBoost shows ranchers the genetic profile and attributes of a single animal or the entire herd. Interested to know that one of your animals scores 60 percent in marbling, 90 percent in average daily gain, but only 30 percent in pregnancy rate?

Now, you can breed with that information at your fingertips.

It takes an average of three to four years to determine the quality of a calf for breeding purposes. Producers spend resources maintaining animals, only to learn later which ones have poor breeding characteristics. AgBoost removes the guesswork and waiting. Send a small hair sample and see the results on your phone, desktop or in the field.

OKFB members can manage the first



25 animals for free on AgBoost; receive two free DNA tests when ordering 10 or more tests; and receive discounts on other premium services.

Compare the profiles of all your animals, clearly see where your herd is strongest and breed what you really need. Visit www.ag-boost.com to learn more.



Oklahoma Farm Bureau
Women's Leadership Committee

Nurse's Training Scholarship

Applications Due July 1

Reminder: WLC nurse's scholarship applications due July 1

The Oklahoma Farm Bureau Women's Leadership Committee is accepting applications for its 2018 nurse's scholarship program now through July 1.

The annual scholarship program awards three \$500 scholarships to students studying nursing at an accredited college, university, vo-tech or trade school.

Applicants must be Oklahoma Farm Bureau members or a member of a Farm Bureau member family.

Full details are available in the application, which is available as a PDF file at www.okfarmbureau.org/applications.

For more information, contact WLC Coordinator Marcia Irvin at 405-523-2405.