

Finally: A completely new farm bill becomes law

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Finally, this chapter of the 2008 farm bill has officially closed. By a margin of 317 to 109, the House of Representatives voted this afternoon to override President Bush's veto of H.R. 6124---the latest and finally, a complete version of the farm bill. The U.S. Senate quickly followed suit, voting to override the veto by 80-14.

It's been a wild ride, filled with intrigue, angst, and numerous ups and downs. The President first vetoed the farm bill on May 21, but due to a House clerical error, it didn't include Title III, dealing with trade. One foreign source, who asked not to be identified, jokingly sent a note to U.S. lobbyists that they had "captured" the trade title and were holding it for ransom or until policymakers made changes.

For all intents and purposes, USDA officials had already started to implement the law. But the failure to include Title III left open the possibility of lawsuits and lawmakers wanted to make sure that the entire package was signed into law.

Senate Agriculture Chairman Tom Harkin, who chaired the farm bill conference committee said: "It has been a long time coming, but today's veto override in the Senate completes action on the new farm bill, enacting the full bill, including provisions on foreign food assistance and agricultural trade.

Some folks expected President George Bush to be a little less combative with his veto pen this week---especially given the margins of support in the House and Senate. Yet, even on the second time around, he was no less adamant about his opposition to the measure.

"In passing H.R. 6124, the Congress had an opportunity to improve on H.R. 2419 by modifying certain objectionable, onerous, and fiscally imprudent provisions. Unfortunately, the Congress chose to send me the same unacceptable farm bill provisions in H.R. 6124, merely adding title III. I am returning this bill for the same reasons as stated in my veto message of May 21, 2008, on H.R. 2419, noted Bush in his veto statement.