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## Senate approves farm bill

By Sara Wyant, Agri-Pulse Editor

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By an overwhelming majority, 79 to 14, the U.S. Senate approved the Food and Energy Security Act of 2007, H.R. 2419, this afternoon. Senate Agriculture Committee Chairman Tom Harkin (D-IA) described it as a **“strong, bi-partisan bill”** which “maintains a strong safety net for farm producers and strengthens programs that will help agricultural producers of all kinds across our nation.”

Ranking Minority Leader Saxby Chambliss (RGA) also lauded the measure and described it as **“a real victory for American agriculture.”**

“This bill provides certainty to America’s farmers, ranchers, conservationists, school lunch beneficiaries, and environmentalists in rural communities all across this great land,” he emphasized.

Sen. Chuck Hagel (R-NE), one of 14 to vote against the measure, cited the lack of reform.

“Our federal farm policy has drifted far from where it was originally intended to be 70 years ago,” he said. “The Senate missed an opportunity to reform our farm policy for 21st Century challenges and opportunities, and reconnect our agriculture policy to its original purpose: **providing a true safety net to real farmers when they need it most, while limiting government involvement in producer’s decisions.**”

In a press conference shortly after Senate passage of the farm bill, USDA Acting Secretary Chuck Conner echoed some of those same sentiments. He said presidential advisors would not recommend the President support a bill that included tax increases used to fund new farm bill spending. He also said a lower adjusted gross income (AGI) test, similar to the \$200,000 level proposed by the Administration, was a “critical reform” needed.

**“Farmers deserve a farm bill that is free of budget smoke and mirrors and tax increases,”** said Conner. “The measure passed today has \$22 billion in unfunded commitments and budget gimmicks, and includes \$15 billion in new taxes- the first time a farm bill has relied on tax increases since 1933.

Sen. Kent Conrad, (D-ND) said he expects the Farm Bill to be signed by President Bush despite White House veto threats. He noted the overwhelming majority in support of the bill and said **there were more Senate votes in favor of this farm bill than at any time since 1973.**

The Farm Bill now goes to a conference committee where much of the real work will begin on sorting out the differences between the Senate and House versions of the Farm Bill. Chairman Harkin said staff discussions could start as early as next week on how to move forward with the conference committee when Congress returns in mid-January.

#### Today's farm bill vote: Grouped By Vote Position

YEAs ---79

Akaka (D-HI)	Dorgan (D-ND)	Menendez (D-NJ)
Alexander (R-TN)	Durbin (D-IL)	Mikulski (D-MD)
Allard (R-CO)	Enzi (R-WY)	Murkowski (R-AK)
Barrasso (R-WY)	Feingold (D-WI)	Murray (D-WA)
Baucus (D-MT)	Feinstein (D-CA)	Nelson (D-NE)
Bayh (D-IN)	Graham (R-SC)	Pryor (D-AR)
Bingaman (D-NM)	Grassley (R-IA)	Reid (D-NV)
Bond (R-MO)	Harkin (D-IA)	Roberts (R-KS)
Brown (D-OH)	Hatch (R-UT)	Rockefeller (D-WV)
Brownback (R-KS)	Hutchison (R-TX)	Salazar (D-CO)
Bunning (R-KY)	Inhofe (R-OK)	Sanders (I-VT)
Byrd (D-WV)	Inouye (D-HI)	Schumer (D-NY)
Cantwell (D-WA)	Isakson (R-GA)	Sessions (R-AL)
Cardin (D-MD)	Johnson (D-SD)	Shelby (R-AL)
Carper (D-DE)	Kennedy (D-MA)	Smith (R-OR)
Casey (D-PA)	Kerry (D-MA)	Snowe (R-ME)
Chambliss (R-GA)	Klobuchar (D-MN)	Specter (R-PA)
Coburn (R-OK)	Kohl (D-WI)	Stabenow (D-MI)
Cochran (R-MS)	Landrieu (D-LA)	Stevens (R-AK)
Coleman (R-MN)	Leahy (D-VT)	Tester (D-MT)
Conrad (D-ND)	Levin (D-MI)	Thune (R-SD)
Corker (R-TN)	Lieberman (ID-CT)	Vitter (R-LA)
Cornyn (R-TX)	Lincoln (D-AR)	Warner (R-VA)
Craig (R-ID)	Lott (R-MS)	Webb (D-VA)
Crapo (R-ID)	Martinez (R-FL)	Wyden (D-OR)
Dole (R-NC)	McCaskill (D-MO)	
Domenici (R-NM)	McConnell (R-KY)	

NAYs ---14

Bennett (R-UT)	Gregg (R-NH)	Reed (D-RI)
Burr (R-NC)	Hagel (R-NE)	Sununu (R-NH)
Collins (R-ME)	Kyl (R-AZ)	Voinovich (R-OH)
DeMint (R-SC)	Lautenberg (D-NJ)	Whitehouse (D-RI)
Ensign (R-NV)	Lugar (R-IN)	

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