

July-August, 2010

# The Council Caller

## Legislative Issue

The Council on Food, Agricultural, and Resource Economics (C-FARE) is a non-profit organization dedicated to strengthening the application of economics to food, agricultural, and resource issues at the national level. *The Council Caller, Legislative Issue* is an e-newsletter provided by C-FARE with informational updates for agricultural and applied economists.

**To view the legislation visit <http://thomas.loc.gov/>, select the option that will allow you to search by Bill Number.**

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## Consumer Concerns, Food, Health and Safety

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### Genetically Engineered Food

On June 23, 2010, Representative Dennis Kucinich (OH-10) and several cosponsors introduced three pieces of legislation that attempt to address concerns regarding the regulation and labeling of genetically engineered (GM) crops.

- Genetically Engineered Food Right to Know Act (H.R.5577)
  - Amends the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act (FDCA), the Federal Meat Inspection Act, and the Poultry Products Inspection Act
  - Requires mandatory labeling for foods that contain or were produced with a genetically engineered material
  - Requires the periodic testing of such foods transferred along a chain of distribution to assure accuracy of labels
  - Exceptions for food served in restaurants or prepared primarily in a retail establishment, ready for human consumption, but not offered for sale for immediate consumption in the establishment
  - The bill has been referred to the House Agriculture and Energy & Commerce Committees.
  
- Genetically Engineered Safety Act (H.R.5578)
  - Amends the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act
  - "Prohibit[s] the open-air cultivation of genetically engineered pharmaceutical and industrial crops"
  - "Prohibit[s] the use of common human food or animal feed as the host plant for a genetically engineered pharmaceutical or industrial chemical"
  - "Establish[es] a tracking system to regulate the growing, handling, transportation, and disposal of pharmaceutical and industrial crops and their byproducts to prevent human, animal, and general environmental exposure to genetically engineered pharmaceutical and industrial crops and their byproducts"
  - The bill has been referred to the House Agriculture and Energy & Commerce Committees.
  
- Genetically Engineered Technology Farmer Protection Act (H.R.5579)
  - Creates a "farmer bill of rights"
  - Biotech companies that sell any genetically engineered animal, plant, or seed for use in the United States must "provide the purchaser with written notice of possible legal and environmental risks of such article's use (such disclosure shall neither relieve the company from liability, nor be construed to create purchaser liability), disclose any technology fees to the Secretary of Agriculture (USDA), and not charge fees that are higher than those outside the United States."

- The bill has been referred to the House Agriculture, Energy & Commerce, and Judiciary Committees.

**Other Consumer Concerns, Food, Health and Safety Legislation:**

- Rep. Chellie Pingree (ME-1) introduced the Eat Local Foods Act (H.R.5806) on July 21, 2010. The bill is meant to provide assistance to schools to incorporate local foods into the School Lunch Program. It has been referred to the House Committee on Education and Labor.

## **Future Technologies and Infrastructure Investments**

- Senator John D. Rockefeller, IV (WV) introduced the America COMPETES Reauthorization Act of 2010 (S.3605) on July 15, 2010. The bill “establishes, revises, and extends specified science, technology, education, and mathematics (STEM) programs, as well as engineering, research, and training programs, and establishes a green chemistry basic research program and a green manufacturing and construction initiative.” It also authorizes FY2011-FY2013 appropriations for the National Science Foundation (NSF) and the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST). The Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation ordered to report the bill favorably on July 22, 2010.

## **Agriculture’s Global Competitiveness and Profitability**

- Rep. Walter Minnick (ID-1) submitted H.RES.1562, Recognizing the importance of trade to job creation and the United States economy and calling for the immediate implementation of the United States-Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement, United States-Panama Free Trade Agreement, and United States-Korea Free Trade Agreement on July 27, 2010. The bill was referred to the House Committee on Ways and Means.
- Senator Mark Udall (CO) introduced the American Family Farm and Ranchland Protection Act of 2010 (S.3640) on July 22, 2010. The bill “amends the Internal Revenue Code to increase to \$5 million the limitation on the estate tax exclusion for land subject to a qualified conservation easement and to increase the percentage of the value of such land that is excludable.” It has been referred to the Committee on Finance.

## **Environmental and Natural Resource Issues**

### **Climate Change and Energy**

Energy alternatives and climate change mitigation have received much attention. Rep. Henry Waxman (CA-30) introduced the American Clean Energy and Security Act of 2009 (H.R.2454) on May 15, 2009. The bill was passed in the House on June 26, 2009. As the Library of Congress Thomas summarizes it, “Sets forth provisions concerning clean energy, energy efficiency, reducing global warming pollution, transitioning to a clean energy economy, and providing for agriculture and forestry related offsets. Includes provisions:

- (1) creating a combined energy efficiency and renewable electricity standard and requiring retail electricity suppliers to meet 20% of their demand through renewable electricity and electricity savings by 2020;
- (2) setting a goal of, and requiring a strategic plan for, improving overall U.S. energy productivity by at least 2.5% per year by 2012 and maintaining that improvement rate through 2030;
- (3) establishing a cap-and-trade system for greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and setting goals for reducing such emissions from covered sources by 83% of 2005 levels by 2050.”

The Senate also introduced a couple of clean energy bills.

- Senator Harry Reid (NV) introduced the Clean Energy, Community Investment, and Wildlife Conservation Act (S.3587) on July 14, 2010. The bill has four parts: an oil spill response, a clean energy and job creation title, a tax package, and a title on greenhouse gas emissions from the electric utility industry.
- Senator Harry Reid (NV) introduced the Clean Energy Jobs and Oil Company Accountability Act of 2010 (S.3663) on July 28, 2010.

#### **Other Recent Energy-related Legislation:**

- Senator Roger Wicker (MS) and 9 cosponsors introduced S.R.582, a resolution recognizing the economic and environmental impacts of the British Petroleum oil spill on the people of the Gulf Coast and their way of life and urging British Petroleum to give all due consideration to offers of assistance, products, or services from the States directly impacted by the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, on July 14, 2010.
- Senator Amy Klobuchar (MN) introduced the Securing America's Future with Energy and Sustainable Technologies Act (S.3576) on July 13, 2010. The bill is intended to promote the production and use of renewable energy, and for other purposes.
- Rep. Dean Heller (NV-2) introduced the Clean Energy, Community Investment, and Wildlife Conservation Act (H.R.5735) on July 14, 2010. The bill requires the Secretary of the Interior to establish a royalty based on sales of solar and wind power. The money collected from energy companies will go into a Renewable Energy Mitigation and Fish and Wildlife Fund, which will then be distributed by the Secretary to the home states and counties to “mitigate the impacts of renewable energy on federal lands in their region, including protecting fish and wildlife corridors and other sensitive land, restoring fish and wildlife habitat, and securing recreational access to Federal lands through easements, rights of way, or fee title acquisition from willing sellers.” Funds may also be used by states to execute activities authorized under the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965.
- Rep. James Oberstar (MN-8) introduced the Oil Spill Accountability and Environmental Protection Act of 2010 (H.R.5629) on June 29, 2010. Reported by Committee on Transportation, discharged by Judiciary, Natural Resources Committees. Placed on Union calendar.
- Rep. Jared Polis (CO-2) introduced the Oil Pollution Wildlife Protection Act (H.R.5863) on July 26, 2010. The bill has been referred to the Committee on Natural Resources.
- Rep. Devin Nunes (CA-21) introduced H.R.5899, Roadmap for America’s Energy Future, on July 28, 2010. The bill was referred to several subcommittees.
- Senator Patty Murray (WA) introduced the Clean Energy Works Act (S.3631) on July 22, 2010. The bill was referred to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

#### **EDITORIAL COMMENTS**

If you have any feedback for C-FARE or would like to inform us of a research area you have been working on, please contact Tamara Wagester, Executive Director at 202-408-8522 or by e-mail [tamarawagester@cfare.org](mailto:tamarawagester@cfare.org). If you are not currently getting our monthly e-newsletter directly from C-FARE, and would like to subscribe to “The Council Caller”, please send an E-mail directly to [info@cfare.org](mailto:info@cfare.org).

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C-FARE is a non-profit, non-partisan association actively working to represent agricultural and applied economists in matters of science policy, priority setting, and budget determination at the federal level, and to collaborate with other scientific organizations and government agencies in these activities.