



Farm Bill 2014: What's Inside this \$965 Billion Piece of Legislation?

After years of delay, Congress passed the much anticipated Farm Bill in February 2014. Many of the provisions in this legislation pertain to the organic and natural food industry, of which, the impact could be immense. The areas that will have the most substantial effect include:

Organic Agriculture

This omnibus bill was a major victory for the organics, as it contains the most funding to date to be earmarked specifically for organics in any piece of legislation.

- \$20 million per year for the Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative (OREI)
- \$5 million for the Organic Data Initiative (ODI)
- \$15 million per year for the National Organic Program (NOP)
- \$5 million for necessary technology upgrades at the NOP
- Strong enforcement tools granted to the NOP, in addition to new due process protections for organic certificate holders
- A new requirement that organic price elections for the purpose of crop insurance be completed by 2015
- Full funding of the National Organic Certification Cost Share Program at \$11.5 million per year
- Expansion of the exemption for organic operations from conventional check-off programs
- Authorization for the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to consider an application for a check-off program from the organic sector should the sector choose to pursue such an application

The last two points are groundbreaking developments, paving the way for the possibility of an Organic Research and Promotions Program should an industry majority vote to approve one. If this “check off program” comes to fruition, it could generate more than \$30 million per year for education, research, and promotion.

Sustainable Agriculture

- The biggest-ever federal investment in sustainable agriculture, including \$1.2 billion over five years for beginning farmers, local food systems, organic agriculture, rural development, and specialty crops



- Local and regional food systems and healthy food access received a large boost in the bill. This includes support for the Farmers Market and Local Food Promotion program as well as the farm to institution programs and food hub activities
- If farmers want government support for crop insurance, they must now implement soil and wetland conservation practices

Beginning Farmer and Ranchers

- Veteran Farmers are now recognized as a distinct class of farmer
- \$444 million funded directly into beginning, veteran and socially disadvantaged farmers' initiatives over the next ten years