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LOCAL

2018 Farm Bill on Track to Pass

By Jamison Cruce
 USA Rice

The 2018 Farm Bill, known formally as the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018, H.R. 2, and its accompanying conference report of resolved differences between the House and Senate versions is in the final stretch to becoming law.

The Farm Bill conference report was officially filed late Monday evening. Yesterday afternoon, the Senate voted 87 to 13 to adopt the Farm Bill conference report. This afternoon, the House overwhelmingly, adopted the conference report by a vote of 369 to 47.

The rice industry had broad support from our many friends in Congress representing both agriculture and urban states and districts. Unfortunately, two Members of Congress representing rice states voted against this legislation that supports the U.S. rice industry in a time of great need, including Senators Tom Cotton (R-AR) and John Kennedy (R-LA).

"USA Rice applauds the work and perseverance of the Farm Bill Conference Committee, especially the House and Senate Agriculture Committee leaders and their staff, for passing a Farm Bill that is good for the U.S. rice industry," said Joe Mencer, Arkansas rice farmer and chairman of USA Rice Farmers. "The Farm Bill provides a sense of confidence for rice farmers and the industry during a time of depressed prices and an uncertain trade and market outlook going into next season."

The 12-title, 807-page omnibus farm law contains several positive provisions for the U.S. rice industry, many of which were developed by and advocated for by the dedicated grassroots members of USA Rice. Some highlights include the maintenance and enhancement of the Price Loss Coverage Program, an increase to the rice marketing loan rates, improvements to critical conservation programs, and the preservation of trade promotion and food aid programs.

"On behalf of the U.S. rice industry, I want to

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Arkansas Animal Rescue Foundation issues grant to local nonprofit

When you're driving into Stuttgart city limits the sign says population 9,326. "I'm not sure some days if that's human count or cat count," said Stephanie Davis, founder of Purring Paws Rescue & Adoption. "When you walk to the end of your driveway to check the mail cats scatter in every direction. You look both ways down the street and you see neighbors trash being broken into by hungry stray cats and little baby kittens."

Davis has dedicated her time to focus on looking for humane programs to help Stuttgart with our stray cat population. She became obsessed with the Trap-Neuter-Return Program and knew immediately that the program was what Stuttgart needed. "TNR (Trap-Neuter-

Return) had to go into place, otherwise the feline stray population was going to continue to grow out of hand in Stuttgart," said Davis.

According to Davis, feeding bans don't work. "You can't ban free-roaming cats," said Davis. "Trap and euthanize methods are proven ineffective; it's very expensive for the city. Trap and euthanize is what you call the "Vacuum Effect" the population will feel a void and they will recover/ reproduce to its original size." Trap-Neuter-Return is more than saving today's cats: it is the future of animal control and sheltering according to Davis.

The TNR program is a humane and effective approach for the stray and feral cats. TNR improves the lives of feral cats, im-

proves their relationship with the people that live near them and decreases the size of the colonies over time. The program is exactly what it sounds like: Cats are humanely trapped and taken to a veterinarian to be neutered or spayed, receive rabies shot, and ear tipped. After recovery, the cats are returned to their homes- their colony- the outdoors. Kittens and cats who are friendly and socialized to people may be adopted into homes.

TNR relieves the cats of the constant stresses of mating and pregnancy. Mating behaviors cease, like roaming, yowling, spraying, and fighting. Cats' physical health improves. The population stabilizes meaning no new kittens and the population will eventually decline.

"I was hooked on the TNR program and began to grant write for this program in late September," said Davis. "I requested a grant for \$10,000 to fund this program which would cover around 275+ cats." The first week of December Davis received a call from the Arkansas Animal Rescue Foundation and they wanted to grant Purring Paws Rescue & Adoption the full \$10,000 to fund the TNR Program. "I was beyond blessed to receive this news," said Davis. "This program is going to be huge for the cats and the citizens of Stuttgart all made possible in part by a grant from the Arkansas Animal Rescue Foundation."

Davis would like to encourage citizens to email h e r

stephanie8793@gmail.com if they have a colony of cats. Include how many is in this colony and where they are located so she can get the colony on the list.

"We were able to get with the Arkansas Animal Rescue Foundation to bring their Low Cost Spay and Neuter cat vouchers to the Stuttgart Animal Clinic," said Davis. "These vouchers will provide \$40 for a spay and \$20 for a neuter." Apply at: <https://www.arkansasanimalrescuefoundation.org/spay-neuter>

"We are still taking vet medical bill donations for the cats that enter the rescue from the shelter and the community," said Davis. "The medical bills get very costly." Davis adds

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David Walker honored at ceremony



Stuttgart linebacker/defensive end David Walker was a finalist for the Farm Bureau Insurance Awards Class 4A Defensive Player of the Year. Walker was honored at a ceremony in North Little Rock on Mon., Dec. 10. Pictured are (l to r) Arkansas County Farm Bureau Insurance Agency Manager Chuck Wallace, Walker, Warren defensive lineman Marcus Miller, Bradley County Farm Bureau Insurance Agent Reid McKinney, Rivercrest linebacker Kentavious Robinson and Mississippi County Farm Bureau Insurance Agent Grant Barnett. Miller won the award.

Soybean farmers lose \$77M after wet harvest

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (AP) — Arkansas soybean farmers have lost at least \$77 million this year after heavy rainfall interrupted harvest season and damaged the quality of the crop, according to a recent report by agriculture experts.

Wet conditions starting with Tropical Storm Gordon in September and continued rainfall in the following months delayed Arkansas' harvest, costing about \$56 million in physical damage to soybeans, according to the University of Arkansas report. Agriculture economists also predict the state's farmers will likely spend another \$21 million to repair muddy fields after using heavy machinery to salvage their crops, the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette reported.

"Virtually every field has rut damage, and each will require one or two additional trips to repair the damage," said

Jeremy Ross, a soybean agronomist who contributed to the report. "It all adds up, labor, fuel, and a lot of equipment was put under a lot of stress in that late harvest."

The \$77 million total doesn't account for soybean farmers' losses sustained from having their dominant export market largely close as China responds to President Donald Trump's trade tariffs.

The lack of sales has forced many U.S. farmers to store their crops in hopes of selling the surplus later at a decent price, the report said. But more soybeans going into storage is driving prices down and could affect the crop's price next year.

Some of the state's soybeans were sold for less than \$7 a bushel, a significant price drop from the \$10 a bushel rate just over a year ago. Louisiana's soybean crop was also devastated

by the storm and a rainy harvest, reducing quality as farmers manage the aftermath of recent trade disputes with China.

Farmers in both states could qualify for payments from the one-time \$12 billion fund that the Trump administration set up to help offset the loss in trade. But even with the payments, farmers could still fall short of breaking even.

"The elephant in the room is tariffs," Ross said. "If we hadn't had those, we wouldn't have had near the problem of getting rid of the beans. There would have been discounts, but the real problem was capacity. Elevators along the (Mississippi) river and in the Gulf got backed up, with no place to sell."

Information from: Arkansas Democrat-Gazette, <http://www.arkansasonline.com>

Christmas Wishes still accepting toys

By Bill Shrum

"Christmas Wishes," the Christmas gift giving distribution at Christmas conducted by the Southeast Arkansas RSVP, is still accepting toys for the qualified children.

These children are at risk children in Stuttgart and in the Grand Prairie that are eligible to receive gifts.

"We will be collecting toys and clothing items until next week," Norma Strabala, director of the Southeast Arkansas RSVP, said. "The cutoff period is Tuesday, Dec. 18."

Strabala added that Arkansas County Co-op at 22nd Street and Park Avenue in

Stuttgart and Arkansas County Co-op in Almyra will be accepting toys at these two locations.

"There will be a drop box at both locations," Strabala said.

Strabala added that the gift tags, which include a request for gift items for a child that are on the tags which will be at trees at Walmart and tags can be picked up at the RSVP office in Stuttgart.

For more information or to receive a gift tag with sizes and gift requests, contact the Southeast Arkansas County Office in Stuttgart at PCCUA-Stuttgart campus in the back of the building or at (870) 673-8584.

GOT NEWS?

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