

U.S. Sens. Baldwin, Hoeven: Introduce Bipartisan Legislation to Alleviate Feed Shortages for Farmers and Ranchers

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senators Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) and John Hoeven (R-ND) have introduced the *Feed Emergency Enhancement During Disasters with Cover Crops (FEEDD) Act*, bipartisan legislation to provide farmers and ranchers with additional flexibility to alleviate feed shortages in years with widespread excessive moisture, flooding or drought.

Specifically, the bill would:

- Create an emergency waiver authority for the Secretary of Agriculture to allow for haying, grazing or chopping of a cover crop on prevented plant acres before November 1 in the event of a feed shortage due to excessive moisture, flood or drought.
 - Under this waiver, producers would not see a reduction of their crop insurance indemnity.
- Direct the Secretary to establish regional haying and grazing dates for each crop year.
 - The current date, November 1, is set on a nationwide basis and disadvantages producers in the upper Midwest.
 - This would provide flexibility for the Secretary to move up the haying and grazing date for states in the northern part of the country.
- Maintain crop insurance program integrity and will have no impact on a

producers' Actual Production History (APH).

“In Wisconsin, when farmers lose a crop to flooding, drought, or other extreme weather events, they are left with tough choices about how to make up for crop losses and protect their soil from erosion,” **said Senator Baldwin**. “This bipartisan legislation will give farmers more certainty about their feed options in disaster years. By reducing uncertainty for farmers, we’re working to ease one of the headaches they face when deciding about putting in cover crops, which will benefit soil health on the farm and water quality in our communities.”

“Cover crops are an important tool that enable farmers to better maintain their land and provide an important source of feed for livestock,” **said Senator Hoeven**. “It makes sense to provide adequate flexibility in USDA’s rules for cover crops to address disasters, differences in regional climates and local feed shortages. That’s exactly what our bill will provide, while preserving crop insurance program integrity and preventing penalties for farmers.”

Representatives Dusty Johnson (R-SD) and Angie Craig (D-MN) are introducing companion legislation in the House.

“A one-sized-fits-all approach doesn’t always work, and the cover crop harvest date is a good example where this approach falls short,” **said Representative Johnson**. “I’m grateful USDA provided an administrative fix to the prevent plant harvest date deadline in 2019 after unprecedented flooding in states like South Dakota, but this date flexibility needs to be permanent and regionally tailored. The government can’t control the weather, but we can enhance predictability for producers when disasters hit.”

“Especially in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and economic crisis, Congress has a responsibility to provide farmers and ranchers the flexibility they need to do their jobs successfully,” **said Representative Craig**. “The *FEEDD Act* will help to support ag producers in Minnesota at no cost to the taxpayer - while incentivizing the planting of cover crops to protect the health and quality of farmers’ soil in Minnesota. I’m proud to help lead this bipartisan, commonsense effort and look forward to its passage in the House.”

In Wisconsin, the bipartisan *FEEDD Act* is supported by the Wisconsin Farmers Union and the Wisconsin Farm Bureau. The bill is also endorsed by the American Farm

Bureau Federation, National Farmers Union, National Cattlemen's Beef Association, National Milk Producers Federation, National Association of Conservation Districts, American Soybean Association, U.S. Durum Growers Association, American Sheep Industry Association, Edge Dairy Farmer Cooperative, Midwest Dairy Coalition, Farm Credit Council, American Bankers Association, Independent Community Bankers of America, U.S. Cattlemen's Association, National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, Ducks Unlimited, Pheasants Forever, Quail Forever, Crop Insurance Reimbursement Bureau, the Ag Retailers Association, The Nature Conservancy, National Council of Farmer Cooperatives, and FarmFirst Dairy Cooperative.

"Rising average temperatures, shifting precipitation patterns, changing growing seasons, and increasingly frequent and severe weather events are making it more difficult to grow food, feed, fuel, and fiber. The effects of climate change are becoming clear across rural America, and the past few springs have been especially challenging for family farmers and ranchers. In many areas across Wisconsin, it has been too wet to put seeds in the ground, forcing many farmers to rely on prevented planting insurance coverage to make ends meet. While prevented planting offers a critical risk management tool, the November 1 harvest date prevents many farmers from utilizing a "second crop" as forage. Wisconsin Farmers Union thanks Senator Tammy Baldwin for introducing the common sense, bipartisan *FEEDD Act*, which provides the flexibility family farmers and ranchers need as they prepare for future planting and growing seasons," **said Darin Von Ruden, President of the Wisconsin Farmers Union.**

"Wisconsin Farm Bureau is appreciative of U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin's introduction of the *FEEDD Act*," **said Wisconsin Farm Bureau President Kevin Krentz.** "Recently, dairy and livestock farmers in Wisconsin and parts of the Midwest experienced substantial feed shortages due to winterkill of alfalfa. This legislation will give flexibility to the USDA Secretary in the event of a feed shortage due to increased weather variability. Wisconsin farmers welcome the passage of The *FEEDD Act*."

"FarmFirst Dairy Cooperative applauds Senator Baldwin's leadership and support of farmers in managing their farm more fully without program restrictions. The introduction of the *FEEDD Act* today showcases support from both sides of the aisle to provide farmers the flexibility needed to manage their cropping decisions in the event of adverse growing conditions. Placing the tools and resources directly in the hands of farmers is the best way to equip them for success, and making this a permanent piece of legislation is a step in the right direction," **said Jeff Lyon,**

General Manager of FarmFirst Dairy Cooperative.

“Edge is thankful to Senator Baldwin and her colleagues for understanding the needs of our dairy farmers. Ensuring that USDA will be able to provide farmers with this flexibility going forward is essential so that our animals are taken care of and food production is not interrupted,” **said Brody Stapel, President of Edge Dairy Farmer Cooperative.**

“I commend Senator Tammy Baldwin for authoring the bipartisan *Feed Emergency Enhancement During Disasters Act*. This bill provides dairy farmers in Wisconsin and beyond with critical tools and flexibility that will help them to manage feed shortages caused by intense flooding and other difficult weather conditions. We look forward to working with Senator Baldwin to pass this important legislation,” **said Jim Mulhern, President and CEO of the National Milk Producers Federation.**

An online version of this release is available [here](#).