



UNITED TO GROW FAMILY AGRICULTURE

Chandler Goule, VP of Government Relations, National Farmers Union

April 16, 2013

National Food Policy Conference Panel

“The Impact of Droughts, Floods, and Other Disasters on our Food Supply”

Summary

-The effects of extreme weather are short supply and high prices.

-The policies to prepare for and rebound from impacts will be found in a 5-year Farm Bill containing disaster, conservation, and risk management programs.

-The impact of a changing climate is reduced through conservation, technology, and decreasing greenhouse gas emissions.

-[Farmers Share Chart](#) - the portion of an agricultural good's price that a farmer receives

1. Extreme weather, such as the past three years of flooding in Iowa and Missouri and the recent droughts in Oklahoma and Colorado, threaten our producers' ability to provide food, feed, fiber and fuel to our nation. The Mississippi River, a previous resource for transporting commodities, has been rendered navigable in some places recently, making the movement of products near impossible at points, while the Ogallala aquifer's condition is threatening the water supply for food and drinking for millions of people. Policies must be implemented to both adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change. Farming is volatile due to external issues that many industries don't have. Extreme weather is not just a local phenomenon, but is occurring throughout the world, as evidenced by droughts in Australia and Brazil.
2. The conservation program of the farm bill contains programs such as the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) that are crucial to maintaining soil health during times of extreme weather. Just as conservation programs that were first instituted in response to the 1930s Dust Bowl helped mitigate harm and restore farmland, farm bill conservation programs successfully prevented a repeat of the Dust Bowl during the current drought, emphasizing the importance of a 5-year farm bill and the inclusion of conservation programs.
3. Farm bill risk management programs, including a robust federal crop insurance program and adequate disaster relief programs, must be available to producers when disasters strike. These are tools that producers use to manage uncertainty and minimize losses from natural disasters; they do not help farmers create profits, but help keep farmers in business through a difficult time.
4. The U.S. needs to mitigate the effects of climate change by instituting a market-based solution such as a cap and trade system. President Obama even mentioned the need for a similar solution in this year's State of the Union address. Such a system would need to address the needs of agriculture and provide offsets for production practices such as no-till and the installation of anaerobic digesters to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Agriculture can be both a huge benefactor of climate change, as well as the source of a solution.
5. We must continue the judicious use of biotechnology in the agriculture and energy sectors. Biotechnology, if applied in a producer-friendly manner, can improve resiliency within in agriculture sector. It can also help commercialize advanced biofuels and reduce greenhouse gas emissions within our nation's fuel supply.