



Michigan Victories - Food, Conservation and Energy Act

U.S. Senator Debbie Stabenow

Michigan's agricultural industry generates over \$60 billion annually for our economy and employs approximately one million residents, making it the second largest industry in Michigan. Senator Stabenow has represented Michigan on the Agriculture Committees in both the U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate for over a decade. Senator Stabenow has played a leading role in crafting the Food, Conservation and Energy Act, also known as the Farm Bill, which passed the Congress on May 15, 2008. She was the first Senator from Michigan in over 40 years to be appointed to the Conference Committee which negotiated key differences in the House and Senate passed bills. This legislation is renewed every five years by Congress and has a far-reaching impact on Michigan.

Recognizing Michigan's Specialty Crops- This is the first Farm Bill to recognize the importance of "specialty crops" - fruits, vegetables and other crops that keep America healthy. These crops make up half of the nation's agricultural cash receipts. Michigan will especially benefit from a new specialty crop title in the bill which was authored by Senator Stabenow. This title adds \$3 billion dollars to support these important crops, by investing in block crop grant programs, pest and disease prevention, organic research, and trade assistance for Michigan asparagus growers hurt by unfair trade.

Maintaining a Strong Farm Safety Net- The Farm Bill maintains a strong safety net for producers, which will help keep food and feed prices down, while ensuring a safe and nutritious food supply. Michigan grown agricultural products will have better coverage when disasters strike, because an Agricultural Disaster Trust Fund was included in the bill.

Boosting Michigan's Leadership in Energy Independence- The Farm Bill will give a boost to Michigan's emerging leadership in biofuels production by investing approximately \$1.5 billion dollars in alternative energy. Senator Stabenow was instrumental in drafting a new production tax credit for cellulosic ethanol, which is an advanced biofuel that utilizes agricultural waste products and renewable resources such as switchgrass and woody biomass. This tax credit will act as an incentive for numerous businesses considering investments in Michigan and allow Michigan to become a leader in alternative energy by capitalizing on its strengths in agricultural research, forestry and crop production.

Investing in Healthy Foods and Nutrition- Two-thirds of the resources in the Farm Bill are invested in food and nutrition programs for families, children, and seniors, including \$10 billion in new investment. The Farm Bill expands the fruit and vegetable snack program for schools to all fifty states to increase children's access to healthy food choices, which will serve over 80,000 students in Michigan. In addition, it extends emergency food assistance, currently used by one in every eight people in Michigan. Senator Stabenow was also instrumental in a provision to provide coupons to low-income seniors for the purchase of fresh, unprepared foods at farmers' markets. The Bill also includes a **Buy American provision**, authored by Senator Stabenow, to require that schools purchase products from American producers for their federally funded meal programs.

Preserving our Great Lakes- Senator Stabenow also authored a provision in the Farm Bill to strengthen the Great Lakes Basin Program for Soil Erosion and Sediment Control. This new provision will help implement a larger regional strategy to restore and protect the Great Lakes and is focused on improving water quality for downstream watersheds.

Conserving and Preserving our Lands, Wildlife Habitat, Air and Water- The Farm Bill expands critical conservation programs by investing an additional \$4 billion that growers can use to conserve land, protect wildlife habitats, restore wetlands and improve water and air quality. These conservation programs help farmers be some of the best stewards of our land and create an enormous public benefit that we all enjoy. Additional new tax incentives for conservation easements and endangered species will protect open spaces, farm land, water quality and biodiversity.

Supporting Michigan's World Class Research Universities- Senator Stabenow led an effort to establish the National Institute of Food Agriculture, which will raise the stature of competitive agricultural research programs dedicated to basic research, applied research and education. This will greatly benefit land-grant universities such as Michigan State University.

Investing in Safer, More Nutritious Foods- This Farm Bill invests millions of new dollars in research to grow safer and more nutritious foods. The bill also strengthens "country of origin" labeling standards so consumers can make more informed choices about the source of their food purchases.

Meeting the Needs of Rural Michigan- This Farm Bill will improve the quality of life in rural communities by renewing successful programs that meet vital utility, healthcare, and emergency service needs. The bill also establishes a rural entrepreneurship program to provide credit to small business entrepreneurs to establish and sustain new businesses in rural communities, where credit may be hard to get.

Supporting Michigan's Forestry Industry- In addition to benefiting from new tax credits for alternative energy, for the first time, Michigan's forestry industry will be eligible to utilize the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). This program offers financial and technical help to assist farmers and foresters in implementing conservation practices. In addition, the Healthy Forests Reserve Program will restore and enhance forest ecosystems for the purpose of forest management, improving biodiversity, and enhancing carbon sequestration.

If you would like more detailed information regarding the Food, Conservation and Energy Act, you can visit Senator Stabenow's website at Stabenow.Senate.gov.