



May 20, 2024

The Honorable Glenn Thompson
Chairman
House Committee on Agriculture
1301 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable David Scott
Ranking Member
House Committee on Agriculture
1301 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Thompson and Ranking Member Scott:

The American Soybean Association appreciates the tireless efforts that you and your teams have contributed toward laying the groundwork for a new and improved farm bill. We write to share our strong support for the Farm, Food, and National Security Act of 2024 (“Chairman’s Mark”) that will be considered on May 23.

Founded in 1920, ASA represents more than 500,000 U.S. soybean farmers on domestic and international policy issues important to the soybean industry and has 26 affiliated state associations representing the 30 primary soybean-producing states. In 2023, U.S. soybean farmers produced nearly 4.2 billion bushels on 83.6 million acres. Farmers produce soybeans in nearly every state represented by members of this committee.

For the past two years, ASA has advocated for a bipartisan, meaningful, comprehensive farm bill that addresses priorities of soybean farmers. We applaud the Chairman for crafting legislation impactful for soybean farmers and highlight several areas in the Chairman’s Mark for which we are especially appreciative.

Title I Farm Safety Net Improvements

Earlier this year, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) forecast a 26% drop in net farm income in 2024 relative to 2023, which follows a decrease of 16% the year prior. This concerns farmers who face high input costs, lower market prices, and believe firmly in their mission to provide food, feed, fuel, and fiber to consumers worldwide. An even more troubling picture is painted when considering continued concerns with the largest export market for U.S. soybeans: China, which accounted for \$18.8 billion in U.S. soybeans in the last marketing year. Soybean farmers experienced the lack of an effective soybean farm safety net when prices plummeted during the 2018-2019 China trade war, but the farm bill safety net provided virtually no support.

ASA supports the significant improvements included in the Chairman's Mark to make the farm safety net more responsive and predictable. We sought changes to the soybean reference price, program calculations, and base acres to address deficiencies in the soybean farm safety net, and the Chairman's provisions are unmatched by other congressional proposals to date. We believe this approach will improve the effectiveness and accessibility of the farm safety net for soybean farmers, who sorely need it.

Trade Promotion Resources & Food Aid

The long-term success of U.S. agriculture abroad has been facilitated by trade promotion programs, such as the Market Access Program (MAP) and Foreign Market Development (FMD) program. These cost-share programs are an excellent example of public-private partnership. We have unfortunately seen dramatic increases in industry demand for MAP and FMD without increases in federal funds; administrative costs, inflation, and sequestration have further limited the amount of funding available. Continuing tensions with China underscore the need to invest in greater diversification and expansion of export markets.

ASA supports the doubling of funding for trade promotion programs as included in the Chairman's Mark. We support provisions to ensure that U.S. grown agricultural commodities remain the foundation of international food assistance programs and ensure greater coordination between the U.S. Agency for International Development and USDA. We support language which clarifies that no single entity can be awarded the entirety of Food for Progress annual funding. We support the use of ready-to-use therapeutic foods in international food assistance programs.

Protection of Crop Insurance & the Soy Checkoff

ASA supports in the Chairman's Mark the protection and enhancement of crop insurance – the most effective risk management tool soybean farmers currently have available. Crop insurance is critically important in securing operating credit annually. We also support continuation of the farmer-led, farmer-funded soy checkoff that brings a high return on investment for soybean farmers.

Additional Priority Areas

Several additional areas included in the Chairman's Mark are important to ASA:

- ASA supports the historic investment in voluntary conservation programs, which are effective but currently oversubscribed. This will enable greater access to incentive-based stewardship.
- ASA supports reauthorization and enhancement of biobased and biofuels programs. These will contribute to more market opportunities for soybeans, which are used in over 1,000 consumer and industrial products.

- ASA supports other improvements to farm policy to help with financing, connectivity, and the future for soy, such as credit modernization, precision agriculture, broadband, research, and certainty in crop protection product labeling.
- ASA supports provisions that will strengthen and support the livestock sector. Animal agriculture is U.S. soy's largest customer and providing certainty and stability for livestock growers further supports soybean farmers.

Strengthening the farm bill is more important than ever, and ASA is pleased to offer our strong support for the Farm, Food, and National Security Act of 2024.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Josh Gackle". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Josh Gackle
President

cc: Members of the House Committee on Agriculture