

# Policy Advisory Group Report

## Members

- Andy Bailey
- Brad Burbrink
- Tom Byers
- Jim Culp
- Justin Dale
- Alan Dunn
- Casey Evans
- Andy Fix
- Tom Gasper
- Kerry Goshert
- Guy Heitkemper
- Larry Huffmeyer
- Brad Lawrence
- Quentin Overbeck
- Mark Seib
- Jon Sparks
- Ed Yanos

## Crops Policy Advisory Group

The crops policy advisory group met on Feb. 5. The group heard from expert speakers and discussed a number of priority policy areas, including farm program design and crop insurance, the renewable fuel standard and international trade. The discussion resulted in one new policy proposed by the group to be submitted through the policy development process for further consideration. More on this discussion is found later in the report.

After a welcome and introductions, the group heard an update on the renewable rule standard from Dr. Wally Tyner of Purdue University. Recent changes to the volumetric requirements of the RFS by the EPA have renewed the conversation about the RFS, and several groups and lawmakers have used the opportunity to call for further reductions or even a full repeal. Farm Bureau and other ag groups are concerned the reductions will hurt our chances of a robust biofuels future. The blend wall continues to be a challenge for expanding the use of ethanol in the marketplace, as well as consumer access to higher blends.

In addition to the RFS update, Tyner presented a new cover crops research project at Purdue. The goals of the project are to determine under which conditions cover crops provide the greatest benefits and how much corn residue can be removed with and without cover crops. There are financial incentives for farmers to enroll in the project.

The group heard from Floyd Gaibler, director of trade policy at the U.S. Grains Council. Gaibler provided an overview of the benefits of trade to agriculture, including a review of past trade agreements and their impacts on the ag sector. He also discussed the importance of the pending Trans-Pacific Partnership agreement, which includes 12 countries and over a third of global GDP.

The meeting also included discussion on farm program design and crop insurance. Mary Kay Thatcher of the American Farm Bureau provided a briefing on current implementation of the farm bill, as well as discussions occurring in Washington, D.C. about the next farm bill. Also weighing in on the discussion of farm policy were Matt Erickson, chief economist of the Senate Ag Committee and Mike Dankler, legislative director for U.S. Rep. Jackie Walorski.

Some of the issues that are likely to be raised during the discussions of the next farm bill, as addressed by our speakers, were:

- Crop insurance premium subsidies cap.
- Adjusted gross income limits.
- Cost of administration of the program and pressures on federal budgets (baseline).
- Perceptions that insurance companies have taken the financial cuts but farmers have not.
- Crops insurance being tied to soil types and production.
- Additional conservation practices for additional payments or incentives.
- Geographic distribution of payments.

Later, the PAG members discussed several of the items addressed by the speakers. The highlights of those discussions included:

- Double crop soybeans and preventive planting and related reporting dates.
- The need for FSA and RMA to work more closely together to share data and information.
- A need for grassroots member dialogue and potential consideration of basing crop insurance premiums on soil productivity instead of APH.
- The need for Farm Bureau to be engaged early and often as discussions surrounding the next farm bill increase.

The farm policy and crop insurance group discussion continued. The group discussed the challenge with RMA reporting dates and double crop soybeans. The discussion resulted in a new policy submitted by the group for further consideration.

- AFBF Section 225 Risk Management/Crop Insurance  
We support:  
1.1.59 The establishment of a separate reporting date for double crop production for preventive planting and reporting purposes.

The meeting finished with a presentation and group discussion of the HGFA arbitration system, which was a request from the previous meeting.

## **CALL TO ACTION**

### ***County Farm Bureaus can***

- Consider the above issues raised by the meeting's farm policy speakers related to the next farm bill discussion. Discuss what these potential changes would mean and identify what Farm Bureau's priorities should be going into the next farm bill. Discuss in policy committees.
- Consider hosting a farm bill forum or farm visit to discuss the needs of Indiana farmers in the farm bill, and include members of Congress and their staff. INFB staff can offer support.
- Organize an event and, invite members of Congress and their staff.

- Highlight the importance of trade to agriculture and why TPP is so important in a time of depressed commodity markets.

***Farmers are asked to***

- Provide feedback to INFB staff regarding how the current farm bill and farm programs are addressing their needs or areas that need to be evaluated for further improvement.
- Contact Dr. Wally Tyner if they are interested in the Purdue cover crop study.

Questions regarding the activities of the crops PAG can be directed to one of the group members or to [Kyle Cline](#), 317-692-7845, the Farm Bureau staff member facilitating the group.