

FRESH TALK

COMMENT AND ANALYSIS FROM THE NATIONAL EDITOR OF THE PACKER

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Farm bill crunch

The Organic Farming Research Foundation is seeking to secure a couple of key policy wins in the next few days during the Senate farm bill debate. From the group's latest communication:

Farm Bill Debate Starting Up Today—Last Push for Dorgan-Grassley Amendment!

The Farm Bill had been stalled in the Senate for several weeks, but late last week, Senate leadership finally came to an agreement on the terms of the debate. The Senate began debating the bill on Dec 7, and voting is likely to start on Dec. 11. We wanted to give you two important updates:

- **The Dorgan-Grassley Payment Limitations Amendment** will likely be debated on Tuesday, Dec. 11 or Wednesday, Dec. 12. This amendment caps commodity payments to farmers at \$250,000 and shifts the savings to conservation, sustainable agriculture, and rural development programs. It is the only chance to change the Bill's unfair Commodity Program, which continues the multi-million dollar payments to the nations largest farms.

The Senate version of the Farm Bill will most likely include a "Sense of Congress" provision urging the USDA Agricultural Research Service (USDA-ARS) to devote a fair-share of research dollars to organic agriculture research. A "fair-share" means that the percentage of USDA-ARS research dollars spent on organic should match organic's share of the US retail food market. A similar provision was included in the House version of the Farm Bill.

TK: Senators who oppose the Dorgan-Grassley Amendment will point to food security, food safety and the shrinking ag balance of trade as issues to rally around. The Dorgan-Grassley Amendment passed the Senate in 2002 but was stripped out in the House-Senate conference committee.

POSTED BY TOM KARST AT 2:17 AM

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