

# WORC

*Western Organization of Resource Councils*

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**FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:** Randy Joseph, 541-894-2347 (cell); or WORC staff, Jeri Lynn Bakken, 701-376-7077, Margie MacDonald or Kevin Dowling, 406-252-9672

## **Statement on Final Farm Bill**

*Randy Joseph, Chair of the Western Organization of Resource Councils (WORC), from Baker City, Ore. issued the following statement in response to the final farm bill conference agreement announced today by Congressional agriculture leaders. Based in Billings, Mont., WORC is a network of conservation and family agriculture organizations in Colorado, Idaho, Montana, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, and Wyoming.*

“The Farm Bill has missed opportunities in two key areas. First, the bill fails to make livestock markets fairer and competitive. Second, the Farm Bill did not set up a biofuels feedstock reserve policy to help control price spikes and market volatility.

Most disappointing to the Western Organization of Resource Councils and independent ranchers is the lack of real market reform. Provisions like the prohibition on packer ownership and captive supply reform are notably absent from this bill. Although livestock market concentration is at the highest level ever and competition is virtually non-existent, Congress has failed to support independent producers and rural communities by not acting to return competition and fairness to livestock markets.

While U.S. biofuels production is a negligible factor in the run up of global food prices, Congress should establish a farmer-owned biofuels feedstock reserve as part of a common sense mechanism in farm and fuel policy.

Furthermore, Congress has economized on funds for the Renewable Energy Assistance Program (REAP), which has some of the greatest potential for rural and renewable energy development. Rural America is full of opportunities for significant development of new, decentralized, local energy efficiency and renewable technologies including wind, solar, biodiesel, and others. The final number will be a fraction of the \$1 billion over five years that WORC supported.

Despite these missed opportunities, there are some significant reforms in this bill. The Livestock Title in the bill, the first ever, reforms arbitration procedures in contract disputes, secures, again, country of origin labeling for meat and other products, and enables interstate shipment of state-inspected meat.

Funds to advance the transition to more greener and more sustainable biofuels, like cellulosic ethanol from perennial prairie grasses, are also a highlight in the bill.

On balance, we believe America's family farmers and ranchers, and the consumers of food and renewable fuel, are better off if this bill is enacted into law. We will continue to urge our representatives in Washington to restore competition to monopolized agricultural markets, and to help rural America move to a clean, renewable, local energy future."

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