



REPORT CARD

United States Senate
 Assignment: 2018 Farm Bill
 Name: Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018
 Topic Area: Productivity and Risk Management

FBLE Recommendation	Rating	Comments
Commodity and Crop Insurance Programs		S. 3042 maintains the troubling status quo that favors the profits of megafarms and insurance companies over struggling farmers and rural livelihoods and long-term soil health through risk management reforms.
Ensure crop insurance programs promote sound risk management practices.		S. 3042 fails to reform government incentives that encourage environmental and financial risk-taking . Existing crop insurance incentives ensure that producers will continue to receive short-term financial gain at the expense of long-term investments in productivity and resilience.
Increase fairness in public-private crop insurance administration.		S. 3042 continues to guarantee excessive profits to insurance companies that administer federal crop insurance. The Senate misses an opportunity to cut corporate largesse and reinvest the savings.
Target program payments toward payoffs for farms, communities, and stewardship.		S. 3042 takes lowers the adjusted gross income cap for commodity payments and closes the "active personal management" loophole. These changes better target subsidy payments. But, the bill lacks income limits on crop insurance subsidies, and still disproportionally benefits the largest farms over small and midsize operations.
Conservation Compliance		S. 3042 fails to address serious deficiencies in conservation compliance implementation and enforcement. Without updates, the program cannot effectively guarantee that producers are meeting their duty to protect the most sensitive soil and wetlands in return for subsidies.
Bring transparency to conservation compliance.		The Senate bill does not require USDA to provide meaningful data on conservation compliance to Congress or the public. S. 3042 fails to adopt reporting requirements that would ensure accountability.
Update conservation compliance standards to conserve more soil.		S. 3042 allows Sodsaver, which protects native grasslands, to expand subject to state approval. Still, most sensitive crop and wetlands acres remain vulnerable because compliance standards are too weak or do not apply.
Fund robust enforcement and technical assistance of compliance standards.		The bill does not provide funding for USDA to implement conservation compliance programs. Without funding, USDA cannot enforce compliance standards or provide farmers the support they need to comply.
Voluntary Conservation Programs		The Senate farm bill better targets voluntary conservation programs to support the most effective stewardship practices. But, it cuts funding to core conservation programs.
Invest in long-term soil and water and quality.		Updated conservation programs better target stewardship priorities , including new permanent conservation options and pathways to scale up conservation. But, S. 3042 makes harmful and unnecessary cuts to working lands programs (CSP, EQIP).
Restore EQIP's focus on smaller farms performing voluntary conservation.		S. 3042 reforms EQIP to further promote water conservation, reduce set-asides that benefit concentrated animal feeding operations, and includes a "micro" program to improve small farm access.
Prioritize innovation in conservation program spending.		S. 3042 provides no change in spending on the most innovative conservation initiatives , missing an opportunity to make thoughtful and decisive investments in the future of conservation.
Pilot Programs and Research		The Senate bill improves collection, analysis, and availability of key agricultural data. This data can inform policy strategies that prioritize long-term productivity and risk management. Still, S. 3042 fails to address critical opportunities to build agricultural resilience.
Bolster links between insurance subsidies and soil health.		S. 3042 pilots a "good driver discount" that reduces crop insurance premiums based on risk-reducing practices. It also creates research programs to better understand linkages between agricultural practices, weather conditions, yield, and risk. These changes help tie subsidies to public values .
Ensure a coordinated and robust USDA response to climate change.		EQIP and other programs better address climate priorities including carbon sequestration and biogas energy generation. Still, the bill misses an opportunity for USDA to lead in helping farmers mitigate and adapt to climate change.
Invest in improving innovative agricultural systems.		S. 3042 fails to make a significant public investment in research into promising new conservation methods, including perennial agriculture and precision agriculture.

= aligns with FBLE recommendations | Updated to reflect S. 3042 as it passed in the Senate on 6/28/18