



News Release

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"Connecting Cows, Cooperatives, Capitol Hill, and Consumers"

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Virginia Dairy Farmer Urges Congress to Pass New Farm Bill



WASHINGTON, DC – Dairy farmers need Congress to pass a new Farm Bill now to help provide certainty for making future business decisions, according to Sarah Leonard (left), a fourth-generation dairy producer from Midland, VA, who spoke at a Senate news conference today about the Agriculture Reform, Food and Jobs Act of 2012 (the 2012 Farm Bill).

Sen. Debbie Stabenow (D-MI), Chairwoman of the U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry, and Sen. Pat Roberts (R-KS), the Committee's Ranking Member, hosted the news conference Wednesday in the Capitol. They were joined by several young farmers to discuss the importance of the farm bill for the next generation of ag producers. Leonard, who operates a 325-cow dairy along with her parents, spoke about her experiences as a young farmer on a multi-generational farm.

"On our farm, we don't focus on the latest polls, or whose campaign is raising the most money," she explained. "We focus instead on how much rain we received last night, how much milk the cows are generating today, and what the market price of corn and soybeans are. That's our daily reality. But part of that reality is, we need a new farm bill."

Leonard said she was excited to see that the Farm Bill legislation contained a variety of provisions to help beginning farmers like her continue to make a living from family farms, including access to capital, crop insurance, and mentoring programs.

"I can rely on my parents for their wisdom and perspective, but it would be great to know that the farm bill also has tools that I can use to keep our family business going. I would like to sell milk, not sell our land to developers," she said.

The Farm Bill legislation is not just about the next five years, but the next generation of farmers in America, Leonard concluded. "Dairy producers appreciate the work that Senators Stabenow and Roberts, and their colleagues, have done so far. Now it is up to all 100 Senators to take it from here," she said.

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The Senate is expected to take a procedural vote on cloture this week, after which debate on the farm bill will commence.

The National Milk Producers Federation, based in Arlington, VA, develops and carries out policies that advance the well-being of dairy producers and the cooperatives they own. The members of NMPF's 30 cooperatives produce the majority of the U.S. milk supply, making NMPF the voice of more than 32,000 dairy producers on Capitol Hill and with government agencies. Visit www.nmpf.org for more information.