

AGRICULTURE

Contrasting the Farm Bills

■ This chart compares major provisions of the 2007 House and Senate farm bills. The House version, H.R. 2419, passed 231-191 in July. The Senate version is on the floor this week.

	HOUSE	SENATE
Spending	Estimated outlays for agricultural programs total \$286 billion from FY08-FY12. That figure is 2 percent above the CBO's March 2007 baseline, or what it would cost to extend the current farm bill.	Estimated outlays for agricultural programs total \$283 billion from FY08-12. That figure is about 1 percent above the baseline. When combined with a Senate Finance disaster aid package, it will total \$288 billion.
<p>Click here for a graph comparing proposed spending on each of the farm bill's major titles to the 2007 baseline.</p>		
Commodities	Would retain direct payments at current rates. Counter-cyclical payments would also be retained, though crop target prices would be adjusted. Producers would also have the option to choose between the target price system and one based on national average of revenue. Overall, direct and counter-cyclical payments would be limited to \$250,000 per farm. There are no limits on marketing loans.	Would also retain direct payments and counter-cyclical payments. Unlike the House bill, the Senate version would create a state-based Average Crop Revenue program as an alternative to current income supports. Producers who choose to participate in the ACR would forego traditional direct payments and instead receive \$15 per acre, regardless of crop. Direct and counter-cyclical payments would be limited to \$200,000 per farm. There are no limits on marketing loans.
<p>Click here for a comparison table of current and proposed loan rates and target prices for 21 commodities.</p>		
Conservation	Would extend or expand most of the conservation programs of the previous farm bill. However, it does not provide money for any additional enrollments in the Conservation Security Program through FY12.	Would continue the land-idling Conservation Reserve Program and the Environmental Quality Incentive Program, which is used to clean up livestock operations and other farms. It would reauthorize the Wetlands and Grasslands Reserve programs. The Conservation Security Program would be renamed the Conservation Stewardship Program and provided with enough money to increase the number of acres in the program from 14 million to 80 million over the life of the farm bill.
Nutrition	Would increase food assistance by raising the standard deduction used to determine food stamp benefits from \$134 to \$145 and indexing it to inflation. The current \$2,000 asset test would be indexed to inflation.	Would raise the standard deduction for food stamps to \$140 and index it to inflation. It would raise the asset test to \$3,500 and index it to inflation. It would also increase eligibility for able-bodied adults without dependents to six months out of every 36, from the previous three months.
<p>Click here for a table showing each state's participation in the Food Stamp Program from FY02-FY06.</p>		
Energy Provisions	Would extend the biofuels and renewable energy programs from the 2002 farm bill. The Biorefinery Development Program would also provide new loan guarantees totaling \$800 million from FY08-12. The Bioenergy Program, which rewards biofuels producers for increased production, would be boosted to \$1.4 billion through FY12.	Would also extend energy provisions in the previous farm bill, though its mandatory funding levels are lower than those in the House version. The Senate Finance Committee's accompanying tax package would extend the tariff on imported ethanol through 2010, and reduce the ethanol excise tax credit for producers from 51 to 46 cents per gallon.