

WASHINGTON, DC - Representative Robert C. “Bobby” Scott, (D-VA-3) backed a bipartisan Farm Bill that will strengthen American agriculture, help families facing high food costs and make a substantial commitment to land conservation and our energy independence. The Farm, Nutrition, and Bioenergy Act passed on Wednesday by a vote of 318-106.

The US Senate passed the farm package today.

“With food prices soaring, consumers need all the help they can get,” said Congressman Scott. “The new farm bill will help families who see food costs rising while supporting our farmers and taking important steps toward reforming farm payments.”

Nearly three-fourths of the Farm Bill will support nutrition programs that help 38 million American families afford healthy food. The legislation's updates to the food stamp provisions will help about 11 million people by 2012. The bill also provides much-needed support to emergency feeding organizations, such as food banks, food pantries, and soup kitchens by increasing TEFAP funding by \$1.25 billion – with \$50 million for immediate shortages at food pantries. Additionally, the bill helps schools provide healthy snacks to students, with \$1 billion for free fresh fruits and vegetables.

Congressman Scott is also pleased the Farm Bill gives farmers, who filed claims under the *Pigford* case, an opportunity to seek relief. The *Pigford v. Veneman* case was brought after black farmers received discriminatory treatment by the United States Department of Agriculture. The case was settled and black farmers were guaranteed some monetary relief in the consent decree. Due to inadequate notice and arbitrary deadlines, many farmers did not get the opportunity to be heard by the appropriate court. The Farm bill gives victims additional time to file claims and establishes a \$100 million fund that can be replenished by Congress to settle these late filed claims.

To encourage conservation efforts, the Farm Bill boosts conservation programs that reduce soil erosion, enhance water supplies, improve water and air quality, increase wildlife habitat and reduce damage caused by floods and other natural disasters by \$7.9 million. It will provide \$188 million over the next 4.5 years for a new Chesapeake Bay Watershed Program, and increase the region's share of national conservation programs more than \$252 million over five years.

Under the bill, farmers will play a greater role in fueling our energy independence. The Farm Bill invests \$1 billion in renewable energy focusing on new technologies and new sources. The legislation takes another critical step in transitioning biofuels beyond corn to non-food crops and sources such as switchgrass, woodchips and corn stalks.

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