

Plant and Animal Breeding Research

Senate 2012 Farm Bill Floor Debate

Protecting farmer choice and national food security



Photo Source: USDA

In recent decades, resources for conventional plant and animal breeding research have dwindled, threatening food security and limiting farmer choice. The monumental productivity gains made in agriculture over the last century are primarily due to conventional breeding techniques, yet USDA has failed to fulfill the conventional breeding priority in the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative from the 2008 Farm Bill. By ignoring the Congressional mandate, USDA is undermining future productivity gains. Additionally, fewer and fewer varieties and breeds are available for farmers to choose from that are suited to their local climate and market demand.

Amendment Basics – SA 2234

Senator Tester offered an amendment that will protect farmer choice and boost agricultural productivity by:

- Designating that five percent of annual funding for the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative be used for conventional breeding, focused on public cultivar and breed development.
- Honing the definition of conventional breeding to remove hurdles that have hindered USDA's efforts to address this need.

Why It Matters

- In order to sustain and improve agricultural productivity, USDA must dedicate resources through AFRI for proven conventional plant and animal breeding research.
- Farmers in many regions of the country are relying on seeds that are designed for other regions, or no longer meet pest and disease pressures, putting them at a competitive disadvantage.
- Without a focus on the development of seeds and breeds that farmers need, farmers will be increasingly unable to take advantage of market opportunities and trends.
- The Congressional Budget Office has ruled that Sen. Tester's Conventional Breeding Amendment does not cost taxpayers money.

For More Information: All Members are encouraged to co-sponsor and support Sen. Tester's Conventional Breeding Amendment. Contact Nathan Taylor in Sen. Tester's office at (202) 224-2644 or nathan_taylor@tester.senate.gov.



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