

2008 Farm Bill Miscellaneous Title

Socially Disadvantaged Producers

- **Increases mandatory funding for the Section 2501 Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers Outreach and Technical Assistance Program**
 - Provides \$75 million in mandatory funding for fiscal years 2009-2012
 - Amends the program to better meet the needs of socially disadvantaged farmers or ranchers:
 - Enhances the coordination of the outreach, technical assistance, and educational efforts authorized under USDA programs
 - Assists the Secretary in broadening participation of socially disadvantaged farmers or ranchers
 - Requires the Secretary of Agriculture to provide Congress with an annual report on the program's operation
- **Improves transparency and accountability**
 - Requires USDA to annually compile application and participation rate data for socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers in USDA programs
 - Authorizes all USDA agencies to collect and transmit data to the Secretary, regarding race, gender, and ethnicity
- **Provides funding for the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program with \$75 million for fiscal years 2009-2012**
 - The program provides training, education, outreach and technical assistance initiatives for beginning farmers and ranchers
- **Directs the Secretary of Agriculture to establish permanently the USDA Office of Advocacy and Outreach (taking over the duties of the Office of Outreach and Diversity currently located in the Office of Civil Rights) with responsibilities that include carrying out the Section 2501 Outreach Program**
- **Establishes a Farmworker Coordinator in the Office of Advocacy and Outreach**
 - Serves as a liaison to groups that represent low income migrant and seasonal farmworkers; coordinates with USDA and State and local governments to assure that farmworker needs are met during declared disasters and emergencies; and assures that farmworkers have access to services and support to enter agriculture as producers
- **Establishes the Minority Farmer and Rancher Advisory Committee at USDA to:**
 - Review the operation of the Section 2501 Outreach Program
 - Maximize participation by minority farmers or ranchers in USDA programs
 - Review civil rights activities

Farm Program Reforms

- **Permanently bans anyone convicted of defrauding USDA from any subsequent participation in USDA programs (except for participation in food assistance programs)**

Office Closures

- **Prohibits the closure or relocation of county or field offices for the Farm Service Agency for two years**

Agriculture Security

- **Establishes an Office of Homeland Security within USDA**
 - Integrates inter-agency emergency response plans and works with the Department of Homeland Security and other agencies to coordinate planning and response efforts
 - Creates a bio-security communication center to prepare for potential animal disease emergencies, agro-terrorism attacks and other threats to agricultural bio-security
- **Builds biosecurity capacity, communications, planning, preparedness and response**
 - Creates a competitive grant program to develop and expand agriculture bio-security training programs for veterinarians and food science professionals
 - Provides grant and loan assistance for states to assess their agricultural disease response capabilities
- **Establishes programs to protect and respond to potential animal and plant disease emergencies**
 - Creates a grant program to fund research and development of agricultural countermeasures that could be used in cases of animal and plant disease emergencies

Animal Welfare

- **Strengthens prohibitions on animal fighting ventures and increases criminal penalties for violations**
- **Bans the importation of dogs under six months of age**
- **Strengthens fines for violations of the Animal Welfare Act**
- **Directs USDA to review findings of study related to use of dogs and cats in Federal research**

Regional Infrastructure and Economic Development

- **Establishes three regional Commissions to encourage economic development**
 - The Southeast Crescent Regional Commission
 - The Southwest Border Regional Commission
 - The Northern Border Regional Commission
- **Authorizes \$30 million per year that the Commissions will use to provide grants for basic infrastructure and business development in the region to improve economically distressed and underdeveloped areas**