



Senator Herb Kohl

United States Senator for Wisconsin



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SENATOR KOHL: Mr. President, I rise to support and encourage passage of this farm bill.

Farm bills are difficult measures to shepherd through this chamber. There has never been -- and never will -- be a 'perfect' one in the eyes of every member of this body. But American agriculture needs a new farm bill and this one deserves our support for a variety of reasons.

For starters, it delivers over \$23 billion dollars in savings at a time when our nation's balance sheet needs it most.

It improves nutrition programs by curbing fraud and improving program integrity. Hungry Americans -- many of whom are children -- need a food safety net when times are tough. These changes support that safety net and deliver more accountability to taxpayers.

This bill also responds to concerns articulated by dairy farmers who are hugely important to me and to Wisconsin. Long-time farm policy observers know of my enduring interest in dairy policy. The MILC program, which I co-authored with several of my colleagues in this chamber, was the first comprehensive safety net for American dairy producers. It provided payments in time of low prices and cost the government nothing when we had robust dairy prices. Dairy farmers today face new and different challenges. In recent years they have seen situations where, despite robust milk prices, their input prices dramatically escalated and their margins evaporated. The dairy policy embodied in this bill recognizes that challenge and establishes margin protection insurance. Participants will be given the option to choose the level of margin protection that makes the most sense for their dairy operations.

I supported a number of amendments to this farm bill. Among them were modifications to enhance rural development and programs for beginning

farmers. Farm bills touch our nation in many different ways, and these are two areas that merit more attention and continued diligence. I also opposed a number of amendments because I feared they would undermine agriculture exports, our ability to innovate, and our organic agriculture sector.

Finally, I want to congratulate the Chair and Ranking member of the Senate Agriculture Committee for their diligent work. It takes an enormous amount of effort to move a farm bill. They worked hard to find consensus and deserve our thanks.

I encourage my colleagues to support the bill.