

THUNE FARM BILL 2018



Sen. John Thune's Phase IV Farm Bill Rollout – S. 1479

Livestock Disaster and Grazing Assistance

Background Information

Livestock Forage Program (LFP) Issues:

Under the current LFP rules a county must be categorized as D2 on the U.S. Drought Monitor for eight consecutive weeks. Livestock producers have provided that this eight-week eligibility period is too long, and that D2 conditions warrant that assistance is needed much sooner than after eight weeks.

Sen. Thune's LFP Fix:

- Using the U.S. Drought Monitor as a trigger for county eligibility, LFP provides monthly feed loss assistance payments, which are based on a feed-cost-per-head that is indexed to the price of corn for grazing livestock.
- Thune's bill would modify LFP language to allow a one-month payment when a county reaches the D2 (severe drought) category for four consecutive weeks, compared to eight weeks under current law.
- When a county reaches D2 for eight consecutive weeks, it would be eligible for another month's payment.
- Other payment categories for D3 (extreme drought) and D4 (exceptional drought) are unchanged under Thune's bill.
- An eligible livestock producer can receive a maximum of five months of LFP payments per head in one year.

Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) Issues:

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) headquarters has been very restrictive regarding eligibility for LIP due to weather-related livestock losses.

Improving LIP Coverage for Weather-Related Death Losses:

- LIP provides payments for eligible livestock deaths that are in excess of normal mortality rates and due to natural disasters, like blizzards, extreme heat, high winds, and certain other weather events.

- Thune's bill would strengthen LIP by specifying that livestock deaths, resulting from an eligible weather-related disease, be eligible for LIP if the death is verified as weather-related by a licensed veterinarian.
- It would also specify that USDA shall not use vaccination protocol, or lack of vaccination, with respect to livestock losses due to a weather-related disease, when it considers eligibility for LIP payments.
- Thune's fix should stop USDA from arbitrarily denying LIP to certain livestock producers who lose livestock due to weather-related diseases.

Modifying the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA):

Issue:

Under current FLPMA rules, ranchers with permits on Forest Service Grasslands are not granted the same rights as those who have grazing permits on Bureau of Land Management and Forest Service land.

Equalizing Grazing Rights on All Federal Lands:

- Thune's bill would fix the Forest Service Grasslands disparity and ensure ranchers who have grazing agreements on Forest Service Grasslands are treated the same as permittees on other federal lands.
- This modification would allow Forest Service Grassland permittees:
 - The right to 10-year permits.
 - First priority for receipt of a new permit.
 - Entitlement to written notice of any permit violations and an opportunity to achieve compliance before cancellation or suspension proceedings related to the permit.
 - Except in cases of emergency, no permit cancellation without two years' prior notification.