

Mrs. KENNELLY. Mr. Speaker, I have noticed we do have a great deal on the plate obviously because we are going to finish and go on August break next week.

We have heard that the DOD, the Agriculture, the foreign operations, the legislative branch and the immigration conferences might also come up. Could the gentleman address the possibility of those conference reports?

Mr. DELAY. If the gentlewoman will yield further, certainly the Committee on Appropriations of the House is working as hard as they can to see that that happens. We are trying to get as many appropriations bills to the President as quickly as possible in anticipation of adjourning on October 4.

Mrs. KENNELLY. So the above mentioned will be going to conference, or the gentleman is going to try to see if they will go to conference?

Mr. DELAY. If the gentlewoman will continue to yield, we certainly want to go to conference on those bills any way that we can next week so that we can stay on our schedule.

Mrs. KENNELLY. I thank the distinguished majority whip.

ADJOURNMENT TO MONDAY, JULY 29, 1996

Mr. DELAY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that when the House adjourns today it adjourn to meet at 12:30 p.m. on Monday next for morning hour debates.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

DISPENSING WITH CALENDAR WEDNESDAY BUSINESS ON WEDNESDAY NEXT

Mr. DELAY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the business in order under the Calendar Wednesday rule be dispensed with on Wednesday next.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

AGRICULTURAL MARKET TRANSITION ACT AMENDMENTS

Mr. COMBEST. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Agriculture be discharged from further consideration of the bill (H.R. 3900) to amend the Agricultural Market Transition Act to provide greater planting flexibility, and for other purposes, and ask for its immediate consideration in the House.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

Mr. DE LA GARZA. Mr. Speaker, reserving the right to object, I yield to the gentleman from Texas [Mr. COMBEST] for an explanation of the bill.

Mr. COMBEST. I appreciate the gentleman yielding.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 3900 is a short and simple bill to address two problems related to the implementation of the 1996 farm bill, or the Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act. This bill has been the subject of many staff discussions between Republicans and Democrats on the House Agriculture Committee and with staff of the Department of Agriculture. I have personally visited with my good friend, Secretary Dan Glickman, about the first part of this bill and he supports making this change.

The first part of the bill simply allows farmers to plant a secondary crop of fruits or vegetables on their farm program acreage following a crop which has failed earlier in the year. This practice, referred to as ghost acres, has been allowed for several years but is being disallowed this year due to the interpretation of the new farm bill by USDA. Allowing this practice clarifies the intent of Congress and does not violate the spirit of any agreements made on the issue of planting flexibility under the new farm bill.

It is unfortunate that the passage of this legislation has become necessary and many of us believe that this problem could have been more easily resolved by a more appropriate interpretation of this provision by USDA. Language very similar to this was recently inserted into the Agriculture appropriations bill on the Senator floor. However, enactment of this change is needed now to allow farmers to get their crops into the field immediately.

The second provision of H.R. 3900 requires the issuance of new regulations by the Department of Agriculture for the Conservation Reserve Program by September 15. This requirement is needed because rural Americans have already waited too long to hear what the details of the new CRP program will be and need to make decisions as to the future use of their land.

Mr. Speaker, this bill has bipartisan support in both Houses of Congress and I urge its immediate adoption.

Mr. DE LA GARZA. I thank the gentleman.

Mr. Speaker, further reserving the right to object, I yield to the gentleman from Texas [Mr. STENHOLM].

(Mr. STENHOLM asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. STENHOLM. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I strongly support this unanimous-consent request.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, the Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996 contains a provision under section 118 which prohibits the planting of most fruit and vegetable crops on contract acreage, with three narrow exceptions. The primary intent of this provision is to prevent the subsidization of fruit and vegetable production in competition with traditionally nonsubsidized producers of these crops, yet allow for the same flexibility to plant fruits, vegetables, or other commodities as

was allowed in the last farm bill, the Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act of 1990. Rather than leave the issue open for interpretation, this bill more clearly defines the parameters under which farmers can plant a second crop without incurring an acre-for-acre reduction in their market transition payment.

In Texas, blackeyed peas are historically grown on failed cotton acreage. They make for an excellent followup crop to cotton compared to other crops, because they more readily adapt to the herbicides used in cotton planting. More importantly, blackeyed peas allow producers an opportunity to grow a crop that: First, requires considerably less water during times of drought; second, serves as an excellent ground cover, even if they only get a few weeks growth; third, assists with fertilization for next year's crop by contributing nitrogen to the soil, and fourth, provides lenders additional incentive to work with difficult credit situations like many farmers are experiencing now. Most States have similar cropping substitutes. Maybe it goes without saying, but every true Texan knows that any good luck throughout the year can easily be traced back to those traditional servings of blackeyed peas on New Year's Day. If this year's farm bill is really about flexibility, it is important that producers who operate outside those counties currently designated as double cropping regions, but who have traditionally been able to plant a commodity in lieu of a failed program crop, continue to have that opportunity. I am confident that it was not the plan by the authors of this farm bill to prohibit or restrict planting options relative to the past, and I feel certain that their aim was, at a bare minimum, to maintain the producer's freedom to farm his land at 1990 levels.

With the passing of this bill, we also encourage the Secretary of Agriculture to provide specific guidance to those producers who are considering bringing their land back into production from the Conservation Reserve Program. I understand the excessive workload that the Department is facing in issuing all the rules and regulations associated with this farm bill's implementation and the staffs of all those agencies involved should be commended for the long hours and headaches they have endured this summer—but it is very important that the eligibility requirements be determined and announced as soon as is reasonably possible so that CRP contract holders can know what to expect.

I support this bill and urge my colleagues to do the same.

Mr. DE LA GARZA. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 3900.

This bill will give the U.S. Department of Agriculture much needed direction in the interpretation of the Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996—FAIR Act—which we passed earlier this year.

H.R. 3900 is very simple. First, it reaffirms the Department's ability to continue the practice of ghost acres. Under prior farm bills, producers who suffered a natural disaster could plant a second crop of their choosing without having any impact on their participation in commodity programs. This practice allowed producers the ability to try to recoup some of their losses when Mother Nature was in an unkind mood.

The second provision in H.R. 3900 will require the Department to issue regulations by

September 15, 1996 to implement the Conservation Reserve Program which was amended by the FAIR Act. Producers and landowners in many parts of the country are wondering what the parameters of the new program will be and this provision will spur the Department on to work out the new regulations in a timely fashion.

Mr. ROBERTS. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 3900 which requires the USDA to publish its regulations governing the Conservation Reserve Program by September 1, 1996. Since its inception in 1985, the CRP has been a valuable tool for America's farmers. The CRP allows producers to protect fragile, highly erodible land from further deterioration by signing contracts to remove the land from production and place it under a managed conservation practice in exchange for fixed annual payments. While the CRP has achieved considerable reductions in wind erosion, it also provides excellent wildlife habitat for pheasants, quail, and other animals that inhabit the American plains.

Mr. Speaker, I am concerned that the regulations governing the future of the CRP have been repeatedly delayed by the USDA. Farmers need to know all of the details of the Federal agricultural policies that affect their ability to make commonsense farm management and production decisions. For weeks I have been hopeful that the USDA would issue its policy guidelines regarding the future of the CRP so that farmers could have full knowledge of the rules that will govern their program participation before they signed up for the 7-year farm program.

Unfortunately, in the more than 3 months that have passed since the new farm bill was enacted, USDA has provided only the barest of details. While the USDA has allowed CRP contract holders to extend their contracts for an additional year, farmers have no certainty regarding the long-term future of the CRP. With the world currently experiencing a grain supply shortage, many farmers worry that the CRP will be abandoned completely. At the same time, others worry that continuing to extend the CRP on a year-to-year basis discourages farmers from doing what they do best—feed a hungry and troubled world.

Mr. Speaker, farmers need long-term guidance from the USDA so they can make crucial production decisions. The new farm bill required that the USDA publish its CRP regulations within 90 days of passage—they are already 2 weeks past that deadline. With farmers already preparing to plant next year's wheat crop this fall, it is important that they know what the CRP rules will be both for next year and for the years to come.

The CRP debate has dragged on for long enough. America's farmers deserved an answer long before now. They should not have to wait any longer.

Mr. DE LA GARZA. Mr. Speaker, I withdraw my reservation of objection.

□ 1315

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. TORKILDSEN). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

The Clerk read the bill, as follows:

H.R. 3900

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

Sec. 1 Increased Planting Flexibility.—Section 118 of the Agricultural Market Transition Act (7 U.S.C. 7218) is amended by adding the following new paragraph to subsection (b)(2):

“(D) by a producer on contract acreage following a crop that fails due to conditions beyond the producer's control.”.

Sec. 2. Conforming Amendment.—Subsection 118(b)(2) is amended:

(a) in paragraph (B), by striking “or”; and
(b) in clause (ii) of paragraph (C), by striking “vegetable.” and inserting “vegetable; or”.

Sec. 3. Conservation Reserve Program Regulations.—Not later than September 15, 1996, the Secretary shall issue regulations to implement the Conservation Reserve Program (16 U.S.C. 3831 et seq.), as amended by section 332 of the Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996 (Pub. L. 104-127, April 4, 1996).

AMENDMENT OFFERED BY MR. COMBEST

Mr. COMBEST. Mr. Speaker, I offer an amendment.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. TORKILDSEN). The Clerk will report the amendment.

The Clerk read as follows:

Amendment offered by Mr. COMBEST:

On page 2 Line 7 strike “in” and insert “at the end of”.

Mr. COMBEST. Mr. Speaker, I would just mention this is strictly technical. It is to further clarify in the amendment a misinterpretation that had been earlier made, and it is purely technical and clarifying in nature.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Texas [Mr. COMBEST].

The amendment was agreed to.

The bill was ordered to be engrossed and read a third time, was read the third time, and passed, and a motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. COMBEST. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on H.R. 3900.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. WHITE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H. Res. 488.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Washington?

There was no objection.

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of May 12, 1995, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Connecticut [Ms. DELAURO] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Ms. DELAURO addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana [Mr. BURTON] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. BURTON addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Colorado [Mrs. SCHROEDER] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mrs. SCHROEDER addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California [Mr. RIGGS] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. RIGGS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas [Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

STATUS REPORT ON THE CURRENT LEVELS OF ON-BUDGET SPENDING AND REVENUES FOR FISCAL YEAR 1997 AND FOR THE 5-YEAR PERIOD FISCAL YEAR 1997 THRU FISCAL YEAR 2001

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. KASICH] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. KASICH. Mr. Speaker, to facilitate application of sections 302 and 311 of the Congressional Budget Act, I am transmitting a status report on the current levels of on-budget spending and revenues for fiscal year 1997 and for the 5-year period fiscal year 1997 through fiscal year 2001.

The term “current level” refers to the amounts of spending and revenues estimated for each fiscal year based on laws enacted or awaiting the President's signature as of July 22, 1996.

The first table in the report compares the current level of total budget authority, outlays, and revenues with the aggregate levels set by House Concurrent Resolution 178, the concurrent resolution on the budget for fiscal year 1997. These levels are consistent with the recent revisions made pursuant to section 606(e) of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974 as amended by the Contract with America Advancement Act—Public Law 204-121—which provides additional new budget authority