



Farm Bill

Background

The 2018 Farm Bill re-authorization is currently in the conference committee stage, as the House and Senate attempt to reconcile differences in their respective passed bills. There are a number of provisions in both versions of the Farm Bill that directly impact the forest products industry and the hardwood sector.

Issues

- **Export Promotion:** The Market Access (MAP) and Foreign Market Development (FMD) programs are authorized and funded by the Farm Bill. These are successful programs with proven track records that help open markets for U.S. agricultural products overseas and are crucial to the funding of the American Hardwood Export Council (AHEC). HF stands firm in our advocacy that both MAP and FMD should be not only reauthorized in the new Farm Bill, but also at mandatory funding levels in order to ensure consistent and adequate funding throughout the life of the 5-year Farm Bill without going through an annual appropriations process.

Both the House and Senate versions of the 2018 Farm Bill fully fund and reauthorize MAP and FMD and restructure the programs to protect them from future funding baseline elimination.

- **Federal Forest Management:** The FY 2018 Omnibus federal government spending deal made some U.S. federal forest management improvements, but we support additional reform measures in the 2018 re-authorization of the farm bill, particularly the House version which includes a number of new provisions that will help the Forest Service better manage forestlands, meet regional timber sale objectives and protect forest health. More efficient Federal timber sales need to be executed more expeditiously so that project work can keep up with the forest management needs of our increasingly overgrown federal forest tracts.
- **Energy:** Initiatives to promote biomass energy and deployment of heating and power systems that rely on wood-based biomass fuel are important to the Hardwood business sector. An emerging issue for our industry is declining markets for wood residuals due to warm winters and relatively low fossil fuel prices which have reduced demand for biomass heating fuels. One program to help address these needs is the Community Wood Energy Program (CWEP) that encourages schools, hospitals, community centers, and other public and private institutions in rural areas to convert to heating with highly efficient biomass thermal systems that rely on wood pellets or wood chips. The Hardwood Federation supports the House version of the Farm Bill which authorizes the program at a much higher level (\$25 million) than the \$5 million in the Senate version and expands the scope of the program to include grants for constructing innovative wood products facilities.
- **Tall Wood Buildings:** Provisions of the Timber Innovation Act (TIA) are included in both the Senate and House-passed Farm Bill versions. TIA promotes the use of wood in taller structures through research and development initiatives and grants. The Hardwood Federation supports the stronger TIA language in the Senate bill (S. 3042) and will be advocating for its provisions to be included in the final 2018 Farm Bill conference report.

- **Sustainability of Private Forestlands:** The Farm Bill offers woodland owners a number of incentives to keep their forests as forests. Programs include those that offer landowners payments on an annual basis to encourage conservation activities on the land or one-time payments for specific projects or for a long-term easement. Programs in the Farm Bill Forestry Title include the Environmental Quality Incentives Program known as EQIP and the Conservation Stewardship Program.

Hardwood Federation Position

The Hardwood Federation advocates for full or increased funding for all the programs listed above as well as elimination to regulatory barriers that impede full implementation.