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Wisconsin Farmers Union President comments on Farm Bill

Wisconsin Farmers Union President Darin Von Ruden gave the following comments today, in response to the passage of the farm bill:

The passage of the farm bill is welcome news in farm country, where net farm income is at its lowest point in more than a decade. Wisconsin Farmers Union appreciates the tireless work of Senate and House agriculture leaders and their staff to resolve differences in this incredibly important piece of legislation.

Farmers Union is pleased to see continued support for conservation programs like the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQUIP) and the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). We are also encouraged by the reauthorization of the Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network, a program that is direly needed given the current economic and mental health crises plaguing rural America, and we urge funding of that to be a priority in the next appropriations cycle.

WFU is disappointed to see the bill does not contain Senator Chuck Grassley's (R-IA) proposal to strengthen payment limitations for Title I programs. WFU supported the payment limits, which would have ensured that federal commodity payments are directed only to farmers actively participating in both the labor and risk of a farm operation.

Unfortunately, the passage of the Farm Bill isn't a silver bullet that will solve the farm crisis that has put hundreds of Wisconsin dairy farmers out of business this year. The agricultural community and political leaders still have important work to do to create meaningful solutions that will dig farmers out from under the depressed farm economy.

The replacement of the dairy Margin Protection Program (MPP) with Dairy Margin Coverage (DMC) is a welcome change for smaller-scale producers. WFU will continue to advocate for further improvements to dairy policy.

WFU appreciates the bipartisan approach to the farm bill and looks forward to working with Congress to continue to address the challenges being faced by rural America. An important priority for the next Congress will be addressing mega-mergers in ag markets and the lack of meaningful competition.

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Wisconsin Farmers Union, a member-driven organization, is committed to enhancing the quality of life for family farmers, rural communities, and all people through educational opportunities, cooperative endeavors, and civic engagement. Learn more at www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com.