Will 2023 US ‘Farm Bill’ address escalating issues of agricultural innovation, climate change and exports?

With Congress back in full swing, agriculture advocates and policymakers are staring down a fast approaching deadline. On September 30, the Farm Bill — a must pass, often bipartisan piece of legislation that governs the U.S. farm and nutrition programs — is set to expire.

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While it is unlikely that the 2023 Farm Bill will be truly transformational—it probably will not overhaul crop insurance or nutrition programs, for example—the proposals embedded in these bills have the potential to make real change at the margins for both U.S. producers and the climate. Even more promising, unless otherwise noted, each of these proposals are bipartisan.

1. Bolstering USDA research programs

Among a full slate of partisan disagreements, science and innovation have the potential to cross party divides. With public agricultural R&D spending at a 20-year low and producers facing increased global competition and new threats, such as climate change, geopolitical risk, and supply chain crises, new investments in the Farm Bill’s research programs are long overdue.

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5. Investing in climate-smart agriculture systems and measurement

Climate is one of the more divisive issues that will plague lawmakers in farm bill negotiations. As a growing amount of government funding is directed toward incentivizing “climate-smart” agriculture practices, quantifying, verifying, or otherwise measuring their environmental benefits and tradeoffs becomes increasingly important. To this end, several new marker bills aim to prioritize funding for improved climate-smart tools, technologies, practices, and management systems.

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