

A Strong Farm Bill Supports a Strong Rural America

Developing a new farm bill presents an opportunity to address many needs facing rural America and farmers and ranchers. A strong farm bill allows producers and their community bank lenders to work together for long-term business planning purposes to ensure producers remain viable regardless of their financial challenges or the agricultural economy's outlook.

Serving the Ag Sector – Community banks are vital providers of credit to rural America, providing the majority of agricultural credit from the banking industry – over 80 percent of loans secured by farm real estate and nearly 75 percent of operating debt. Community banks excel in financing small farmers and ranchers, making 90 percent of bank farmland loans under \$500,000.

Presence in Rural America – Community banks represent 97 percent of all banks, with \$2.6 trillion in assets and \$2.2 trillion in deposits. Community banks strongly represent rural areas with 72 percent of all bank offices and two-thirds of all bank deposits. They are four times more likely to operate offices in rural counties and remain the only banking presence in one-third of all U.S. counties. In 2021, over 4,000 banks distributed loans to the farm sector.

Protect & Enhance Community Bank Service to Rural America

- Provide a commodity safety net that protects producers regardless of economic conditions.
- Ensure crop insurance programs are available to as many producers as possible.
- Increase USDA guaranteed farm real estate loan limits to \$3.5 MM and \$3 MM for guaranteed operating loans. Land prices have risen dramatically as have production costs.
- Require quick USDA approval of small loans (< \$1 MM) (*USDA Express Act HR 5877*).

Oppose FCS Non-Farm Financing & Reduced Compliance Requests

- The Farm Credit System (FCS), a *government sponsored enterprise* that competes against private sector lenders, has over \$500 billion in assets and if labeled a bank would be one of the top 10 banks in the U.S. FCS's effective tax rate is only 2.4 percent.
- Oppose **non-farm** financing authorities to dramatically expand FCS lending for 'essential community facilities' while eliminating its regulator's approval of ECF loans. Community banks already make these loans.
- Oppose FCS financing **non-farm** businesses with de-minimis services to aquaculture.
- Oppose granting FCS enhanced powers to provide non-farm equity financing and to make home loans in towns with populations above 2,500 people.
- Allow community banks the same Sec. 1071 (small business data collection) compliance burden as granted FCS. Exam frequency for FCS institutions should not be reduced unless also provided for community banks.