

Included in this agricultural industry are banana, guava, papaya, avocados, and wide range of tropical specialty fruits such as rambutan, lychee, and longan.

While the total acreage and the total number of farms increased in 2007, these growers are small farmers, averaging less than 5 acres per farm in production. These farmers have limited resources and do not have the means to conduct the R & D to support their industry. This funding provides means for stakeholder-driven research and development in support of the industry.

The main problems faced by Hawaii tropical fruit growers include pest management strategies, phytosanitary export protocols, and refined market information to guide production.

For example, two major Hawaii Tropical Specialty Fruits, rambutan and longan, are grown for export to the U.S. mainland but face stiff competition with foreign countries, such as from Thailand, where labor and other input costs are much lower. Research funds have been devoted to finding best management practices for post-harvest handling of rambutan and longan to identify the fungal diseases that damage fruit and accelerate spoilage during shipment. Research, done collaboratively with USDA Agricultural Research Service, has identified methods to extend rambutan and longan shelf-life and to maintain higher quality fruit during shipment, giving Hawaii growers a competitive advantage over cheap foreign competition.

Hawaii has an image of being a paradise. Hawaii is beautiful, but at the same time we are also very vulnerable to any downturn in the U.S. or international economies. Our biggest industry, tourism, has been hit hard by the recession. Our geographic isolation means that everything is more expensive, including inputs for agriculture.

My district, which includes all of Hawaii (7 inhabited islands) except for the city of Honolulu, is largely rural and most of our residents would like it to stay that way. We have a long agricultural tradition and history and are struggling to adjust to changing markets without the safety net that most states that grow program crops (like cotton, rice, and corn) enjoy. Despite the fact that Hawaii farmers are not able to take advantage of many of the programs that benefit mainland farmers, I have consistently supported farmers throughout the country and simply ask that my fellow members also support Hawaii's hard-working farmers.

AGRICULTURE, RURAL DEVELOPMENT, FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2010.

SPEECH OF

HON. BOB ETHERIDGE

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 8, 2009

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 2997) making appropriations for Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies programs for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2010, and for other purposes:

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Chair, I rise tonight in reluctant support of this legislation. While H.R.

2997, the Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act of 2010 provides critical funding for the United States Department of Agriculture, including important initiatives that I helped put in the 2008 Farm Bill, it falls short for some rural Americans.

USDA funding is critical to our nation, and H.R. 2997 ensures USDA can continue its good work. This bill provides more than \$2.8 billion for rural development, 4 percent more than in 2009, for investments such as rural housing, water projects, community facilities and economic development efforts. These rural initiatives not only sustain our rural communities, but also create new opportunities for growth and development in our nation's small towns. At a time when our rural economies are suffering, this funding provides a desperately needed hand up, and a way to spur continued growth and maintenance for existing infrastructure.

To protect American agriculture, the safety of our nation's food supply, and to spur the continued research that makes our land grant universities the pinnacle of the world's agriculture research centers, the bill provides nearly \$1.2 billion for the Agricultural Research Service \$1.3 billion for important agricultural research at the National Institute for Food and Agriculture, and \$881 million to fund programs that protect American agriculture against animal and plant diseases. As the representative of the district that contains the main campus of North Carolina State University, one of our nation's finest land grant and agricultural research institutions, I am proud that the research funds within the bill will continue to allow these students and researchers to do their good work for American agriculture and the consumers who eat the healthy food American farmers produce, here at home and across the globe.

Conservation efforts were sadly diminished under the last Administration, but this bill provides \$980 million for conservation programs at USDA, 8 percent above the President's request and 1 percent above 2009. Funding provided in H.R. 2997 for the Natural Resources Conservation Service will improve service in the field, and deliver conservation to protect the environment. The bill rejects \$267 million in proposed cuts to farm bill conservation priorities, including the Wetlands Reserve Program, Farmland Protection Program, and Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program. These initiatives ensure that our children inherit the legacy of a clean environment and a healthy rural America. They deserve no less than what we enjoyed growing up.

To help the most needy in our society, H.R. 2997 provides more than \$7.5 billion to provide proper nutrition to mothers and their children, supporting healthy food for up to an additional 700,000 women, infants, and children. The funds provided in this bill will help bring needed WIC assistance to more than ten million people. It also sets aside \$125 million for the upcoming WIC reauthorization, including a number of program improvements such as increasing fruit and vegetable vouchers, implementing the electronic benefit transfer system, and expanding the breast feeding peer counseling program.

There are many good things in this bill. But while the bill provides basic support for our nation's farmers, it leaves out some of the farmers most in need and may harm many of our livestock and poultry producers.

Mr. Chair, the people who live in my district are suffering. With double digit unemployment in every county in my district, we are experiencing some of the worst economic conditions in the nation. My farmers are suffering as well. I have poultry growers and livestock producers who are on the verge of losing their homes. This bill should include Section 32 funding, that I requested, for economic disaster assistance for these producers, producers who work hard to raise thousands of birds for our family tables but are not eligible for any traditional assistance at USDA. This provision would have helped nearly a thousand poultry producers in a dozen states who have lost their contracts. These folks have nowhere else to turn for a bridge that will allow them to keep their farms. When we are giving bailouts to Wall Street and the auto industry, we owe it to rural America to lend a hand to those who reside on Main Street. But, unfortunately, the committee did not include this provision.

I am also concerned about a provision put into this bill that extends a ban on imports of processed poultry meat from China. This is already threatening to hurt not only U.S. poultry producers, but also pork and beef producers who depend on the Chinese market. While I share Chairwoman DELAURO's desire to make sure that our food is safe, arbitrary restrictions do not forward our goals. Congress should rely on the food safety efforts of USDA and FDA, and insist on continued oversight of these agencies. We must work to improve Chinese food safety in a manner that protects U.S. consumers, but that is also consistent with our international obligations on fair trade. Singling out our largest trading partner may lead to retaliation that would threaten an already suffering industry. It is my hope that this provision will be removed from the bill during conference.

Mr. Chair, I will vote for H.R. 2997, and I urge my colleagues to do the same. But I also urge those in Leadership, and the Chair of this committee, to think of North Carolina's poultry farmers, and livestock producers across the country, as this bill goes to conference. I hope to work together in the future to ensure that future legislation is more inclusive of all of our farmers and people in need.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. BRAD ELLSWORTH

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 9, 2009

Mr. ELLSWORTH. Madam Speaker, on Tuesday, July 7, 2009, I missed rollcall votes Nos. 478 and 479 and on Wednesday, July 8, 2009, I missed rollcall votes Nos. 480, 481, 482, 483, 484, and 488. I missed these rollcall votes due to having the flu.

Had I been present for rollcall 478, on motion to suspend the rules and agree to H. Con. Res. 135, I would have voted "aye."

Had I been present for rollcall 479, on motion to suspend the rules and pass H.R. 1129, I would have voted "aye."

Had I been present for rollcall 480, on agreeing to the resolution H. Res. 610 providing for consideration of H.R. 2965, I would have voted "aye."

Had I been present for rollcall 481, on motion to suspend the rules and pass, as amended H.R. 1278, I would have voted "aye."