



## COMMITTEE FOR STRONGER RURAL COMMUNITIES

# THE IMPORTANCE OF THE FARM BILL AND REP. COLLIN PETERSON'S LEADERSHIP TO RURAL AMERICA: **A REPORT CARD**

## MINNESOTA'S 7TH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Conditions of the farm economy have been challenging recently, with poor market prices, loss of overseas trade and severe weather all contributing to reduced net farm income over a period of several years. With so many economic contributors outside of their control, to sustain

operations, manage risk, and help maintain domestic supplies of food, fiber and fuel for the nation, farmers rely on a comprehensive Farm Bill, written by Congress about once every five years.

The most recent farm bill is the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018, a bipartisan bill negotiated by Congress and signed into law by President Donald J. Trump on Dec. 20, 2018.

Rep. Collin Peterson, MN-07, served as a chief author of the bipartisan 2018 Farm Bill. Today, Peterson serves as Chairman of the House Agriculture Committee, and he is responsible for both overseeing implementation of the current farm bill – through hearings and communications with the Administration – and preparing the Agriculture Committee for the next farm bill. Rural America needs Rep. Collin Peterson at the helm to represent our interests every day and as work begins the next Farm Bill.

### **WHY REP. PETERSON?**

The Committee for Stronger Rural Communities believes rural America needs champions in Congress; lawmakers who understand the risks and rewards of raising a family or operating a business in a rural community. Rep. Collin Peterson has proven himself to be an unwavering advocate for the families, businesses and farmers who reside in Minnesota's 7th Congressional District, the state's most-rural district. He has been the chief author of more bipartisan Farm Bills than any other member of the House of Representatives. **It is for these reasons that CSRC strongly supports Rep. Collin Peterson's reelection.**

## WHY AGRICULTURE MATTERS TO GREATER MINNESOTA

Production agriculture, whether livestock or row crops, is big business in Minnesota. The state's agricultural production was valued at \$17.1 billion in 2019, and represents Minnesota's top export among all of the state's industries.

Minnesota's agricultural production and processing industries generate more than \$112 billion annually in total economic impact and support more than 431,000 jobs.

The state is first in production of sugar beets, green peas and wild rice, second in the nation for production of sweet corn for processing, third in the nation for growing soybeans, dry beans, sunflower and oats. Other major top-selling crops include corn, rye, wheat, canola and alfalfa.

In livestock, Minnesota is the nation's top turkey producer, followed closely by hogs.

## WHY AGRICULTURE MATTERS TO MINNESOTA'S 7TH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Fewer parts of the country are as dominated by agriculture as MN-07. The sprawling 7th Congressional District is the chief provider of several of the state's top-selling, highest-value agricultural products, including sugar beets, corn and soybeans.

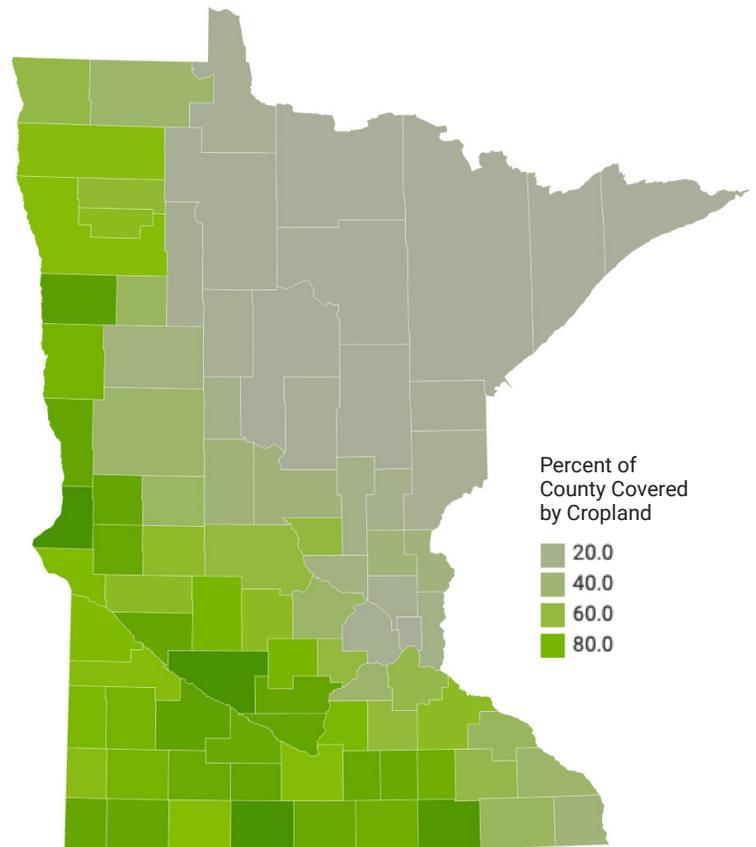
## LONG TERM OUTLOOK

The 2018 Farm Bill specifically renewed risk management tools, developed overseas markets and enhanced environmental stewardship programs that farmers and livestock producers need to survive a prolonged and painful downturn in farm income and be sustainable. However, in its request for Fiscal Year 2021, the Trump Administration slashed support for farmers, notably in crop insurance, disaster assistance, conservation spending and other programs.

In his role as Chairman of the House Agriculture Committee, Rep. Peterson worked to overturn the President's budget recommendations and restore funding that farmers and livestock producers count on in many different ways.

Today's Farm Bill contains much-needed programs to help provide market certainty and support for farmers, ranchers and rural communities. The law provides expanded, affordable risk management options for dairy farmers, as well as permanent, mandatory funding for priorities like the Local Food and Farmers Market Promotion Program, Value-Added Producer Grants, the Beginning Farmers and Rancher Development Program, and Organic Research.

Other issues remain for implementing the existing Farm Bill and preparing the next, including dealing with the huge hole in farm income left by the loss of overseas trade markets. While Market Facilitation Program payments created some safety net for that trade loss, farmers want to earn their income from the market, not the government. Likewise, Congress is expected



Source: USDA and MPR News

## STRENGTHENING THE DAIRY SAFETY NET

Among all sectors of production agriculture, dairy may have the most difficulty struggling through a period of chronically low prices. The Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 made an \$800 million investment in the Margin Protection Program and lifted the cap on livestock insurance expenditures. That program was re-named the Dairy Margin Coverage in the Farm Bill and ushered in by Rep. Peterson, who built on the initial investment by offering new coverage levels for the first five million pounds of production, cutting premiums larger producers pay on catastrophic coverage, among other significant changes to benefit producers.

to address high farm debt that has accumulated the last four years, which in inflation-adjusted dollars is nearing the 1980 all-time record.

These pending issues and others require an experienced, knowledgeable and effective lawmaker with a record of bipartisan effectiveness — like Chairman Peterson.

## A BIPARTISAN APPROACH: WHAT THEY SAID

### AGWEEK

“Collin and his team delivered across the board,” said Rep. Mike Conaway, R-Texas, then the top Republican on the House Agriculture Committee. Conaway says it was a team effort, and they ended up with a good bipartisan farm bill.

— *AgWeek*, [Dec. 18, 2018](#)

“Collin Peterson is a powerful voice for Minnesota agriculture and losing his leadership in Washington would be a blow to farm families and our rural economy ... We value the fact that Collin Peterson makes farm policy based on what’s good for agriculture and farmers vs. what’s good for partisan political interests.”

### CROOKSTON TIMES

— *Op-ed published [Sept. 23, 2020](#), in the **Crookston (Minn.) Times**, signed by Minnesota Barley Growers Association, Minnesota Corn Growers Association, Minnesota Chicken and Egg Association, Minnesota Farm Bureau Federation, Minnesota Farmers Union, Minnesota Milk Producers Association, Minnesota Pork Producers Association, Minnesota Turf Seed Council and the Red River Valley Sugarbeet Growers*

## LEGISLATIVE OVERSIGHT AND ACTION

**DISASTER RELIEF:** Critical to agricultural producers is the ability to continue operations after a weather disaster, whether it’s prevented planting, freeze, too much rain or flooding, or too little in the form of drought. In February 2020, Chairman Peterson worked across the aisle to deliver a bipartisan package of aid for farmers in the Red River Valley hit by two years of weather disasters. The \$285 million in disaster assistance for sugar beet cooperatives across the country was negotiated and announced jointly with Sen. John Hoeven, North Dakota Republican.

**COVID19 AND MEATPACKING:** Chairman Peterson was instrumental in negotiating a means of keeping meatpacking plants operating -- maintaining worker safety while also maintaining both a market for livestock producers and a stable meat supply for American consumers. In April 2020, Peterson announced a plan at a JBS USA plant in Worthington, Minn., impacted by more than 500 positive COVID19 tests among its workers, to keep the plant operating. The plan was worked out in conjunction with Sonny Perdue,

Agriculture Secretary for President Trump. Congressman Collin Peterson “took the bull by the horns” to bring the parties together to get the job done.

**ETHANOL:** The production of corn ethanol is both an economic boon to rural America and a crucial move toward energy independence for the nation. When President Trump’s Environmental Protection Agency began handing out waivers to Big Oil corporations -- allowing international petroleum conglomerates to disregard the federally-mandated Renewable Fuels Standard -- it was Peterson who stood up for ethanol plants and the corn farmers who rely on ethanol demand for their corn, and urged Trump to end the waivers. Peterson also wrote a bipartisan letter to the Administration to end unfair trade practices with Brazil that permit Brazilian ethanol producers into the U.S. market with no restrictions, while Brazil imposes a 20-percent tariff on corn ethanol imported into that country. “Our farmers can’t take another trade war. We’ve already been dealing with economic uncertainty and loss of overseas markets due to other trade fights,” Peterson said.

## LEGISLATIVE RECORD: HIGHLIGHTS OF THE 2018 FARM BILL

|                                      |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| <p><b>Farm Operating Loans</b></p>   |  <p>Help producers pay for operating expenses with direct (up to \$400,000) and federally-guaranteed loans (up to \$1.75 million).</p>   |
| <p><b>Marketing Assistance</b></p>   |  <p>Provide interim financing at harvest time for producers to meet cash flow needs without having to sell commodities at harvest-time lows.</p>   |
| <p><b>Federal Crop Insurance</b></p> |  <p>Offers hundreds of different insurance products, including coverage for production loss, revenue loss, price decline and more. Covers row crops, livestock, specialty crops, organics, dairy, grazing land and more.</p> |

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| <b>Dairy Margin Coverage Program</b>   |  <p>Replaces the Margin Protection Program for Dairy. Offers protection to dairy producers when the difference between the all-milk price and the average feed cost falls below a certain dollar amount selected by the producer.</p>                   |
| <b>Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP)</b> |  <p>Provides assistance to eligible owners of livestock and producers of honeybees and farm-raised fish for losses due to disease, adverse weather, or other conditions not covered by Livestock Forage Disaster or Livestock Indemnity programs.</p>   |
| <b>Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP)</b>                                 |  <p>Provides financial assistance to producers of certain eligible crops for which catastrophic risk protection plan of insurance is not available when low yields, loss of inventory or prevented planting occur due to an eligible cause of loss.</p> |
| <b>Farm Ownership Loans</b>  |  <p>Help producers become owner-operators of family farms as well as improve and expand current operations. Direct loans of up to \$600,000 and federally guaranteed loans of up to \$1.75 million.</p>   |
| <b>Conservation Reserve Program</b>  |  <p>Provides farm income through rental agreements to preserve soil, water and habitat quality by removing environmentally sensitive and low-value land from agriculture production.</p>  |

## CONCLUSION

In today’s Congress, there are few truly bipartisan lawmakers. Rep. Collin Peterson is one of them. That’s true in part because of the nature of his district’s needs – good farm policy is based on bipartisan understanding and compromise. It is also just who he is.

Peterson’s deep knowledge of agricultural policy is second to none in Washington, DC. He does not need to be “taught” the importance of particular regulations, or the urgency of action when disaster strikes. He does not need to be “told” the price of corn or soybeans. Instead, as the chief architect of the farm

bills that can make-or-break rural communities, he has proven himself to be a deeply-knowledgeable advocate for America’s farmers and ranchers and their families as well as the many, many businesses that rely on a thriving agricultural sector.

In conclusion, CSRC strongly believes that Rep. Peterson is the best choice in the U.S. House of Representatives to chair the Agriculture Committee because of his grasp and dedication to agriculture, and he is the best choice to represent Minnesota’s 7th Congressional District – a district where “agriculture is king” – in the Congress. 🌱



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CSRC is a federal SuperPac that promotes the election of federal candidates who support policies that strengthen our nation’s rural communities. For more information, please contact us at [contact@strongerruralcommunities.com](mailto:contact@strongerruralcommunities.com).