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Algae Agriculture Triumphs in Farm Bill Compromise

December, 12 / 2018

In a historic day for the algae industry, the U.S. Senate Tuesday [approved](#) a Farm Bill compromise that dramatically expands federal support for algae agriculture. The bill sets U.S. farm policy through 2023. It is expected to pass the House of Representatives as soon as today and receive President Trump's signature before Christmas.

Among the bill's more than 800 [pages](#) is a suite of provisions placing algae among the nation's top priorities for new crop deployment and providing support for the development of algae and related technologies in nutrient management, soil health, carbon recycling and other farm and rural applications.

The bill's key algae provisions include:

- **Crop Insurance**– Algae are explicitly added under the definition of “agricultural commodity” for the purposes of federal crop insurance programs, paving the way for federal crop insurance for algae production
- **Algae Agriculture Research Program**– Establishes a new USDA Algae Agriculture Research Program to address challenges in farm-scale algae production and support development of algae-based agriculture solutions
- **Biomass Crop Assistance Program**– Provides for the first time full eligibility to algae under the Biomass Crop Assistance Program. BCAP provides financial support to farmers for establishment, production and delivery of new biomass crops
- **Biobased Markets Program (BioPreferred)**– Directs USDA to establish methodology providing full credit for biobased content for products

from biologically recycled carbon. Current USDA methodology excludes biobased products from recycled carbon.

- **Biorefinery Assistance (9003 Loan Guarantee) Program** – Expands the section 9003 loan guarantee program to allow algae-based and other biorefinery projects for the manufacture of renewable chemicals and biobased products to qualify regardless of whether biofuels will be produced
- **Carbon Capture and Use** – Adds several provisions expanding CCU research, education and outreach at the Department of Agriculture

The bill also reauthorizes BCAP, BioPreferred, and the section 9003 loan guarantee program through 2023, though it strips BCAP of mandatory funding and marginally reduces 9003 mandatory funding levels.

It total, these provisions represent a dramatic advance in federal algae policy with the potential to greatly expand U.S. algae production and rapidly accelerate development and deployment of innovative algae agriculture technologies.

This remarkable outcome is the product of a more than year-long campaign by the ABO [Executive Policy Council](#) and the support of more than a dozen congressional offices, including key House and Senate farm bill leaders.

ABO particularly wishes to thank the following:

- Senate Agriculture Committee Chairman [Pat Roberts](#) and Ranking Member [Debbie Stabenow](#) championed several key provisions in the Senate bill and in conference negotiations with the House
- House Agriculture Committee Chairman [Mike Conaway](#) and Ranking Member [Collin Peterson](#) provided key support for several algae provisions as well
- [Congressional Algae Caucus](#) co-chairs [Scott Peters](#), [Darin LaHood](#), [Derek Kilmer](#) and [Andy Biggs](#) introduced the [Algae Agriculture Act](#), the landmark legislation that served as the original source of nearly all of the algae provisions included in the final Farm Bill. Reps Peters and LaHood also [wrote](#) to farm bill leaders calling for inclusion of Algae Agriculture Act provisions.
- [Will Hurd](#), [Matt Cartwright](#), and [Michelle Lujan Grisham](#) also co-sponsored the [Algae Agriculture Act](#), and Rep. Hurd provided key advocacy for inclusion of the algae crop insurance provision in the final farm bill package
- [Neal Dunn](#) introduced language in the House Committee hearing that [resulted](#) in inclusion of the Algae Agriculture Research Program. Senators [John Cornyn](#) and [Tom Udall](#) filed an [amendment](#) during Senate floor consideration of the farm bill outlining algae ag research program priorities that demonstrated key bipartisan, bicameral support for the proposal.
- Senators [Sheldon Whitehouse](#) and [Michael Bennet](#) led the charge on securing multiple provisions in support of Carbon Capture and Use
- Lloyd Ritter and the [Agriculture Energy Coalition](#) did remarkable work to rally [support](#) and secure reauthorization and funding of Energy Title programs – and the Energy Title policy fixes outlined above – at a time when many speculated that the Energy Title had run its [course](#). Thank you, Lloyd!

Many other congressional offices, ABO members, and other allies also played important roles in this historic effort. To one and all we offer our thanks. We look forward, as well, to working with USDA, Congress and the White House in implementing these transformative provisions.

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