

Since first coming to Congress, I have been fighting for the farmers and ranchers of Minnesota's First Congressional District. Agriculture production is vital to the economy of southern Minnesota and farming is the heart of our rural communities. As a member of the House Agricultural Committee, I have worked to ensure that the farm policies being made in Washington make sense for southern Minnesota's farmers and ranchers.

### **Supporting the Next Generation of Farmers**

With the average age of the U.S. farmer at 57 and in Minnesota at 55, we need to ensure that the next generation of family farmers has the support they need to continue providing a safe, abundant supply of food. That is why in October of 2011, I introduced bipartisan legislation that will revitalize rural America and encourage young people to take up farming operations and agricultural entrepreneurship. The bill, H.R. 3236, the *Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act of 2011*, would modify and improve upon existing farm programs to help reduce the large financial burden of setting up an agricultural business.

Family farms are paramount to the success of rural American and southern Minnesota and I will work tirelessly to make sure this initiative is included in the 2012 Farm Bill.

### **A New Farm Bill**

With the current Farm Bill set to expire at the end of September, we owe it to our farmers, ranchers, and those that rely on agriculture production, to enact a new Farm Bill before October

to avoid the uncertainty that comes with extensions or lame duck action. That is why last March, I led a group of 38 of my colleagues in sending a [letter to House leadership](#) calling on them to pass a new Farm Bill in 2012.

Crafting the Farm Bill is a bipartisan opportunity for Congress to make much needed updates to our nation's farm and agriculture policy. It's important that these policies work for you. Many of the initiatives I championed during the 2008 Farm Bill were brought to my attention by farmers in southern Minnesota. I would like to invite you to share your ideas for improving our farm and rural policy in the new Farm Bill. If you have ideas or suggestions on how to improve the Farm Bill, please contact Peder Kjeseth in my office at 507-206-0643.

### **2008 Farm Bill**

In 2007 and 2008, I championed the Farm Bill and worked to secure an override of the President's veto. The Farm Bill included several of the initiatives I fought for, including;

Language modeled after my Farm Flex amendment, which will allow producers in the Midwest to grow fruits and vegetables for processing on up to 75,000 acres, including 34,000 acres in Minnesota.

Nearly a dozen different provisions added to help beginning farmers and ranchers get their start in agriculture. These include a program to provide Conservation Reserve Program transition payments to encourage landowners who are taking land out of CRP and putting it back into production to sell or rent that land to a beginning farmer; a 10% set-aside within various conservation programs to specifically target money at new producers; a requirement that USDA target Risk Management Education at beginning farmers, so they can learn how best to use crop insurance; \$75 million in mandatory funding for the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program; and improvements to the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Down Payment Loan Program and the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Land Contract Program.

A provision that requires USDA to streamline its application process for conservation programs, making it easier for producers to enroll without having to complete redundant paperwork.

An amendment I offered requiring USDA to study the impact of rail service on rural America, particularly regarding agricultural inputs and commodities, renewable fuels, and coal.

An amendment I offered that requires USDA to allow producers to certify their eligibility for the Conservation Security Program at the same time they certify their farming operation as organic. This saves time, reduces paperwork, and helps farmers spend less time in the FSA office and more time in the fields.