

LBM INDUSTRY PRIORITIES IN THE FARM BILL

OBJECTIVE: As part of a final agreement on the farm bill, include provisions important to the lumber and building material (LBM) industry, including 1) federal forest management reforms, 2) promotion of tall wood building construction, and 3) ensuring fairness in federal buying of forest products.

BACKGROUND: The House of Representatives passed the *Agriculture Improvement Act (H.R. 2)* by a vote of 213-211 on June 21, a five-year bill that authorizes farm, agricultural, and food programs that are set to expire on September 30. The Senate followed suit by passing its own version of the legislation on June 28 by a vote of 86-11. The “Farm Bill” includes several provisions supported by NLBMDA and the LBM industry.

FEDERAL FOREST MANAGEMENT REFORMS: Record wildfires last year in the U.S. have brought attention to the need for reforms to the federal forest management system. Provisions included in the House-version of the farm bill allow for expedited salvage operations for dead and dying trees in areas burned by wildfire. It also requires reforestation of at least 75 percent of the burned area. In addition, both the House and Senate bills extend Good Neighbor Authority by allowing the U.S. Forest Service to enter into agreements with county governments. Currently, only state governments can enter into agreements to perform forest management services on National Forest System lands.

TALL WOOD BUILDINGS: Both the House and Senate versions include provisions from the Timber Innovation Act in the farm bill by promoting the construction of tall wood buildings. The House and Senate versions would accelerate the research and development of cross-laminated timber and other engineered wood for use in construction projects as well as provide grants for such projects. The grant funds must be matched by an equal amount of non-federal funds.

FAIRNESS IN FEDERAL BUYING OF FOREST PRODUCTS: The Senate-bill includes language that requires federal agencies to accept more methods of sustainably harvested forest products. Currently, the Department of Energy (DOE) only accepts accepting lumber certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) as suitable for federal purchasing. Lumber certified by the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) and the American Tree Farm System (ATFS) should also be considered sustainable and suitable for federal purchase by DOE as other federal agencies already accept SFI and ATFS certified products.

CURRENT STATUS: The House and Senate have appointed members to a conference committee, which will look to reach an agreement on final legislation that reconciles differences between the two chambers. A final vote is expected in September.

NLBMDA POSITION: NLBMDA supports provisions in the farm bill that include federal forest management reforms, efforts to advance tall wood building construction, and recognition of all wood certification systems that support sustainably managed forests.

REQUEST: As part of the farm bill conference report, include LBM industry priorities that promote healthy forest management, tall wood construction, and fairness in federal buying of forest products.

For more information, contact Ben Gann, vice president of legislative and political affairs, at ben@dealer.org or 202.367.2346.