

**LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY FOR:****June 15, 1998**

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**LAST WEEK:**

**SENATE APPROPRIATIONS MARKUPS** - On Tuesday, the Agriculture, Rural Development and Related Agencies Subcommittee (Chairman Cochran, R-Miss.) of the Senate Appropriations Committee marked up FY99 appropriations for the Department of Agriculture. On Thursday, the full Senate Appropriations Committee (Chairman Stevens, R-Alaska) approved these funding levels:

<b>Program</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>Change from FY'98</b>
Conservation Operations.....	\$632,853,000	+ \$5,378,000
Watershed Surveys and Planning.....	\$ 11,190,000	no change
Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations.....	\$101,036,000	no change
Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D).....	\$ 34,377,000	no change
Forestry Incentives Program (FIP)..	\$ 6,325,000	no change
Wetlands Reserve Program.....	limits to 140,000 acres	
Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program.....	\$ 20,000,000	-\$ 10,000,000
Environmental Quality Incentives Program.....	\$200,000,000	no change
Conservation Farm Option.....	no funding	-\$ 15,000,000
Farmland Protection.....	no funding	-\$ 18,000,000

**HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS** - On Wednesday, the Agriculture, Rural Development, FDA and Related Agencies Subcommittee (Chairman Skeen, R-N.M) of the House Appropriations Committee marked up FY99 appropriations for the Department of Agriculture. The Subcommittee reportedly included the following funding amounts for conservation:

<b>Program</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>Change from FY'98</b>
Conservation Operations.....	\$641,243,000	+ \$8,390,000
Watershed Surveys and Planning.....	\$ 11,190,000	- \$1,645,000
Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations.....	\$ 97,845,000	- \$3,186,000*
		*limits technical assistance to \$47,000,000
Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D).....	\$ 35,000,000	+ \$ 623,000
Forestry Incentives Program (FIP)..	no funding	- \$ 6,235,000
Wetlands Reserve Program.....	limits to 130,000 acres	
Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program.....	no funding	- \$ 30,000,000
Environmental Quality Incentives Program.....	\$174,000,000	- \$ 26,000,000
Conservation Farm Option.....	\$ 25,000,000	+ \$ 10,000,000
Farmland Protection.....	no funding	- \$ 18,000,000

**METHYL BROMIDE PHASE-OUT** - On Wednesday, the Forestry, Resource Conservation, and Research Subcommittee (Chairman Combest, R-Texas) of House Agriculture Committee held a hearing on the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) phase-out of methyl bromide, an ozone-depleting pesticide used to control insects, nematodes, weeds, pathogens, and rodents. Mr. Keith Pitts represented USDA and testified before the Subcommittee. He stated that USDA is conducting an aggressive research program but recognizes that much more work is still needed to develop effective alternatives by the January 1, 2001 phaseout date for methyl bromide. Pitts stated that in an effort to enhance field trial and technology transfer efforts and to provide a larger role for U.S. growers in the research agenda, USDA has requested an additional \$2 million for FY'99 for a grower-developed, extramural research program to address high priority needs. He summarized by commenting that even with the commitment of USDA, EPA and growers to develop alternatives, there may be situations where effective alternatives will not be available for use by the time the phaseout takes effect.

Representative Dan Miller testified that the 2001 phaseout is scheduled despite the fact that there are no alternatives to methyl bromide and the international community will continue to use the substance until as late as 2015. He also commented on H.R. 2609, a bill he introduced that would delay the phaseout in the U.S. until all parties of the Montreal Protocol have eliminated its use, or until the USDA verifies that an effective and affordable alternative has been discovered. The bill currently has 72 cosponsors.

Representative Bill Thomas commented that methyl bromide is necessary to produce healthy and safe produce for American consumers and for export to compete with foreign producers for domestic and foreign markets. He also stated that he is a cosponsor of H.R. 2609 and advocated that American farmers should have the same tools as foreign competitors.

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**THIS WEEK -**

**HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS FULL COMMITTEE MARKUP ON AGRICULTURE SPENDING** - On Tuesday, June 16th, the Full House Appropriations Committee (Chairman Bob Livingston-Louisiana) will markup appropriations legislation for agriculture programs. The Committee will be considering the Subcommittee funding levels for conservation that appear earlier in this summary, including \$641 million for Conservation Operations and \$176 million for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program. The time and place of the markup has not yet been announced.

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**LOOKING AHEAD -**

**APPROPRIATIONS BILLS HEAD TOWARD FLOOR** - After next Tuesday's markup by the House Appropriations Committee, each spending bill for agriculture will be clear for consideration and passage by both the Senate and House of Representatives. Congressional Staff have indicated that Members will attempt to bring the Agriculture Appropriations Bills to the floor before adjourning for the July 4th recess.

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