Wheat Growers President Calls for Farm Bill Passage Before Sept. 30

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National Association of Wheat Growers (NAWG) President Erik Younggren called on Congress Thursday to approve new farm policy legislation before the 2008 Farm Bill expires on Sept. 30.

Testifying before the Senate Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Committee on safety net programs, Younggren told Senators wheat farmers would be in the fields to plant winter wheat as early as August and needed the certainty of a long-term bill to finalize their risk management plans for the coming year.

A wheat, sugar beet and soybean farmer from far northern Minnesota, Younggren spoke in depth about his family’s farm operation and his experiences with crop insurance and farm programs, which are illustrative of NAWG’s policy priorities.

Younggren told Senators that NAWG strongly opposes any reductions to the baseline available for the federal crop insurance program, which is the core of the farm safety net for many crop producers.

“We are prone to frequent flooding in the spring and occasionally in the summer, as well as heavy, yield-robining rains. Our humid summers are conducive to disease and fungus growth,” he said. “My family farm operation has benefited enormously from the evolution of crop insurance in recent decades, showing how important this tool has become.”

While crop insurance is NAWG’s top policy priority for the new farm bill, Younggren told Senators that it alone is not a complete safety net.

Because different production areas of the country rely on different farm programs in times of need, NAWG supports multiple safety-net programs, including a disaster program in Title I.

Younggren called on Members of Congress to:

• outline programs that are understandable and built on the lessons farmers have learned from existing crop insurance revenue products;
• create programs that are defensible to our nation’s taxpayers and friendly to our trading partners;
• offer a revenue-based farm program modeled on those in the 2008 Farm Bill, with coverage by commodity calculated with on-farm triggers and planted acres;
• ensure changes to existing programs or newly-created programs maintain producers’ planting flexibility and the market’s influence in planting decisions; and
• ensure spending within Title I, including funding for direct payments, remains part of Title I.

Younggren’s written testimony is available in full at www.wheatworld.org/farmbill.

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