



National Bison Association

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NBA Farm Bill Position Paper – June 24, 2023 **2023 Farm Bill Priorities for the American Bison Business**

Background

American Bison producers' ability to access the resources available under the current farm bill has contributed to the growth, stability, and profitability of the American bison business over the past five years. The bison industry is processing and marketing more bison than ever before, thanks to growth in consumer demand and increased bison processing capacity. As we have seen with the 2018 Farm Bill, more and more bison producers are utilizing USDA-supported programs, as bison becomes a more mainstream and accepted sector of American agriculture.

As the Senate and House Conference Committees work to develop the final farm bill language, several key provisions will support the continued growth of the bison business as a dynamic part of a diversified rural economy, a model of sustainable agriculture, and an entry point for new producers. As USDA continues its focus on Climate Smart Agriculture, the American bison industry is poised for growth with the ideal livestock species ready to help producers combat climate change through the bison's undomesticated grazing habits and behavior. Please review the following priorities that the National Bison Association has developed in cooperation with its partners in sustainable agriculture that will continue to support the growth of the bison business, and the herd itself, in the years ahead:

Truth in Buffalo Labeling Act

- The NBA's Truth in Buffalo Labeling Act has been introduced in both the Senate and House of the U.S. Congress. This bill would prevent cheap, low-quality, imported water buffalo products from being deceptively labeled as simply "buffalo", which misleads consumers and negatively impacts the U.S. bison industry. The bipartisan bill provides the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) with the authority to ensure that products with water buffalo are labeled as "water buffalo" so consumers aren't misled to believe the product contains bison. Bison products would continue to be labeled as "bison", or "buffalo". The NBA urges Congress to include the Truth in Buffalo Labeling Act in the 2023 Farm Bill as a marker bill accordingly to end the deceptive mislabeling of American bison products. The legislation in the Senate, S. 258, is being sponsored by U.S. Sens. John Hoeven (R-ND) and Michael Bennet (D-CO). A companion bill was introduced in the House, H.R. 3866. The lead sponsors in the House are U.S. Reps. Carol Miller (R-WV) and Yadira Caraveo (D-CO).

Title I Commodities

- Preserve language from the 2018 farm bill that directed the Farm Service Agency to update the market value of bison annually to determine Livestock Indemnity Program valuations.

Title II: Conservation

- Increase Conservation Stewardship Program and Environmental Quality Incentive Program set-asides for new and beginning producers by 30%.
- For grassland Conservation Reserve Program enrollments, incentivize the use of managed grazing for livestock through conservation programs.
- Provide EQIP upfront cost-share to practices with high ecological benefit and target livestock funding that rewards climate-smart agriculture management systems.
- As an ally organization to the InterTribal Buffalo Council, NBA supports their recommendation to recognize traditional, ecological, knowledge-based (TEK) conservation in the 2023 farm bill.
- **S.900, H.R.2719** - Conservation and Innovative Climate Partnership Act: Introduced by Sen. Todd Young (R-IN) and Rep. Dan Newhouse (R-WA), this legislation would amend the Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act of 1990. This amendment would establish a competitive grant program for land-grant colleges and universities to support agricultural producers in adopting conservation and innovative climate practices.
- **S.98** - Agriculture Innovation Act: Introduced by Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), this bill requires the U.S. Department of Agriculture to identify, collect, link, and analyze certain data on the impact of conservation and other production practices on working land profitability, including their effect on enhancing crop yields, soil health, ecosystem services, and other risk-reducing factors.
- Continue to include “bison” specifically as eligible livestock for all conservation programs.

Title III. Trade

- Reauthorization of the Trade Title Market Access Program (MAP) to allow FAS to work directly with the U.S. agricultural trade groups and assure that bison meat marketers have equal access to those funds as other protein sectors.

Title IV: Nutrition

- Reauthorization of the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) commodity purchase program.
- Expand and improve procurement programs by expanding local procurement language to allow local production as a product specification for school foods.

Title V: Credit

- Direct FSA to increase access to financing for beginning, small, and socially disadvantaged producers with pre-approval for select federal lending programs.
- Assure that “bison” producers specifically are eligible for all lending programs.

Title VI: Rural Development

- Appropriate \$2 million to support the manufacture, promotion, and distribution of the USDA ARS-developed bison vaccine to fight the terminal Malignant Catarrhal Fever (MCF) virus, in which domestic sheep are the vector. This disease impacts not only farmed bison but all American bison today, including conservation and tribal herds.
- The 2023 Farm Bill should reauthorize Rural Development Business Development Grant and direct USDA to simplify the application requirements to increase access to the program.

- Reauthorize the Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program and provide at least \$6 million in mandatory annual funding, and raise the maximum loan amount available to from \$50,000 to \$75,000.

Title VII: Research

- Reauthorize the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) and increase funding to at least \$700 million as to support NIFA's work particularly on climate change.
- Reauthorize the Animal Health and Disease Research Programs with funding at \$25 million/year.
 - Continue support for Malignant Catarrhal Fever (MCF) research conducted at the Animal Disease Research Unit, USDA Agriculture Research Service at Washington State University and University of Wyoming.
 - Continue support for the ARS/National Animal Disease Center in Ames, IA and particularly its work on *Mycoplasma bovis* research for bison currently underway.
- Reauthorize the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program with mandatory funding of at least \$100 million per year.
- **S.834** Advancing Cutting Edge (ACE) Agriculture Act: Introduced by Sen. Michael Bennet (D-CO), this bill would amend the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977 to reauthorize the Agriculture Advanced Research and Development Authority. The legislation has been cosponsored by Sen. Roger Marshall (R-KS). Expanding the size and scope of this program to better account for climate impacts is a good investment.

Title XII: Miscellaneous

- Continue to improve implementation of the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program and develop a long-term strategic plan for BFRDP.
- Rebuild local and regional meat processing capacity by supporting the independent meat processing sector, addressing workforce shortages, and enhancing opportunities for them.
- Include the term "bison" and/or "bovine" to all Farm Bill language that seeks to include bison producers as to ensure inclusion in such programs.