

News

Senate farm bill stumbles in committee

By [MARC HELLER \(HTTPS://WWW.EENEWS.NET/MEET-THE-TEAM/MARC-HELLER/\)](https://www.eenews.net/meet-the-team/marc-heller/) | 08/06/2026 04:33 PM EDT

Sen. John Boozman’s five-year farm bill failed to gain a majority vote as changes to nutrition programs overshadow agreements on farm policies.



Senate Agriculture ranking member Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn.) and Chair John Boozman (R-Ark.) during Thursday's farm bill markup. Francis Chung/POLITICO

Senate Republicans’ drive to pass a bipartisan five-year farm bill faltered in committee Thursday, complicating plans to boost higher-ethanol fuel and renew farmland conservation programs.

Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Chair John Boozman’s package screeched to a halt after Democrats said his efforts to appease them on the farm bill’s main point of contention — changes to low-income nutrition programs — didn’t go far enough.

The Arkansas Republican recessed the session after an 10-11 vote and will return to the bill after the impending recess. By then, Sen. Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) — who is recovering from a fall — may be on hand to get the legislation over the finish line. Sen. Tommy Tuberville (R-Ala.) was also absent for the markup.

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“It’s not going to go away,” Boozman said about the legislation. And he told reporters after the session, “Farmers need hope, and sadly we didn’t give that to them today.”

Ranking member Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn.) said she expects negotiations to continue through August. “I want us to get to a bipartisan agreement,” said Klobuchar.

Beyond the fight over reductions in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, [most of the bill](https://www.agriculture.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/af583ceb-c9d2-e4f0-a989-7ec9026749f9/S___%20Agricultural%20Act%20of%202026_e691c2af-26d2-4ffe-9745-9880c01d31af.pdf) (https://www.agriculture.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/af583ceb-c9d2-e4f0-a989-7ec9026749f9/S___%20Agricultural%20Act%20of%202026_e691c2af-26d2-4ffe-9745-9880c01d31af.pdf), reflects bipartisan agreements on a wide array of conservation incentives, rural energy programs and forestry that are

all but certain to appear in a final deal.

Those include provisions increasing drought assistance, stepping up wildfire mitigation in national forests and funding research at the Department of Agriculture.

Still, the stumble in advancing the Senate legislation raises the prospect that a farm bill may not become law this year. The House passed its version (<https://subscriber.politicopro.com/article/eenews/2026/04/30/house-oks-farm-bill-after-axing-protections-for-pesticide-makers-00900446>), similar to the Senate bill, in April.

Should lawmakers reach a deal during the upcoming recess, the House and Senate Agriculture committees could hold a preconference to iron out differences before putting forth a new version.

The last farm bill, from 2018, expired in 2023 and has continued through extensions. Boozman has said he wants a bipartisan bill but can't go much further in paring back the Republicans' proposal on SNAP.

Impatience over E15

With the process in slow motion, proponents of the ethanol provision — to lift seasonal restrictions on sales of E15 at gas stations — said they're open to other avenues.

Klobuchar, who's pushed E15 for years, said she discussed with Minority Leader Chuck Schumer on Wednesday the possibility of allowing a separate floor vote on that issue.

"I can't tell you how important this is," Klobuchar said.

Boozman's inclusion of the E15 provision stirs a battle between the ethanol industry and certain petroleum refiners that may also cloud the farm bill's future.

In recent days, critics representing petroleum companies said they can't accept parts of the proposal that would revise how EPA grants biofuel-blending exemptions to some small refineries.

Among other details, the proposal would free small refineries of the mandate in the renewable fuel standard and require that biofuel volumes exempted be reallocated to other refineries.

The Fueling American Jobs Coalition, representing refiners, said the proposal amounts to making midsized refineries pay for the breaks granted to small ones.

"That is not reform. It is simply shifting costs from one refiner to another," the coalition said in a news release.

Boozman said he's confident the E15 provision will be in a final bill despite the petroleum industry pushback. "I think we've got the votes we need to pass E15," he said.

Amendments discussed

In the meantime, farmers continue to face a variety of challenges including low crop prices, higher costs tied to inflation and the Trump administration's tariff wars, and a federal safety net that has trouble keeping up.

"American agriculture is really in crisis," said Sen. Peter Welch (D-Vt.).

The committee adopted, on a voice vote, a manager's amendment that would add \$200 million for the Foundation for Food and Agriculture Research, make timber producers eligible for disaster assistance block grants and create an initiative at USDA to increase plantings of white oak trees that are critical to barrel-makers (<https://subscriber.politicopro.com/article/eenews/2023/11/14/whiskey-makers-race-to-save-white-oak-trees-00126885>).

Democrats offered an array of amendments that failed by one-vote party-line margins, including to restore nearly \$2 billion that was diverted from the Environmental Quality Incentives Program to pay for a forest conservation easement program. Proxy votes from absent lawmakers count during the amendment process.

"We cannot treat the conservation title of this bill as a zero-sum game," said Sen. Michael Bennet (D-Colo.), who offered the EQIP amendment.

Boozman, however, said the bill in total would increase baseline funding for conservation programs by 30 percent compared to the 2018 farm bill.

Another Bennet amendment, would have boosted funding for the Forest Service to thin potential wildfire fuel from national forests.

A proposal from Sen. Cory Booker (D-N.J.) would have protected individuals’ right to sue pesticide companies for failure to warn on labels about potential health risks of their products.

That proposal grows out of the debate about alleged cancer risks from the weed killer glyphosate and whether states can require cancer warnings if that’s in conflict with EPA label requirements.

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