

Farm Bill Database Reveals Lopsided Subsidies

Who's benefiting? EWG says billions of dollars in federal farm subsidies to some of the largest farm businesses in the nation.

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Image Courtesy of EWG Who's benefiting from the Farm Bill?

A new online database, (viewing requires a free, quick registration) developed by the Environmental Working Group (EWG), says that Americans have paid tens of billions of dollars in federal farm subsidies to some of the largest farm businesses in the nation.

According to EWG, just 10 percent of subsidy recipients will collect around 60 percent of the money. Ken Cook, president and co-founder of the Environmental Working Group (EWG), says some individuals have netted more than \$1 million in a year. The group is hoping Congress will close the loopholes that make the lopsided distribution possible and create a farm bill that allocates resources fairly.

EWG's analysis found: A total of 1,120,525 recipients will be eligible for the subsidy bonus, which will cost \$1.56 billion. The top 1 percent of subsidy bonus recipients will collect 15 percent of the payments, totaling \$238 million, or over \$21,000 each on average. Some 54 large crop operations will receive more than \$100,000, and 476 recipients will collect over \$50,000.

The bottom 80 percent of recipients (896,420 of them) will receive a total of \$331 million, or about \$369 each on average. USDA records indicate that at least 10 percent of the subsidy bonus will go to recipients who own land but do not farm it themselves. These landowners, including absentee owners, have not incurred increased energy costs-the farm operators who rent their land have.

The top five states for the subsidy bonus are Iowa, Illinois, Texas, Nebraska and Kansas, which together will receive 40 percent of the money. California, the number one state one farm state in terms of production value, will rank 12th in subsidy bonus payments, and Florida, ranked ninth for value of farm production, will rank 36th in subsidy bonus payments. Corn producers will account for the biggest share of bonus subsidies, with \$626 million (795,673 recipients). Wheat will follow, with \$338 million (673,463 recipients), and upland cotton will account for \$181 million (123,690 recipients).

EWG says the database was built from millions of previously unpublished USDA subsidy records, providing nearly full disclosure of federal farm subsidy beneficiaries for the first time. EWG is a public interest research and advocacy organization whose mission is to use information to help protect human health and the environment.

This information is courtesy EWG. Find the database and more details (after a free, quick registration) at www.ewg.org/sites/farmbill2007