



## Learning About the Farm Bill

**Carol Ekarius, a Hobby Farms contributing editor, encourages us to learn more about the farm bill and its impact on rural living and agriculture.**

© Ken Woodard

Theresa doesn't want a radio frequency ID implanted; neither do any of the other chickens or animals that live on my farm. And I don't want to have to do that to all my animals. So I stay involved in farm policy issues and the farm bill debate to make sure my voice is heard by my elected officials! ~ Carol E.

The first "farm bill", or Food Security Act as it's officially called, was adopted in 1933: with the nation struggling under the devastation of the Great Depression, Congress passed the act as a way to raise the value of agricultural products.

Remember, this was a time when one-in-four Americans lived on farms, and the best way to get money into those rural pockets was through government programs that helped extend services to rural areas (such as irrigation, improved transportation, and rural electrification), and by establishing a set of price supports for crops.

Initially it really supported small-scale farmers and small communities in their efforts to support themselves.

But sometime over the last 74 years, the farm bill has become a vehicle for supporting corporate agriculture over small farmers and rural communities.

What happens in Washington does affect you and the things you care about.

We still live in a democracy, so learn as much as you can about the bill and its implications, and then make your voice heard: email or call your Senators and Congressmen.

Here's where you can start learning:

The National Campaign for Sustainable Agriculture has developed farm-bill priorities under the focus areas of organic agriculture; stewardship incentives; competitive markets and concentration (this committee deals with the National Animal Identification System, or NAIS); rural development; social justice and community food security; commodity programs; sustainable livestock; and renewable energy. Visit their website at [www.sustainableagriculture.net](http://www.sustainableagriculture.net)

The Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy is a nonprofit think tank out of Minneapolis. They have developed a website called AgObservatory that has lots of information on the farm bill and other agricultural policy issues. They are located at [www.agobservatory.org](http://www.agobservatory.org)

The United States Department of Agriculture maintains a site on the farm bill. Go to [www.usda.gov](http://www.usda.gov) and look for the farm bill link at the bottom of the page.

~ Carol  
[www.carolekarius.com](http://www.carolekarius.com)