

Johanns: 2007 Farm Bill must handle global needs

By J.T. SMITH

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Mike Johanns made it clear at the 2007 Beltwide Cotton Conferences in New Orleans that the Bush administration does not favor an extension of the popular 2002 Farm Bill.

The 2002 Farm Bill governs the nation's farm policy through Oct. 31, 2007. The current farm act was crafted in a bipartisan effort with fellow Texans and former U.S. Reps. Larry Combest, a Lubbock Republican, and Charles Stenholm, a Stamford Democrat, working together. The bill has come in well under budget estimates. It has been popular with cotton growers, with its loan and countercyclical payment features.

Nevertheless, Johanns said the 2002 Farm Bill was fine for its time, but a bill more in tune with today's global agriculture is needed. The USDA secretary noted 80% of U.S. cotton must

Key Points

- Ag Secretary Mike Johanns wants a new 2007 Farm Bill.
- Johanns tells cotton growers 2002 bill has served its time.
- He says a grower safety net is about more than subsidies.

now find a home in the global market.

"Developing countries are increasingly driving world cotton trade," Johanns observed. "And 50% of our rice goes to the international marketplace. In fact, about one-third of all our [U.S.] row crops go into the international market, including soybeans and corn.

"You can cuss it — or discuss it — but it's a fact of life."

Johanns said U.S. agricultural exports reached \$68 billion in 2006, and he expects that to grow to \$77 billion for fiscal year 2007. At the same time, U.S. cotton exports were a record \$4.7 billion in 2006, and are projected to exceed \$5 billion in 2007.

That shows the U.S. dependence on the global market, he said.

He noted that he doesn't intend to take any action that would jeopardize the U.S. access to the international marketplace — not only for cotton but other commodities, as well.

Improve trade

Johanns said he realizes the World Trade Organization, which was key in doing away with U.S. cotton's Step 2 Export Enhancement, is not popular with a lot of folks in the cotton industry.

But he noted trade complaints go beyond cotton, such as Uruguay protesting the U.S. rice program, or Canada challenging U.S. corn policy.

"It might be a better option to craft [new] farm policy that wouldn't be challenged," Johanns offered.

He added, "WTO litigation is not a good idea for anyone."

Johanns said a safety net is

about more than just farm subsidies. Johanns was quick to say he is a firm believer in federal support for agriculture, but said the real issue is how government support will be delivered.

Johanns said a 2007 farm act might need to be a bill with more conservation, product promotion and research.

Help coming

In the meantime, as debate is sure

to be hot in the 110th Congress, USDA will take some immediate actions in 2007 to help U.S. farm products.

For cotton, specifically, Johanns said the Agriculture Department will assist Cotton Council International, the overseas arm of the National



NEW BILL NEEDED: U.S. Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns tells those at the Beltwide Cotton Conferences in New Orleans that he wants a new farm bill that's more in tune with modern agriculture and the global marketplace. Prior to his USDA post, Johanns was Nebraska's 38th governor.

Cotton Council, this year with its Market Access Program.

And overall, Johanns said that USDA will directly help some 67 U.S. trade organizations in fiscal year 2007 with \$100 million in assistance to promote U.S. agricultural products overseas.

Monsanto to help groups in quail conservation effort

A NEW collaboration will focus on helping raise funds for quail habitat conservation.

Quail Forever has announced the collaboration with Monsanto that will help QF along with two other groups to protect and enhance the bobwhite quail habitat.

Monsanto will donate \$75,000 annually for three years to Quail Forever for a conservation collaboration that includes Tall Timbers Research Station and Land Conservancy, and the Southeast Quail Study Group.

QF will administer the Quail Conservation Collaboration.

"As a company with a base in agriculture, we and our farmer customers are committed to being good stewards of the environment and making sure we engage in programs that help sustain our natural resources, including wildlife," says Ernesto Fajardo, U.S. crop production lead for Monsanto. "We've had a long relationship in supporting Quail Forever's parent organization, Pheasants Forever, and we look forward to extending our conservation efforts to quail habitat restoration and preservation."

Key Points

- Monsanto will help Quail Forever and two other groups.
- Company to donate \$75,000 annually for three years.
- Other donations to be made for eligible Roundup purchases.

In addition to the \$75,000 yearly donation, for every gallon of Monsanto's Roundup WeatherMax or Roundup Original Max purchased for use on eligible conservation acres, Monsanto will donate \$1 to the Quail Conservation Collaboration in the name of the farmer who purchased the product.

The Roundup products must be used for specific projects in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Conservation Reserve Program, including CP 1, CP 10 or CP 33 projects. All three practices are focused on improving habitat for the bobwhite quail. Combined, they account for 2.75 million acres eligible for Monsanto's dollar donation fundraising program.

This additional Monsanto donation will be made upon customers' completion of an enrollment form that includes

a copy of their Roundup purchase invoice. Forms are available by calling 800-ROUNDUP, or Quail Forever at 866-457-8245. All forms should be sent to Quail Forever's national headquarters: Quail Forever, QCP Form, 1783 Buerkle Circle, St. Paul, MN 55110.

Quail numbers in trouble

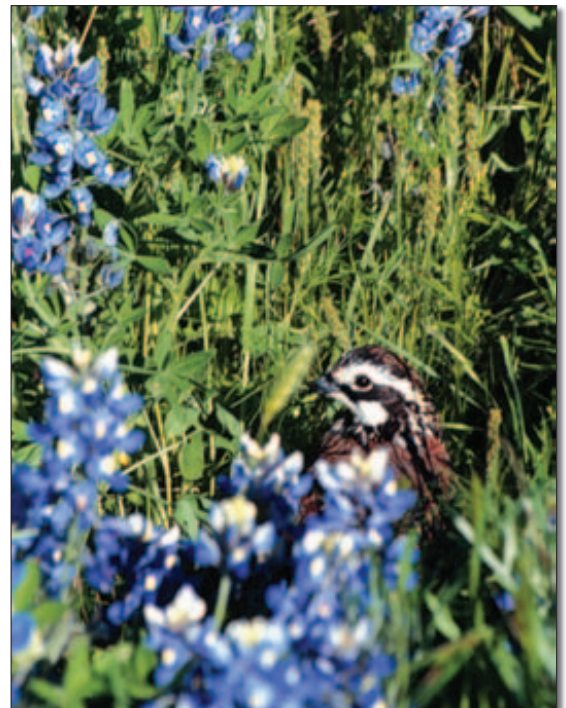
In the United States, bobwhite quail numbers are in trouble. Bobwhite population losses over just the past 25 years range from 60% to 90% across the country.

The reason for the quail population plunge is simple. It's the result of massive losses of suitable habitat for quail.

There are five major factors leading to the losses of quail habitat:

- intensified farming practices
- intensified forestry practices
- succession of grassland ecosystems to forests
- overwhelming presence of exotic grasses like fescue that choke out wildlife
- urban sprawl

The Quail Conservation Collaboration partners are dedicated to addressing the



habitat losses to restore U.S. quail populations to their 1980s levels.

"Through this innovative new partnership, farmers, ranchers and landowners concerned about quail can make a real difference to the bird's future," says Quail Forever's president and chief executive

officer, Howard Vincent.

"Please take the time to fill out the enrollment form and send them in," Vincent says. "Your donation of time will be matched with Monsanto's generous cash donations that will help ensure the next generation's ability to enjoy the bobwhite's call."