

TILTH PRODUCERS POLICY UPDATE

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POLICY PRIORITY SURVEY RESULTS

Early this summer, Tilth Producers surveyed our members on which policy issues matter most to them. We received feedback from over 60 members who prioritized these ten issues:

1. Local food system development
2. Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO)
3. Beginning farmers and ranchers (tied for 3rd)
3. Farmland preservation (tied for 3rd)
5. Research and education
6. Conservation
7. Access to fresh food for children, seniors, and institutions
8. Renewable energy
9. Farm Bill
10. Organic standards

These priorities include all of the Policy Committee's 2012 priorities with the exception of food safety (which came in 13th and didn't make the top 10 list), and the addition of beginning farmers and ranchers, research and education, conservation, renewable energy, and organic standards. The priorities identified by the survey will guide our policy work in 2013.

Members were also surveyed on how they would like to engage in policy advocacy with Tilth Producers. 73% of respondents wanted to participate via online action alerts, 45% were interested in local activities in their communities, and 38% wanted to have networking and educational meetings with peers (members were invited to choose more than one way to engage). Only 10% said they did not want to engage in policy advocacy.

POLICY BRIEFING SESSION ON FRIDAY OF ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Join our policy committee on Friday evening (November 9th, 7:30 p.m.) of the Tilth Producers 2012 Annual Conference for a Policy Briefing Session. The session will cover what policy activity to expect around each of our highest priority issues in the coming year, results from the Policy Priority Survey, a question and answer period, and an advocacy activity.

ISSUE UPDATES

GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISMS (GMOs)

The countdown has begun to gather 300,000 signatures on the petition to get GMO labeling on the ballot in Washington State. The signatures are due by the end of 2012. Many Tilth members have already begun collecting signatures at their farm stands, stores, and offices. You can help! To request a packet with blank petitions, info sheets, talking points, and instructions on how to collect signatures, contact policy intern Ariana Taylor-Stanley at ariana@tilthproducers.org or 206-660-8958.

FARM BILL

The House of Representatives failed to bring the Farm Bill to the floor for a vote before the previous bill expired on September 30th, leading the USDA into a "no-law limbo-land" (in the words of National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition Assistant Policy Director Ariane Lotti) and jeopardizing the reform achieved in the Senate bill. From here, we hope Congress will pass a full Farm Bill in the lame duck session after the election. The other option is to pass an extension to the current bill and postpone further work on the Farm Bill (and any hope for reform) until next year.

Even if the House does take up the Farm Bill after the election, it will be another struggle to ensure that the final bill includes important programs and reforms. The draft bill passed by the House Agriculture Committee is much worse for sustainable agriculture than the Senate version. The House draft bill cuts conservation and nutrition programs more than the Senate bill, eliminates the organic cost share program, cuts beginning farmer funding, and includes riders that significantly deregulate GMO crops and pesticide pollution. Stay tuned for further updates - fingers still crossed that a bill will be passed this year that includes important reforms as well as funding for key programs.

LEARN MORE ONLINE

Visit our policy blog at <http://tilthproducers.org/category/policy/> for more policy updates, to learn how you can get involved, and to view a graphic representation of the policy priority survey results.


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