



## Introducing the Farm Bill Toolbox

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Previously, articles on *farmdoc daily* have provided details regarding the efforts to inform readers about the 2014 Farm Bill, particularly with regard to farm program decisions that will have to be made ([farmdoc daily, February 13, 2014](#); [farmdoc daily, May 30, 2014](#)). As the next step in that project, today we introduce the *Farm Bill Toolbox* as the one-stop resource for farm program decisions, information and analysis, as well as providing further information regarding the ongoing efforts for the Farm Bill.

On July 1, 2014, the University of Illinois as the lead university for the National Coalition for Producer Education (NCPE) entered into a cooperative agreement with the Farm Service Agency for development of web-based decision tools to help producers and farm owners with the decisions and programs in the Farm Bill. This effort will involve the development of three different tools by the Illinois-led NCPE, as well as training, education, outreach and analysis on the tools and programs: (1) a tool for the ARC/PLC program decision, including base acre reallocation, payment yield updating and SCO/STAX; (2) a tool for the new dairy Margin Protection Program and Livestock Gross Margin-Dairy insurance policy; and (3) a tool for the new Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) provisions regarding buy-up coverage.

The University of Illinois-NCPE proposal envisioned using the *farmdoc* platform as a user-friendly, one-stop resource for all aspects of the Farm Bill program decisions. To that end, we introduce the *Farm Bill Toolbox* (available [here](#)) as the dedicated site for producers, landowners and others interested in the programs. It will house the specific web-based tools being developed, as well as training, education, outreach and analysis materials. These materials will include webinars and answers to frequently asked questions. Additionally, general conclusions gleaned from analysis of the programs within the real-world context of prices, yields and risk, coupled with what is learned from developing and running the tools. We also envision providing some basic guidance or "rules of thumb" that producers can use as they need. Like any good toolbox, the *Farm Bill Toolbox* will contain a range of items and materials - the tools - to serve the widest variety of producers and situational needs. Not everyone will make use of the specific tools, or the articles analyzing the programs. But the tools will be available for anyone who seeks information, and at levels intended to fit varying degrees of informational needs.

The *Farm Bill Toolbox* is currently under construction and will remain under construction as the web tools, analysis and other information are being developed. It currently houses a limited amount of material taken

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from previous articles and work that remain relevant to this effort and the pending producer decisions. It will be updated as the tools and materials are developed and become available for public release. Information and links to the tools will also be available on the FSA [website](#).

The website and the tools will be important, valuable resources for producers, but the key to the NCPE proposal are the coalition partners who will be working on tool development, training, education, outreach and analysis. The coalition consists of the following institutions:

**University of Illinois**--the lead institution on the project, working with coalition partners to develop and build the farm bill tools, as well as coordinating the training, education, outreach and analysis using the *farmdoc* and *farmdoc daily* sites;

**Watts & Associates**--an economic consulting firm specializing in econometrics, agricultural risk management, and insurance/derivative products for agricultural producers and industry stakeholders worldwide, they combine sophisticated econometric and statistical analysis to address agricultural public policy and have completed numerous contracts involving agricultural public policy inclusive of agricultural risk management, feasibility assessment, development, and evaluation; Watts brings a state-of-the-art enterprise server system that incorporates multiple high-level servers and is equivalent to a Fortune 1000 in-house system to the project as well as an extensive data warehouse that contains over 2.5 terabytes of raw data and more than 1.5 terabytes of usable data on a unified platform, 24 hours-a-day, 365 days-a-year;

**The Ohio State University** -- a major research institution with faculty working in agricultural policy and risk management. Faculty at The Ohio State University will be involved in developing the decision aids related to the Commodity Title, as well as developing outreach material. Ohio State faculty have a tradition of being extensively involved in agricultural policy research and development, providing information to farmers, farm groups, policy makers, and other interested parties.

**Michigan State University**-- a major research institution with award-winning faculty and a demonstrated leadership in risk management and outreach programming including federally facilitated crop insurance, NAP, and finance; Michigan State has participated in the evaluation of proposed federally facilitated insurance products for specialty crops; many of these crops are also eligible for NAP buy-up and Michigan State faculty will be providing a lead role in the development of the NAP tool, as well as significant work on training, education, outreach and analysis;

**The Program on Dairy Markets and Policy (D-MaP)**--a consortium of dairy economists from land grant institutions across the U.S. with the objective of conducting and coordinating research and outreach activities related to the dairy industry; including University of Wisconsin, Cornell University, Penn State University, The Ohio State University, Michigan State University, University of Minnesota, and the University of Illinois; with a history in the development of decision aids and producer outreach initiatives regarding dairy farm risk management programs, D-MaP is taking a lead role in developing the dairy margin protection program and livestock gross margin insurance policy tool;

**Montana State University**--a land grant university that strives to provide education, research, and extension/outreach programs focused to meet the changing needs of Montanans and unbiased research-based education and information that integrates learning, discovery, and engagement to strengthen the social, economic, and environmental well-being of individuals, families, and communities, including a focus on Native American farmers and ranchers addressing finance and marketing issues, the production and consumption of local foods and small business development;

**Delaware State University**--an 1890 Land Grant University with a history of working with socially disadvantaged, limited resource and underserved producers, successfully planning and implementing statewide and regional workshops and conferences for business planning, financial

and crop insurance training and general risk management; Delaware State will lead the effort, in conjunction with the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff and North Carolina Agricultural & Technical State University, on training, education and outreach focused on socially-disadvantaged producers;

**The University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff**--an 1890 Land Grant University with a history of working with socially disadvantaged producers on row crop, livestock and NAP issues for their operations, including helping row crop producers make decisions about updating their bases, calculating estimated payments, and providing education on planting vegetable crops on base acres, as well as providing education to alternative crops, livestock, and hay producers about the NAP Program;

**North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University**--an 1890 Land Grant University with a strong history working with limited resource, socially disadvantaged, and underserved farmers and producers through academic, research, and extension programs designed to be relevant and timely to ensure access to federal and state programs, help with record keeping for strategic business decision making as well as risk management planning; working through a network of county cooperative extension agents across the state to provide efficient programming efforts ensuring that producers are aware of and have access to federal, regional, and state programs and resources to improve economic resilience and financial profitability of their respective operations.

The National Coalition for Producer Education looks forward to serving all of America's producers, providing the best, most relevant information and analysis of the programs that fit the individual producer's needs in a timely, comprehensive manner.

## References

Coppess, J., N. Paulson, G. Schnitkey, and C. Zulauf. "[2014 Farm Bill Informational Efforts on \*farmdoc\*](#)." *farmdoc daily*, Department of Agricultural and Consumer Economics, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, February 13, 2014.

USDA Office of Communications. "[USDA Awarding \\$6 Million to Prepare Farmers for New Farm Bill Programs](#)." Released on May 29, 2014, reposted on *farmdoc daily*, Department of Agricultural and Consumer Economics, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, May 30, 2014.