

Adams on Agriculture
Interview with Collin Peterson
March 8, 2018

Note: This is an unofficial transcript of a discussion with Mike Adams and Rep. Collin Peterson (D., Minn.) from the *Adams on Agriculture* radio program.

Adams: And joining me now is the Ranking Member of the House Agriculture Committee, Congressman Collin Peterson from Minnesota. Congressman Peterson, always good to talk with you. Haven't talked in a while. Thanks for being with me on my new show.

Peterson: Yeah, how you doing? Is it going good?

Adams: Going good, and even better now that you are on.

Peterson: [*Laughs.*]

Adams: I've been telling people when you're on, this is where I find out about the farm bill, what's going on. So what can you tell us? Because every time we start really talking farm bill, other things come up and it kind of pushes it to the back burner on the news. But I know a lot's going on. Can you give us an update where you're at in the House Ag Committee?

Peterson: Well, you know, the staff has been working through issues and all the different titles. Some of them are actually pretty close to being done. But we kind of hit an impasse last night, and I don't know exactly where this is going, but at this point I think we could be on a path to having a partisan farm bill. And I don't know if they'll actually be able to pass it with just Republican votes, but unless something changes, that's probably where we're heading.

Adams: We have heard people say that this is going to get pushed off and pushed back with all the other issues. It could be next year before we have a farm bill. Do you think that'll happen?

Peterson: Well, I don't know if it will or not. That's not what the problem is. I think we have the will to do this. The problem is they have come up with this food stamp proposal that is similar to what killed the bill in 2013, and my side is in revolt, and there will not be one single vote on the Democratic side in committee for this bill if what they have currently in the bill is in there. So we have—I've been telling him for a long time that this isn't going to fly, and they are not listening. And so this is what's holding it up at this point.

Now he claims he's going to go ahead and have a markup a week from Tuesday. I don't know how that's possible given all the things that are open and this food stamp problem, but maybe they're going to move ahead and they're just going to have Republican votes. I think they can get it out of committee that way. But at the end of the day, the Senate is not going to do any of this stuff, so this is an exercise in futility for no good reason that I can see, so I don't know. As you can tell, I'm a little frustrated right now.

Adams: Yeah. I can tell that, yeah. So you're saying for the Democrats these changes being proposed for the nutrition program, the food stamp, the SNAP program, that's a deal breaker for your party?

Peterson: Yes. Yes. It's the same scheme that basically they had that killed the bill in 2013 on the floor. They want to take eight million people off the rolls and they want to take the money they save and give it to the states to create a job training bureaucracy, which is kind of the same thing they tried to do in 2013.

And they're also increasing...so currently people over 60 are not affected by these rules. They want to increase that to 65. So all of a sudden if you've got people that are retired cops, or retired military or whatever, all of a sudden they're going to be cut off the rolls unless they agree to go back to work. So we've got people retiring at 50, 55 because they're in those kind of professions where they can do that, and some of them, you know, if they're not making...they don't have a lot of income, they're on a small amount of food stamps, and they're going to knock them off.

So it's just, it's got our side completely riled up. We had a meeting last night. It didn't resolve anything. I think it made it worse. And we're not exactly sure where we're going from this point, but you'd have to ask the chairman.

Adams: So will this lead to more attempts to separate the nutrition program out of the farm bill?

Peterson: It might. It might be one of the outcomes. But the Senate's not going to—you know, I talked to Chairman Roberts on Monday. There's no way. The Senate's not going to make any significant changes in SNAP. They're just, they're not going to do it. They're not interested in it. And they can't do it because they need—he said I need ten, 15 Democrats to support my bill. And so he's not at all interested in this. Why we're going through this process is beyond me because we were doing fine until I thought they would come to their senses on this, but they apparently aren't, so we'll see what happens.

Adams: Are there any other big changes you think will be coming or any other surprises we should be watching for in this farm bill?

Peterson: Well, no. I mean, the bill, you know, we don't have any new money, and so the bill is going to be very much like what we currently have in law. We're trying to get some increase in acres in CRP, do some reforms in that area, a little bit of tweaking on dairy. But by and large it'll be the current law on the rest of the bill because we don't have any [more money].

Adams: Do you have a way to pay for those increases in CRP acres?

Peterson: Yeah, by limiting the rental payments. We're looking at limiting them to 80% of the rental value in that county, so that they could not pay more than that. That solves a couple problems, because we have places where we're paying more for CRP than the rental rates are. So it'll fix some of those things. It'll put a market based approach into the system where I don't think anybody will take good quality prime farmland and put it into CRP for only 80% of the rental value in that county. So I think what it'll do is it'll get the good land out and the bad land in, and that's what we want to do.

Adams: Congressman, as always, thank you for your time. I look forward to talking with you again real soon. And good luck getting all this worked out. We appreciate it.

Peterson: All right. We'll need it. Thanks.

Adams: All right, take care. The Ranking Member of the House Agriculture Committee, Collin Peterson. Interesting. That food stamp issue really a stumbling block right now in the House Ag Committee on the farm bill. Another busy show coming up tomorrow. Hope you'll join us right here on AOA, Adams on Agriculture.

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