Peter Welch
U.S. SENATOR FOR VERMONT

Senator Peter Welch (D-Vt.) —Amendments to the Farm Bill:

Welch #1—Personal Use Exemption: This amendment codifies current USDA guidance on Personal-Use and Custom Exemptions, allowing consumers to buy live animals from producers and designate agents to handle the slaughter and processing of their meat—bypassing oversubscribed Federally inspected slaughterhouses, as directed in Senator Welch's Local Foods Act.

Welch #2—SNAP Telephonic Signature: This amendment allows SNAP applicants to sign their application over phone or video conference.

Welch #3—Organic Dairy Data Collection: This amendment directs USDA to improve organic dairy data collection

Welch #4—Index Insurance: This amendment directs USDA to conduct research and development on a multi-peril index-based crop insurance product designed for specialty crop and diversified farms facing extreme weather events, as directed in Senator Welch's WEATHER Act

Welch #5—Support for the Farm to School Program: An amendment to Increase Farm to School mandatory funding from $5 million to $15 million per year and increase maximum grant award to $500,000

Welch #6—Tier 1 DMC Improvements: An amendment to provide free DMC coverage for producers under Tier I (6 million pounds) and strike the annual administrative fee for all of DMC

Welch #7—Guardrails on USDA Reorganization: This amendment would require the USDA to not relocate any employees until it publishes a detailed cost benefit analysis for the reorganization (including expected service improvements and the facilities that will be closed), to make publicly available all public comments on the analysis, and to publish a response to the public comments submitted. Also statutorily requires the current Senate-confirmed Under Secretary positions at USDA, including the one for Food, Nutrition and Consumer Services, which was eliminated in USDA's recent reorganization

Welch #8—Trial Food for Peace to USDA: This amendment would strike requirement that 50% of funds need to be used on commodities and shipping, strikes removal of notwithstanding language giving agency more flexibility to meet emergency needs, and moves Food for Peace to USDA for a trial period of 5 years with additional reporting

Welch #9—Food for Peace Notwithstanding Authority: This amendment would strike removal of notwithstanding language giving the agency more flexibility to meet emergency needs

Welch #10—Strike proposed 50% commodity and shipping requirement in Food for Peace: This amendment would strike the requirement that 50% of funds need to be used on commodities and shipping for Food for Peace program.

Welch #11—Removal of Inflation Adjustment for payment limitations: An amendment to remove the inflation adjustor to payment limitations so that Congress approves increases in payment limits, not the Secretary.

Welch #12—Actively Engaged in Farming: An amendment to create a definition in statute of "significant contribution of active personal management" that would require the lesser of 500 management hours or 25% of total hours required. Additionally, the amendment limits a farming operation to 1 person that qualifies as actively engaged in farming through a significant contribution of active personal management.

Welch #13—Farm Program Integrity: An amendment to allow any number of individuals to qualify as actively engaged in farming through any combination of 1,000 hours of active personal labor or active personal management. Creates a $250,000 per farming operation limit. This amendment brings back a limit for Marketing Assistance Loan gains and Loan Deficiency Payments of $75,000. This amendment corrects statute by removing the special provision for peanuts to receive up to two payment limitations.

Welch #14—Reduction of Payment Limits: An amendment to lower the payment limitation for ARC/PLC programs back to the $125,000 previous to budget reconciliation of July 4, 2025.

Welch #15—Removal of Special Provisions for Qualified Pass-Through Entities: This amendment strikes the language creating and referencing qualified pass-through entities which allow certain farming operations to qualify for unlimited payments per operation without a per operation limit that sole proprietorships and certain legal entities must follow.

Welch #16—Removal of Double Payment for Spouses: Currently, the spouse or the estate of a deceased spouse of a person that qualifies as actively engaged in farming may receive a full payment even if the spouse does not qualify as actively engaged in farming. The amendment would strike this provision in statute ensuring that payments go to living persons who qualify as actively engaged in farming.

Welch #17—Audits on High Error Rates: The amendment would require family and nonfamily farming operations to keep the same records if they have more than one person qualifying as actively engaged through active personal management or if the farming operation has more than 3 members receiving payments. Recordkeeping requirements would include a log of management hours containing the date, duration, and location of management. It also directs the Farm Service Agency (FSA) to conduct an audit on these records when ARC/PLC error rates are higher than 6%.

Welch #18—Amendment that includes the amendments below. *(Welch #19-#22)*

Welch #19—Equitable Treatment of Family and Non-Family Operations: Family and nonfamily operations must meet the same requirements to qualify as actively engaged in farming. The amendment clarifies that any person participating in the required number of active personal labor hours shall not be limited in the number of payments they may receive. Farming operations are limited to a maximum of three members qualifying using active personal management based on size and complexity of the operation.

Welch #20—Payment Limitations: This amendment requires persons qualifying as actively engaged in farming through active personal management to have some amount of labor to qualify for payments from more than one farming operation. The amendment creates a limitation of $310,000 per farming operation.

Welch #21—Recordkeeping Requirements for Commodity Programs: The amendment would require family and nonfamily farming operations to keep the same records as seen in 7 CFR 1400.603 if they have more than one person qualifying as actively engaged through active personal management or if the farming operation has more than 3 members receiving payments. Recordkeeping requirements would include a log of management hours containing the date, duration, and location of management. It also directs the Farm Service Agency (FSA) to conduct an audit on these records not less than once every 3 years.

Welch #22—Corrects statute by removing the special provision for peanuts to receive up to two payment limitations: Currently, farmers that qualify for peanut payments under Title I are able to receive double the payment limitation of all other commodities. The amendment would correct statute to remove this special provision just for peanuts and restore more equitable treatment of commodities.

Welch #23—Clarifies CRP Eligibility for Buffer Zone Projects: Vermont currently has to go through an extremely arduous process to enroll in CRP because of Vermont's Required Agricultural Practices, in particular a practice that requires farmers to implement buffer zones. When this first became an issue Vermont had to appeal each CRP project to the Deputy Administrator of Farm Programs, but now only have to appeal to the FSA Study Committee. There are other states that have similar regulations to Vermont, but they have not been penalized. This amendment aims to remove bureaucratic hurdles for Vermont, while also ensuring no other state has to go through this arduous process.

Welch #24— Expands Eligibility for The Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) and Payments to Include Agroforestry Practices: CIG is designed to test new or innovative conservation approaches. There is an existing definition of 7 "new or innovative" approaches, under which agroforestry can be considered. This amendment's goal is to make it clear that agroforestry is part of the definition.

Welch #25—Provides Funding to Combat Invasive Species: The amendment provides tools to combat non-native insects and pathogens that threaten forests and woodlands. It takes a comprehensive approach to combatting the presence of invasive species by expanding access to emergency funds for USDA's APHIS TO eradicate or contain pests.

Welch #26—Study On Invasive Species: This amendment mandates a study to identify actions needed to overcome the lack of centralization and prioritization of non-native insect and pathogen research and response within the federal government and develop national strategies for saving tree species.

Welch #27—Requires USDA To Establish National and Regional Agroforestry Centers to Advance Agroforestry Adoption: This amendment would establish national and regional agroforestry centers. The National Agroforestry Center was established in the 1990 farm bill and located in Lincoln, Nebraska. With interest in agroforestry adoption growing rapidly, the need for additional regional expertise is critical. Silvopasture operations are most likely to be found in the Southern Plains, for example, while forest farming is prevalent in Central and Southern Appalachia. Western states and tribal lands incorporate entirely different practices. Regional centers will provide much-needed local resources to farmers and ranchers.

Welch #28 —Expands OCCSP Into a Comprehensive Opportunities in Organic Program: This amendment would help eliminate steep barriers farmers often face to enter the industry, including high certification costs and insufficient technical assistance from existing USDA programs.

Welch #29—Increase OCCSP's Reimbursement Rate: This amendment would increase the reimbursement rate for OCCSP from $750 to $1500 for the next five years

Welch #30—Increase OCCSP's Reimbursement Rate and Make the Program Permanent: This amendment would increase the reimbursement rate for OCCSP from $750 to $1500 for the next five years, and make the program permanent

Welch #31—Permanently Establish the Organic Market Development Grant Without Mandatory Funding For 5 Years: This amendment would permanently establish the Organic Market Development Grant without mandatory funding for 5 years

Welch #32—Permanently Establish the Organic Market Development Grant with Mandatory Funding For 5 Years: This amendment would permanently establish the Organic Market Development Grant with mandatory funding for 5 years

Welch #33—Limit Overcollateralization, Remove Lifetime Ban on Borrowers That Have Received Debt Forgiveness, And Improve Ability for Applicants to Refinance Loans: This amendment aims to improve credit access

Welch #34—Remove Term Limit Requirements on Direct Farm Ownership Loans and Direct Farm Operating Loans; And Broaden the Scope for the Experience Requirement for Beginning Farmers and Ranchers to Apply for FSA Loans: This amendment aims to improve credit access

Welch #35—Multi-Year BFR Development Loan Pilot Program: This amendment would establish a new pilot program. Investments that will benefit the farm for multiple years and require multiple years to generate return-on-investment are expected to be paid off within one year. Beginning farmers thus often delay investing in critical start-up capacities. The pilot program would address those barriers with flexible, multi-year repayment terms, and helps alleviate challenges for farms that accumulate limited working capital in those pivotal first years with a maximum interest rate and reduced collateral requirements that cannot exceed the value of the loan

Welch #36—Reform The Rural Energy for America Program: Taken from Senator Welch's *Rural Energy Equity Act*, this amendment would improve and authorize strong funding levels for the Rural Energy for America Program

Welch #37—Reauthorize and Expand the Rural Energy Savings Program: Taken from Senator Welch's *Rural Energy Savings Act*, this amendment would help rural utilities maximize the benefits of RESP to lower energy costs for rural communities

Welch #38—Increase Capacity in Rural Communities: This amendment (1) Provide multi-year flexible grants to rural communities to address ongoing issues in rural communities. (2) Provide TA grants to help rural communities navigate the complex federal grant application process. (3) Expand the Rural Partners Network

Welch #39—Require USDA To Provide Congress a Briefing on Their Communication With GAO: This amendment holds USDA responsible to responding to GAO request

Welch #40—Strike E15: This amendment strikes E15 completely

Welch #41—Reconnect 100/100 Broadband Speeds: This amendment sets ReConnect Speeds at 100/100

Welch #42— Farm Home Loans Act: This amendment is the text of the bipartisan Fostering the Availability in Rural Markets of (FARM) Home Loans Act of 2026, bipartisan, bicameral legislation to spur rural economic growth by helping more homebuyers qualify for rural housing assistance. The Senators' legislation would modernize housing assistance eligibility requirements.