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NCC Extremely Disappointed with Exclusion of Cottonseed Policy from Omnibus

MEMPHIS, Tenn. – National Cotton Council (NCC) Chairman Ronnie Lee said the NCC “is extremely disappointed that the fiscal year 2017 omnibus appropriations bill does not include the cottonseed policy developed by the U.S. cotton industry in consultation with Congress.”

Lee said the cottonseed policy is: 1) broadly supported by the entire U.S. cotton industry, as well as many other farm bill stakeholders; 2) budget neutral with the costs offset only by cotton-related provisions; 3) vetted and supported by a broad, bipartisan group in Congress; and 4) designed to help facilitate development of the 2018 farm bill.

The Bronwood, Ga., cotton producer says that, unfortunately, Senators Leahy (D-VT) and Stabenow (D-MI) chose to play politics at the expense of cotton producers and farm families that continue to struggle with negative economic returns and increasing financial pressures. While many in Congress urge the agriculture community to work collectively on policy issues, it is disheartening that some in Congress choose not to take that same approach in their efforts, instead pitting one commodity or industry against another.

“The Senators’ desire to help dairy producers somehow became a pre-requisite for whether Congress could provide a policy to cotton producers to help respond to the ongoing financial and trade policy challenges,” Lee said. “There was no rationale or justification for linking support between cotton and dairy producers. These actions not only have left cotton producers with no near-term options to help them deal with long-running economic issues, but have harmed the prospects for developing a new farm bill. Without the cottonseed policy in place, the result is that all farm bill stakeholders will be seeking support from an expected smaller overall budget available for the next farm bill.”

The NCC would like to thank all those Members of Congress who led the efforts to include the cottonseed policy, and in particular, Sens. Cochran (R-MS), Cornyn (R-TX), Boozman (R-AR), Perdue (R-GA), Roberts (R-KS), Strange (R-AL), and Reps. Conaway (R-TX), Peterson (D-MN), Aderholt (R-AL), Bishop (D-GA), McCarthy (R-CA), Frelinghuysen (R-NJ), and Lowey (D-NY).

The cottonseed policy was developed by all of the cotton industry’s segments and production regions over the course of the past two years. A letter from 58 cotton organizations was recently sent to Appropriations Committee leaders outlining this policy and the immediate need for it. The letter is on the NCC’s website at <http://www.cotton.org/issues/2017/upload/17cseedapplet.pdf>.

“The NCC will now shift its focus to working with Secretary Perdue to determine what administrative options USDA has to help cotton producers,” Lee stated. “Our industry will remain optimistic that the economic well-being of farm families and our rural communities will ultimately prevail over Congressional politics.”

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