

# SEED:

## Farm Bill Priorities

### ASTA's priority issues include:

**COMMODITY PROGRAMS:** Maintain current language ensuring that program requirements do not adversely affect hybrid seed growers.

**CONSERVATION PROGRAMS:** Working lands conservation is an important element for the sustainable growth of agriculture.

**Seeding** requirements in conservation programs can impact program costs and effectiveness. We do not support language in HR 2 that would reduce the cost share for seeds in the Conservation Reserve Program from 50% to 25%. In order to best address program needs, we recommend that seed subcommittees be formed under the State Technical Committees to allow for increased input from stakeholders and to increase transparency in seed mix formulations for conservation programs. ASTA also supports the prioritization of professionally produced seed that has undergone proper testing in Title II programs.

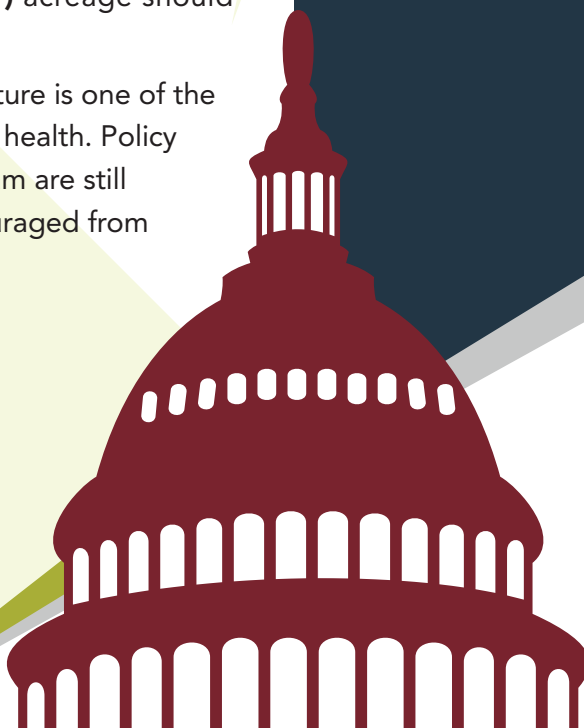
**Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)** acreage should be increased from current cap.

**Cover Crop** usage in production agriculture is one of the most promising practices to address soil health. Policy refinements in the crop insurance program are still needed so that producers are not discouraged from using cover crops.



Founded in 1883, the American Seed Trade Association represents over 700 companies involved in seed production, plant breeding and related industries in North America. ASTA's broad membership offers varieties from alfalfa to zucchini and all production types including conventional, organic and biotech.

As a diverse organization, ASTA has priorities in six different Farm Bill titles. We urge Congress to pass a Farm Bill that provides a strong safety net for growers and incorporates policies that support the continued success of the agriculture sector.



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**TRADE:** Increase funding for international trade programs such as the **Market Access Program (MAP)**, **Foreign Market Development Program (FMD)**, and specialized programs like the **Technical Assistance for Specialty Crops (TASC)**.

ASTA supports language in HR 2 that updates USDA's authority to promote trade and innovation- friendly policies (i.e. removing nontariff barriers to US exports) globally for new agricultural production technologies.

**RESEARCH: Plant Breeding Research** – USDA plays an important role in plant breeding research and cultivar development. **The National Plant Germplasm System (NPGS)** is the world's largest gene bank and a vital component of that work. ASTA supports greater coordination within the Department to maximize the impact of their plant breeding investments.

ASTA supports continued funding for the **Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI)**, the **Foundation for Food and Agriculture Research (FFAR)** and pest and disease prevention programs in the Horticulture Title.

**Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative (OREI)** – increased funding for OREI will ensure there continues to be research on organic production methods and its challenges.

**HORTICULTURE: Plant Variety Protection Act (PVPA)** – Language in HR 2 expands coverage of the Plant Variety Protection Act to include asexually propagated materials. Without this language, asexually propagated materials, such as flowers, are only able to be protected under the Plant Patent Act. However, the Plant Patent Act has a loophole that has resulted in protected plants being copied and marketed in the U.S. The expansion of PVPA has the effect of closing this loophole which is costing U.S. companies millions of dollars.

**Biostimulants** – Language in HR 2 creates a definition for biostimulants and directs USDA to develop a report on a regulatory framework for biostimulants in order to address significant uncertainty created by a patchwork of state regulations.

**Agricultural Innovation** – Language in HR 2 directs the Secretary, in consultation with the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency and the Commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration to provide Congress with a report on plans for improving the federal government's policies and procedures with respect to gene editing and other precision plant breeding methods.

**Agriculture Technology Education** – Language in HR 2 directs USDA to carry out a national science-based education campaign to increase public awareness regarding the use of technology in food and agriculture production.

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