

SENATOR JOE BIDEN ON AGRICULTURE

Though small in size, Delaware is one of the nation's leading agriculture states and boasts a diversified economy. While better known for its banking and financial institutions and chemical companies, Delaware is home to the nation's number one poultry-producing county in America. With a thriving corn growing industry in Sussex County, wheat production throughout Kent County, and mushroom production in New Castle County, Delaware is home to many of the nation's oldest continuously-operating farms, some going back more than 300 years. Senator Biden has been a powerful advocate for Delaware's farmers, and continues to work tirelessly to ensure they get the support they need from the federal government.

THE BIDEN RECORD: OPENING OPPORTUNITIES FOR FARMERS

The Farm Bill

Senator Biden supported the Farm Bill and believes that it is a responsible compromise. It is not perfect, but it was the product of lengthy negotiations and passage was essential to our farm economy. For Delaware and the rest of the nation, this bill contains funding and programs that are critical to the future of the family farmer, stewardship of our environment and meeting nutritional needs at a time when food prices are rising.

Senator Biden is pleased that the bill will continue our support of farm-grown, alternative fuels, moving toward cellulosic ethanol. Reducing our dependence on imported oil is critical. At the same time, there is a global food crisis; today's ethanol production, mostly from corn, must become tomorrow's ethanol from non-food sources. Senator Biden also believes that this bill contains unprecedented funding for specialty crops. Senator Biden was disappointed, however, that in a time of record food prices and a global food crisis, the bill did not include more significant reforms to farm subsidy payments.

Opening Domestic and Foreign Markets to Delaware Products

Senator Biden is one of the Senate's leading proponents of the idea that the future of American agriculture lies in exports. In 2000, he voted to give Delaware's farmers unprecedented access to China's market of 1.2 billion consumers for U.S. farm products and services. Senator Biden argued for a bilateral trade agreement to enhance opportunities for Delaware's farmers, workers and businesses to compete successfully in China's market.

Earlier, in the mid-90's, immediately upon learning that Russia threatened to stop importing American poultry products, Senator Biden led the Senate effort against this ban. He also has fought to maintain a competitive marketplace at home for America's farmers. For example, during the 1980's, Senator Biden defended the interests of small growers on the Delmarva peninsula and challenged foreign subsidies. When several countries were paying their chicken growers an 11 cent-per-pound subsidy to export their products, and American trade negotiators were dragging their feet, Senator Biden

authored a key amendment passed by the Senate to pressure the European Economic Community and Brazil to reduce unfair subsidies.

Responding to the Global Food Crisis

As Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Senator Biden held a hearing on the global food crisis. With global food prices rising 3 percent in the past three years and the United States experiencing the worst food inflation in 17 years, Senator Biden announced a new approach to food policy and the global food crisis. Senator Biden strongly believes that it is imperative that we rededicate resources and attention in the following four areas: First, we need to reinvest in agriculture development. Second, we need to make sure our institutions are organized effectively to address the food challenge. Third, we should ask the hard questions about our existing food policies - does our current bio-fuels policy that diverts corn from food to fuel make sense? Finally, the international community should consider a global compact on food that will eliminate crippling food tariffs affecting the poorest countries.

THE BIDEN RECORD: KEEPING FARMS SAFE AND INNOVATIVE

Combating Avian Influenza

Senator Biden was at the forefront of the fight against Avian Influenza when it was discovered in two flocks of chickens in Delaware in 2004. The presence of avian influenza is a major threat to the poultry industry and at the time, over 50 countries banned U.S. poultry exports. Senator Biden immediately requested funding to respond to and prevent the spread of avian influenza in Delaware, Maryland and other surrounding states. In addition, Senator Biden requested and received assistance from the United States Department of Agriculture to help Delaware and their poultry businesses recover and to undertake new research to minimize this threat. He also worked to help re-open international markets to Delaware exports.

Supporting Agricultural Research and Education

In an effort to improve our lead in agricultural productivity and efficiency, research investment is necessary so that U.S. producers can continue to serve a global marketplace and meet the demands of a growing world population. To help American farmers remain the most productive in the world, Senator Biden has worked with his Senate colleagues to increase federal funding available for competitive grants for agricultural research.

Funding the Farmland Protection Program

Senator Biden has been a long-time advocate of funding for the Farmland Protection Program. Under this system, landowners are encouraged to voluntarily convey the development rights of their land to the state while retaining the right to use the property for agriculture. This gives family farmers added protection from development while preserving the farmers' way of life for future generations.

Providing Disaster Relief for Farmers and Ranchers

The last few years have seen farmers all across America hit with one natural disaster after another. Senator Biden has consistently voted to increase funding for disaster relief for farmers and ranchers in order to address these needs. He also supported initiatives to target relief for drought victims and maintain crop insurance payments and assistance for dairy farmers.

Supporting Delaware's Extension Service

From providing farmers with timely weather and crop information, to informing expectant mothers about nutritional needs, to developing new disease-resistant types of lima beans, Delaware's Extension Service provides the agricultural community with a variety of important assistance. Senator Biden knows that the returns from these programs far exceed their costs, and he has consistently fought against short-sighted attempts to cut funding to the Extension Service.

Stopping Foreign Plant and Animal Species From Reaching Our Shores and Harming Our Environment

Senator Biden has been a strong supporter of efforts to combat the problem of invasive species – plants and animals improperly brought to U.S. shores. Senator Biden feels that these non-native species have the potential to be one of the largest economic and environmental threats in the 21st century. Non-native species alter vegetation, compete with native species, introduce new diseases and interfere with maritime commerce. Conscious of these dangers, Senator Biden continues to support programs aimed at preventing the importation of non-native plants and animals to the United States.

University of Delaware's Poultry Lab

Senator Biden's hard work and commitment to ensuring healthy and profitable flocks led the Congress to provide \$3.5 million in federal funds toward the construction of a state-of-the-art poultry disease research facility at the University of Delaware. This laboratory facilitates nationally important research and testing services, and provides growers with timely disease prevention information.