

## **US House Names Conferees To Work With Senate On Farm Bill** (Dow Jones Newswires, DC)

The U.S. House of Representatives Wednesday appointed conferees to work with senators to create a unified farm bill, laying down a blueprint for agricultural and nutrition policy for five years.

The appointment of conferees paves the way for Congress to finish work on a five-year 2008 farm bill, House Agriculture Committee ranking minority member Bob Goodlatte, R-Va., said.

Rep. Dennis Cardoza, D-Calif., said in a statement: "The appointment of conferees is a significant step towards completion of the Farm Bill."

Still, Goodlatte said, there remain "many, many hurdles" before a new farm bill is completed.

The deadline for Congress to produce a new farm bill is April 18, when the latest extension of the 2002 farm bill expires.

Bush administration officials have said recently that another short-term extension would only be signed by President George W. Bush if Congress showed it was mostly finished with the farm bill. If that hasn't happened by April 18, U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Ed Schafer said recently, a one- or two-year extension of the current 2002 farm bill may be necessary.

A major factor complicating House and Senate farm bill conferees is a plan by both houses of Congress to go \$10 billion over the \$280 billion budget laid out for the farm bill by the Congressional Budget Office.

There has been no agreement on where to get the funds for that spending. Various revenue-raising tax measures were approved in both the House and Senate last year to pay for the extra spending, but the House overwhelmingly approved legislation Wednesday expressing disapproval of such revenue.

The House, in a 400-to-11 vote Wednesday evening, approved a non-binding "motion to instruct" farm bill conferees not to use tax measures to fund the 2008 farm bill.

House Agriculture Chairman Collin Peterson said Wednesday in a statement: "I'm confident that if everyone comes to the table willing to negotiate and compromise, we can pass a new Farm Bill that will expand important nutrition and conservation programs and provide new resources for fruit and vegetable producers and renewable energy programs while improving the farm safety net."