The Senate could pass its $288 billion farm bill to boost food stamp benefits and for the first time guarantee crop revenue by the end of next week under an agreement on Thursday that broke a month-long impasse.

The agreement allows Republicans and Democrats to offer 20 amendments apiece out of the dozens that are pending. Action on the bill was deadlocked since November 6 by the disagreement over how many amendments would be considered and on which topics.

Majority Leader Harry Reid announced the agreement on Thursday evening. An aide to Republican Leader Mitch McConnell said the goal was to complete work on the five-year bill next week. Debate on amendments was expected to begin on Friday.

"With swift action in the Senate, this bill can pass our chamber by the holiday recess," said Agriculture Committee chairman Tom Harkin in a statement. Only hours before, the Iowa Democrat warned that a parliamentary "train wreck" might derail the bill.

There are roughly two weeks left in this year's session. Farm groups say it will be impossible for Congress to enact a new farm law this year. The White House has threatened to veto the Senate bill, as well as the House version passed in July.

If the Senate passes its bill this month, House and Senate negotiators could draft a final version early next year to send to the president.

There was no immediate word on which amendments would be debated. More than 260 amendments were filed by mid-November. They included proposals to block the wealthiest Americans from collecting crop subsides, to require labeling of food from cloned animals, to change tax and immigration laws, to put more controls on "puppy mills" and to toughen fair-play laws that govern contracts between producers and agribusinesses.

The White House says people with an adjusted gross income over $200,000 a year should not receive crop subsidies. It also says the farm bill should not raise taxes or increase crop support rates.

Like the House and Senate, the administration has proposed "revenue protection" for grain, cotton and soybean growers.

By agreeing to 20 amendments per side, the Senate averted a potentially pivotal vote on Friday to limit debate on the farm bill. Democrats lost a November 16 vote to limit debate on a 55-42 roll call with 60 votes needed for passage. Republicans said they would have defeated the new vote too.
Reid said earlier that irrelevant amendments would be barred if the Senate agreed to limit debate to 30 hours. Republicans said Reid did not want open debate and was trying to pick their amendments.