

Facilitating a Predictable Marketplace

Issue Background

Global barriers to agricultural innovation are denying U.S. farmers access to the latest tools of biotechnology. These barriers often take the form of regulatory measures on U.S. exports that unjustifiably delay the approval of new biotechnology products, creating a risk that agricultural trade will be disrupted. It is essential that U.S. government agencies be properly resourced to engage trading partners to advance policies and regulations that facilitate agricultural innovation to ensure U.S. competitiveness and global food security.

Increased efforts are needed to promote and grow our export economy, support innovation in the agriculture industry, create good jobs and strong rural communities and ensure that regulations in foreign countries are based on sound science and align with international standards.

Policy Position

BIO supports the bipartisan “Growing American Food Exports Act of 2018” (H.R. 5379) introduced by Representatives Neal Dunn (R-FL) and Jimmy Panetta (D-CA).

This legislation amends the Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act of 1990 to update a USDA Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) program that funds efforts to harmonize international reviews of agricultural production technologies. Ultimately, this bill will facilitate a stronger export economy for the United States and improve trade relations with U.S. trade partners.

Specifically, this bill provides:

- **Consistent Funding for FAS’ Biotechnology and Agricultural Trade Program:** Authorized in the 2002 Farm Bill, the FAS’ Biotechnology and Agricultural Trade Program has not had consistent, dedicated funding since due to a lapse in authorized appropriations.
- **Clarify FAS’ Authority to Advocate for Biotechnology:** While FAS has had the authority to advocate for biotech and biotech products, the program has regularly run into challenges of consistent funding, which have periodically disrupted advocacy efforts. This bill would also clarify FAS’ advocacy authority by explicitly granting FAS the authority to advocate on any and all “new agricultural production technologies” as a part of their biotechnology advocacy efforts.
- **Policies that Address Top Trade Priorities:**
 - Maintaining and expanding access in major markets;
 - Advancing trade-facilitating solutions to inadvertent Low-Level Presence (LLP) of genetically engineered products approved in the United States, but not in foreign markets;
 - Promoting trade- and innovation-friendly policies globally for emerging technologies; and
 - Building international coalitions for global acceptance of U.S. crops and predictable, science-based regulations.

Key Points

- ✓ According to the most recent data, U.S. farmers are the largest producers of biotechnology crops in the world with 457.4 million acres.
- ✓ Approximately one third of all U.S. agricultural exports, roughly \$40 billion, are produced with or contain products of genetic engineering.
- ✓ Trading partners that rely on imports of grain and oilseeds to meet domestic demand for quality vegetable protein, such as China and Europe, maintain regulatory systems that significantly delay the approval of new biotechnology trade – delays that can average more than 5 years.
 - ✓ To enable innovation and to facilitate trade in these commodities, it is critical for the U.S. government to be funded adequately to actively engage and head off barriers to agricultural innovation.