



PRESS RELEASE

Ag Groups Applaud Senate Approval of the Surface Transportation Bill and the Agricultural Hours of Service Exemption

Washington, D.C. (March 14, 2012) – With planting season already beginning in some parts of the country, the Agricultural Retailers Association (ARA), the Agricultural and Food Transporters Conference (AFTC) of the American Trucking Associations, the National Council of Farmer Cooperatives (NCFC) and The Fertilizer Institute (TFI) applaud the Senate’s passage today of the Surface Transportation bill. The bill includes a clarification of transportation regulations critical to the agriculture industry’s ability to distribute farm supplies in a timely manner, especially during busy times of the year.

This important clarification to the Surface Transportation Bill was presented in the form of an amendment, introduced by Senators Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn.) and Pat Roberts (R-Kan.) and co-sponsored by Senators Claire McCaskill (D-Mo.), Ben Nelson (D-Neb.), Mike Johanns (R-Neb.) and Richard Lugar (R-Ind.) The amendment resolved questions regarding the applicability of the agricultural hours of service (HOS) exemption and received approval by voice vote on the Senate floor yesterday.

The HOS exemption came into question in 2009 when the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) issued an interpretation of the regulations that resulted in transportation restrictions for certain farm supplies. The legislation amends aspects of the Motor Carrier Safety Improvement Act, which served as the basis for FMCSA’s 2009 interpretation, to clarify the applicability of exemptions for agricultural products. Identical legislation was introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives in October by Reps. Sam Graves (R-Mo.) and Blaine Luetkemeyer (R-Mo.).

“We appreciate the leadership demonstrated by Senators Klobuchar and Roberts through their introduction of this important amendment to the Surface Transportation Bill,” said Daren Coppock, ARA president and chief executive officer. “The Senate’s passage of this legislation helps ensure that agricultural retailers are able to supply farmers with the products they need in an efficient manner during critical times of the year.”

“We thank and applaud the efforts of Sens Klobuchar, Roberts and others for their work and support on this important issue. The agricultural exemption to the HOS rule is a crucial tool for transporters of agricultural products during the busiest times of the year,” said AFTC Chairman, John Whittington. “We also commend the Senate for passing their Surface Transportation Bill and including language that will continue to allow the agriculture industry to work with the flexibility necessary to get the job done.”

Specifically, the legislation clarifies that the agricultural hours of service exemption is applicable to:

- Drivers transporting agricultural commodities within a 100 air-mile radius;
- Drivers transporting farm supplies for agricultural purposes from a wholesale or retail business to a farm or other location where the farm supplies are intended to be used within a 100 air-mile radius from the distribution point; or
- Drivers transporting farm supplies from a wholesale location to a retail location so long as the transportation is within a 100 air-mile radius.

“I would like to recognize both Senator Klobuchar and Senator Roberts for their leadership on this issue,” said Chuck Conner, President and CEO of NCFC. “The Senate’s action in approving this amendment will help ensure that farmer co-ops across the U.S. can continue to meet the farm supply needs of their producer-owners in a timely manner.”

“TFI is very pleased with the passage of this important legislation and we are grateful for the efforts of Senators Klobuchar , Roberts and others who offered their support of the agricultural hours of service exemption,” said TFI President Ford B. West. “We hope the House will work quickly to pass similar legislation.”

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Agricultural Retailers Association

Richard Gupton
Phone: (202) 457-0825
Richard@aradc.org

The **Agricultural Retailers Association (ARA)** is a nonprofit trade association representing the interests of retailers across the United States on legislative and regulatory issues on Capitol Hill. As the political voice of agricultural retailers, ARA not only represents its membership but also educates members on the political process and important issues affecting the industry. For more information, visit www.aradc.org.

Agricultural and Food Transporters Conference

American Trucking Associations
Jon Samson
Executive Director
Phone: (202) 478-6850
jsamson@trucking.org

Agricultural and Food Transporters Conference (AFTC), founded in 1995, is the national organization representing motor carrier and allied members of the American Trucking Associations (ATA) on critical issues affecting agricultural and food. For additional information, visit the [AFTC website](#).

National Council of Farmer Cooperatives

Justin Darisse

Phone: (202)-879-0816

jdarisse@ncfc.org

The National Council of Farmer Cooperatives is a national association representing America's farmer cooperatives. There are nearly 3,000 farmer cooperatives across the U.S. whose members include a majority of our nation's more than 2 million farmers, ranchers and growers. These farmer cooperative businesses handle, process, and market agricultural commodities and related products; furnish farm supplies; and provide credit and associated financial services. Earnings from these activities are returned to their members on a patronage basis. Farmer cooperatives also provide jobs for nearly 250,000 Americans, many in rural areas, with a combined payroll of over \$8 billion. Additional information about NCFC can be found at <http://www.ncfc.org>.

The Fertilizer Institute

Sarah Monke

Phone: (202) 515-2716

smonke@tfi.org

The Fertilizer Institute represents the nation's fertilizer industry. Producers, wholesalers, retailers and trading firms which comprise its membership are served by a full time Washington, D.C., staff in various legislative, educational and technical areas as well as with information and public relations programs. Further information and resources on 4R nutrient stewardship is available at www.nutrientstewardship.com