

Roth: Farm Bill Addresses Climate Change

The federal government has started taking some necessary steps toward addressing climate change.

Congress included some important measures in the recently passed farm bill that will help address some environmental issues. For one, the farm bill has a provision requiring farmers to meet a minimum standard of environmental protection to be qualified for federal crop insurance on sensitive land like wetlands.

Farmers who own sensitive land and want to obtain crop insurance on that land must implement an approved soil conservation plan on highly erodible land that is currently producing crops and was cropped before 1985.

Another provision in the farm bill takes program benefits away from farmers who fill or drain wetlands or expand existing drainage on farmed wetlands. All of these provisions will encourage best practices in terms of conservation and ensure that farmers are managing their land in a sustainable manner.

Another measure that President Barack Obama announced to address climate change is the establishment of seven regional climate hubs throughout the country, including one in El Reno.

The purpose of these climate hubs is to assist farmers and rural communities in responding to climate change, including drought, invasive pests, fires and floods.

These measures are important because climate change could have a severe impact on the U.S. agriculture industry, which contributes about \$200 billion to the economy every year.

More extreme temperatures can prevent the growth of many

crops. An unfortunate example of this occurred in 2008, when the Mississippi River flooded right before harvest. This resulted in an estimated loss of \$8 billion for farmers. The government estimates that the U.S. economy lost \$50 billion due to drought from 2011 to 2013, and much of the losses were from the agriculture industry.

As climate change continues, the increasing extremity of weather will have plenty of serious consequences, both environmental and economic. For example, this past January, much of the country experienced extremely cold temperatures. Several industries of the U.S. economy were negatively affected by the weather, including the U.S. auto industry, where Ford, GM and Toyota cited weather as having a negative impact on their sales. Job creation was less than anticipated in January, and many economists cited the miserable weather as a large factor.

With increasingly severe weather year after year, it has become imperative for America to start addressing climate change. The measures in the farm bill and President Obama's establishment of climate hubs will be a nice, albeit small step forward to help farmers implement the most sustainable practices.

Continuing to implement incremental policies that address climate change will benefit farmers, the agriculture industry, the economy as a whole, and the environment. The farm bill and the establishment of climate hubs are a step in the right direction.