

Senate Votes for Organic Standards, LISA Research

In swift action on the 1990 Farm Bill during the last week of July, the U.S. Senate voted in favour of national standards for organic foods and funding for a \$40 million low-input, sustainable agriculture research education program. By a 60 to 32 vote, it also defeated an attempt by Iowa Senator Charles Grassley to weaken the Bill's section on research in sustainable agriculture.

Grassley's amendment would have changed the definition of sustainable agriculture by eliminating all references to lowering chemical inputs. It would also have cut the state-federal matching grant program for research in sustainable agriculture. "The rejection of the Grassley amendment is a major statement of Senate support for low-input, sustainable agriculture," said IAA Executive Director Garth Youngberg.

Provisions for an Integrated Farm Management program and cropping flexibility on 25 percent of commodity-program acreage also were approved by the Senate. The IFM program permits producers with approved farm plans to use crop rotations without losing either program base or payments. A cap of 3 to 5 million acres is placed on this program. The commodity base acreage change would allow farmers to keep their base while moving rotations on 25 percent of that acreage, but would not make commodity program payments on acres in rotation.

The "circle of poison" provision, which would stop the export of pesticides now banned in the United States, was also voted forward in the Senate Bill, as was legislation to address the impact of cosmetic grading standards for fruits and vegetables on pesticide use. Studies by EPA, OTA, and NAS have shown that relaxation of cosmetic standards would enable farmers to more easily reduce pesticide use.

"Overall, the Senate has passed a well-developed bill that we expect to hold its own through the conference committee sessions," summed up IAA Executive of Policy Development Jim Aidala. Senator Patrick Leahy, Chairman of the Senate Agriculture Committee exercised strong leadership in taking many sustainable agriculture provisions forward he said, and Leahy had identified passage of the organic certification, program as one of his top priorities. Source: *Alternative Agriculture News*, , Vol. 8, No.8 - August 1990