



Office of Representative Heath Shuler

Representing North Carolina's Eleventh Congressional District

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Farm Bill Passes House Providing Landmark Aid to WNC Farmers *Bill Supports Rural Communities, Conservation, & Energy Independence*

Washington, D.C. – Representative Heath Shuler today applauded the passage of the Farm, Nutrition and Bioenergy Act of 2007, commonly referred to as the Farm Bill, which makes historic investments in programs to support Western North Carolina's fruit and vegetable producers. For the first time, the 2007 Farm Bill provides a historic \$1.5 billion in baseline budget funding dedicated to programs that directly benefit fruit and vegetable producers.

"I am extremely proud that the Farm Bill we passed today will begin providing assistance to the family farmers in Western North Carolina. This bill will give much needed assistance to our rural communities, provide our school children with nutritious fruits and vegetables, and move our nation toward energy independence," said Rep. Shuler.

Section 32 funding is used by the USDA to directly purchase a variety of fruit, vegetable and tree nut products for through domestic nutrition and food assistance programs to provide fresh fruits and vegetables in our schools. The Farm Bill expands Section 32 funding by \$406 million. Rep. Shuler requested this increase in a letter to the Rep. Collin Peterson, the Chairman of the House Agriculture Committee.

Rep. Shuler fought for various provisions that were included in the Farm Bill that passed the House. He offered an amendment which will help private land owners protect our forests from invasive species such as the hemlock wooly adelgid. The hemlock wooly adelgid is responsible for the destruction of thousands of acres of Carolina hemlock trees in the Southern Appalachian Mountains. This amendment passed the House with overwhelming bipartisan support.

Conservation programs in the Farm Bill protect environmentally sensitive land and encourage environmentally friendly practices on working farmland. The bill extends and increases funding for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program and expands the activities for which a producer can receive incentive payments to include technical services that will help fruit and vegetable producers access the program.

Rep. Shuler also specifically asked for funding the Healthy Forest Reserve Program. For the first time, mandatory funding of \$85 million over 5 years will be spent to help private forest landowners manage and conserve forests.

The Farm Bill also includes key provisions that invest in rural communities, including economic development programs and access to broadband telecommunication services in rural, underserved areas. It also addresses the health care, emergency, and first responder needs of rural areas, as well as creating new markets and rebuilding rural infrastructure.

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The legislation also includes provisions that support efforts to make America energy independent and to fight global warming. The bill invests in renewable energy programs providing \$2 billion in loan guarantees for the development of refineries that process renewable fuels, a key step toward bringing more renewable fuels to market in America and includes \$1.5 billion for production incentives for ethanol and biodiesel made from agricultural, forest, and waste plant materials.

The Farm Bill was supported by a broad range of farm organizations, including the American Farm Bureau, the National Farmers Union, and a wide range of key commodity organizations. Other organizations backing the legislation include conservation groups such as The Nature Conservancy, Ducks Unlimited, The Wildlife Society, and American Farmland Trust and nutrition organizations including Second Harvest and Voices for America's Children.

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