

AgriTalk

March 22, 2012

Mike Adams with House Agriculture Committee Ranking Member Rep.
Collin Peterson (D., Minn.)

NOTE: This is an **Unofficial Transcript** of an *AgriTalk* interview.



Keith Good
FarmPolicy.com, Inc.
Champaign, IL
www.FarmPolicy.com

Mr. Mike Adams: Joining us now is Congressman Peterson. Sir, thank you very much for joining us. I know that you're busy. We appreciate your time. Real quick, let's get to your reaction to Chairman Ryan's budget proposal in cutting \$33 billion from ag spending.

Rep. Peterson: Well, I think it's going to cause big problems, because they're requiring a reconciliation process so they can avoid these defense cuts and so forth, and apparently that's going to have to happen before we actually start writing the farm bill. And the other problem is in the Super Committee bill we cut 850 million in the first year, and what they're going to apparently tell us in the instructions for reconciliation is we have to cut 8.2 billion in the first year, and I don't know how you do that.

I think we were fifty-fifty trying to get a farm bill done this year. I think this lowers the odds significantly. I think this is going to cause a big problem. And what's really sad about it is that generally, when you do a reconciliation, there's an agreement between the House and Senate to both sides are going to do a reconciliation. This is a reconciliation that's not going to be done in the Senate. This is being done strictly to get enough Republican votes to pass a budget, so it has no effect on anything, at the end of the day, other than to cause a lot of trouble for the Ag Committee in the meantime. So it's highly problematic what they're doing.

Mr. Adams: We're talking with Congressman Collin Peterson, Ranking Member of the House Agriculture Committee. We need to take a break. When we come back, we'll talk more about this and whether or not we can get a farm bill done this year. You've heard Congressman Peterson say it's going to make it very, very difficult. He said that this could guarantee that there will be no farm bill this year. What will it take to

actually get one done? We'll talk with Congressman Peterson about that when we come back. Stay with us. This is AgriTalk.

[*Break.*]

Mr. Adams: Welcome back to AgriTalk. Congressman Collin Peterson, Ranking Member of the House Ag Committee, with us. In case you've missed it this week, the House Budget Chair, Paul Ryan, proposed \$33 billion in ag cuts, more cuts for nutrition spending. Congressman Peterson with us saying it makes it very problematic getting a farm bill done this year. All right, Congressman, how do you see this playing out? What will it take to get a farm bill done this year?

Rep. Peterson: You know, I don't... It's one of those things where I don't think you can predict what's going to happen. Apparently the reconciliation cuts are at the discretion of the committee, so it'll depend, to some extent, on how that's all played out. It'll depend on what happens over in the Senate, and can they get a bill out of committee. If they do, are you going to end up with bills so different in the House and Senate that you can't reconcile them? That's possible.

We could get to September and not have this done, and then there's even a question, I think, the last time, remember in '07, when I did the farm bill, we had to extend various authorities to the Secretary five different times in order to finally get the bill done because they couldn't get the Senate to take it up. But this time we're hearing rumors that they won't extend the current farm bill, the different parts of the farm bill, without insisting on further cuts, which basically sets you in the position of having to write a farm bill which, if we get to September, means we weren't able to do anyway.

So it's very unclear. All I would... It looks to me, by interjecting this reconciliation into the process without agreement from the Senate, is just going to almost guarantee that you're not going to get a bill done.

Mr. Adams: So this makes it a non-starter for you then, or do you have to wait and see how it will break down?

Rep. Peterson: Well, it depends on, you know, I mean, we'll continue to try to work with...I'll try to work with [House Agriculture Committee Chairman Frank Lucas (R., Okla.)]. It depends on how it plays out. But I can't see how we can make those kind of cuts, and especially cut that much in the first year and do it in a way that I can end up supporting it.

And frankly, I have a real problem, because they're requiring us to cut our budget, our baseline, in order to hold the military harmless from any cuts. And I have a real problem with that. And they're doing this so they can get the military guys to vote for the budget. And so this is not... They're going through this whole process just so they can get enough votes to pass the budget.

And frankly, this budget committee has become so partisan on both sides, no matter who's in charge, that I am ready to sponsor a bill to get rid of the Budget Committee.

They're not necessary, they're not helping anything, they're causing trouble. And I've had it with them. So that's part of the problem. I just don't agree with what they're doing over there. They're proposing \$187 billion worth of cuts in the overall budget. This is over and above the \$33 billion in reconciliation, so this is way out of line, I think.

Mr. Adams: All right, Congressman, we're out of time, and I know you have to get back to work there.

Rep. Peterson: Yep, I've got to go vote.

Mr. Adams: Thank you very much, and we'll stay in touch.

Rep. Peterson: Okay, thank you.

Mr. Adams: Thank you. Congressman Collin Peterson, Ranking Member of the House Agriculture Committee, with some very strong comments there about the whole budget process, and of course the impact on the farm bill. And wow, it sure makes it sound like it's going to be very hard for them to get the farm bill done this year. Now, things can change, as he said, and they'll keep looking at it, but the way it stands right now doesn't look very optimistic.

And the feeling is, from people we were talking with this week in Washington, it needs to get done this year because it would be even harder next year. The budget situation would be even worse next year. Now, sure, you'd have the election over with, but the budget realities would be as bad or worse next year, so it sure makes it even tougher sledding now, it looks like, for the rest of this year, between now and September, trying to get this farm bill done.

[End of recording.]