

**Climate Bill Long-Term Impacts Should be Brought to Light***By Tracy Taylor Grondine*

Mainstream media and critics have recently struck a nerve with not only farmers and ranchers, but many people who serve and benefit from agriculture's productivity. In a push to pass climate change legislation, the agriculture industry has been painted as greedy and selfish. Some journalists have even reverted to grade-school antics of name-calling and insults.

But, there is a legitimate reason the American Farm Bureau Federation and several other agricultural organizations are opposed to the climate legislation, already passed in the House and now pending in the Senate. Long-term costs of the bill will be substantial not only to agriculture, but the overall economy and will certainly hurt American families.

Most media outlets are only focused on the front-end effects of the climate bill, also known as Waxman-Markey after its sponsors Reps. Henry Waxman (D-Calif.) and Edward Markey (D-Mass.). The energy cost increases generated by the bill will cut farm income by around 5 percent a year by 2020. This economic loss on top of what are already razor-thin margins that many farmers and ranchers are living on today will hurt the industry. But, the effect on agriculture will be more crippling at the back-end of the deal, around 2050.

In 2020, carbon reductions will only be starting and the industry will be receiving significant carbon credit giveaways. But by 2050, the 17 percent cut in agriculture emissions from 2005 levels is estimated to rise to 82 percent and there will be no more credit giveaways. So, by 2050 that 5 percent hit will grow to something more like a 15 percent reduction in farm income.

Further, in 2020 the climate bill will cost each American family \$175 per year out of pocket (of which \$115 will be sent overseas for international offsets and other foreign programs). The Congressional Budget Office estimates the gross family cost of the program before all the giveaways will run \$870 per year with a carbon allowance of \$28 per year. By 2050, no one knows what it will cost families, but there will be no giveaways and the carbon allowance will rise to nearly \$90 per year.

Like any piece of legislation, the devil is in the details, and there are a lot of devils in the Waxman-Markey climate bill. Unfortunately, most media outlets are only focusing on the short-term ramifications of the legislation and not the total costs at full implementation. We can't just highlight costs in the first 10 years, we must look further down the road to how this legislation will impact American households, farms and ranches, and the overall U.S. economy.

Farmers want to be a part of the climate change solution, but such a solution should not jeopardize their economic sustainability in the process, nor should it pave the way for additional economic burdens on American families.