

Field Hearing Testimony to the  
U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Agriculture  
National Archives Building, Morrow, Georgia  
By Andy Bell, Decatur County Farmer  
May 14, 2010

Good afternoon Chairman Peterson, Ranking Member Lucas, and members of the Committee. I am pleased to be here today, and I appreciate the invitation to attend and speak to you.

My name is Andy Bell, and I am a fourth generation farmer from Decatur County, Georgia. I was raised on a family farm near Climax, Georgia. Today I farm in partnership with my brother. We farm both irrigated and non-irrigated land on approximately 2000 acres. We have a diversified farming operation that includes corn, cotton, peanuts, hay, winter forages, and a beef cattle operation. We own land and we also rent land from neighbors.

During my lifetime of farming, I have produced and sold many crops. I have sold corn for as high as \$6.00/bushel and as low as \$1.70/bushel; cotton as high as \$1.00/pound and as low as \$0.26/pound. This type of price fluctuation can be seen in most all crops and livestock during the last 25 years.

Southern agriculture is unique in that our cost of production is higher on certain crops. For example, peanuts and cotton have their own set of tillage and harvest equipment. This specialized equipment is very expensive to own and maintain. A six row peanut picker costs approximately \$100,000 and a six row cotton harvester over \$300,000. These implements are crop specific and are only used for there designed purpose. Grain farmers are then required to have even another set of equipment. As you can see, our costs can quickly escalate as we produce these various crops.

I believe several key provisions of the current farm bill must remain in place in any new legislation. Farmers need downside price protection against extreme low prices. The marketing loan program is a must for all program crops. All crop production on a farm should remain eligible for the marketing loan.

In some years, a farmer may forward contract his expected production. Other times, farmers may place their crop in the marketing loan program in hopes of waiting for a higher price.

The direct and counter-cyclical program (DCP) has worked well and should remain in the new farm bill. The target price system has worked and gives some protection against low prices. The DCP program helps deliver this assistance. Market gains and loan deficiency payments also provide some relief against low prices and should remain in the new farm bill.

Crop insurance is a must on many farms in the South. We can have extreme rainfall, drought, wind storms, hurricanes, or early or late freezes, all in the same year! However, any crop insurance coverage above the 70-75 percent level is simply not affordable. Crop revenue coverage helps, but it is not available for all crops. Crop insurance needs to be improved and must remain affordable for it to be a useful tool in today's agriculture.

Finally, some type of workable permanent disaster program is needed. The Supplemental Revenue Assistance Program (SURE) does not work for southern agriculture. Growing multiple crops and diversification on many farms makes it almost impossible to qualify for benefits.

In conclusion, the current farm bill has worked reasonably well for southern agriculture. Any changes to the current farm bill should create new opportunities as well as preserving the proven target price system. Agriculture is the leading industry in Georgia and in most of the South. We need sound agricultural policy to continue producing the best food and fiber in the world.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for holding this hearing in Georgia and for allowing me to be a part of the discussion.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "William A. Bell, III". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name.

William A. Bell, III (Andy)  
1290 Pelham Road  
Climax, Georgia 39834

Committee on Agriculture  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Required Witness Disclosure Form

House Rules\* require nongovernmental witnesses to disclose the amount and source of Federal grants received since October 1, 2007.

Name: William A. Bell, III

Address: 1290 Pelham Road, Climax, GA 39834

Telephone: 229-248-7100

Organization you represent (if any): None

1. Please list any federal grants or contracts (including subgrants and subcontracts) you have received since October 1, 2007, as well as the source and the amount of each grant or contract. House Rules do NOT require disclosure of federal payments to individuals, such as Social Security or Medicare benefits, farm program payments, or assistance to agricultural producers:

Source: Not applicable Amount: None

Source: \_\_\_\_\_ Amount: \_\_\_\_\_

2. If you are appearing on behalf of an organization, please list any federal grants or contracts (including subgrants and subcontracts) the organization has received since October 1, 2007, as well as the source and the amount of each grant or contract:

Source: Not applicable Amount: None

Source: \_\_\_\_\_ Amount: \_\_\_\_\_

Please check here if this form is NOT applicable to you:

Signature: William A. Bell III

\* Rule XI, clause 2(g)(4) of the U.S. House of Representatives provides: Each committee shall, to the greatest extent practicable, require witnesses who appear before it to submit in advance written statements of proposed testimony and to limit their initial presentations to the committee to brief summaries thereof. In the case of a witness appearing in a nongovernmental capacity, a written statement of proposed testimony shall include a curriculum vitae and a disclosure of the amount and source (by agency and program) of each Federal grant (or subgrant thereof) or contract (or subcontract thereof) received during the current fiscal year or either of the two previous fiscal years by the witness or by any entity represented by the witness.

PLEASE ATTACH DISCLOSURE FORM TO EACH COPY OF TESTIMONY.

**Committee on Agriculture  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Information Required From Non-governmental Witnesses**

House rules require non-governmental witnesses to provide their resume or biographical sketch prior to testifying. If you do not have a resume or biographical sketch available, please complete this form.

1. Name: William A. Bell, III (Andy)
2. Business Address: 1290 Pelham Road  
P.O. Box 365  
Climax, GA 39834
3. Business Phone Number: 229-248-7100
4. Organization you represent: Self
5. Please list any occupational, employment, or work-related experience you have which add to your qualification to provide testimony before the Committee:  
\*See below  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Please list any special training, education, or professional experience you have which add to your qualifications to provide testimony before the Committee:  
Graduate of Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College and  
University of Georgia College of Agriculture  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. If you are appearing on behalf of an organization, please list the capacity in which you are representing that organization, including any offices or elected positions you hold:  
Not applicable  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**PLEASE ATTACH THIS FORM OR YOUR BIOGRAPHY TO EACH COPY OF TESTIMONY.**

\*Self employed farmer; Georgia Peanut Commission Advisory Board; Georgia alternate, National Peanut Board; Decatur County Farm Bureau Board member; American Peanut Growers Group Board Member; Past President, Decatur County Farm Bureau; past Vice-Chairman, Decatur County FSA Committee; past Chairman, Georgia Farm Bureau Peanut Advisory Committee.