

## **Pollan: Senate Farm Bill "a disappointment"**

*The stage is set "for a radical set of reforms"*

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Michael Pollan, the self-described "food-chain journalist" and best-selling author of "The Omnivore's Dilemma" and "The Botany of Desire" as well as the celebrated 2001 article "Power Steer" for the New York Times Magazine, called the Senate version of the bill, passed earlier this month, "a disappointment."

The writer, who has become a Farm Bill-reform activist in addition to holding the Knight professorship in science and environmental journalism at the University of California, Berkeley, **wrote in an e-mail to MEAT&POULTRY**, that "[t]he old guard managed to defend subsidies by buying off critics," but since the critics were many and vocal, he added, "the price they extracted was some very good, albeit small, provisions -- for organics, for local food systems, for conservation, and for specialty crops."

He favors transforming the Farm Bill, which he says has institutionalized, at great financial and environmental cost, a fundamentally flawed and misguided federal agricultural policy, into what he calls a "Food Bill," aimed at providing Americans with the best foods for healthier, more environmentally sustainable eating. With regard to meat specifically, Pollan, who is not a vegetarian, supports grass-fed beef production and raising hogs under traditional family-farm conditions.

While the current versions of the Farm Bill leave him unsatisfied, he holds some optimism for the future. "With such a strong and gathering coalition of not only environmental but public health interests weighing in" on this year's Farm Bill debate, he wrote to M&P, "the politics are now in place for a more radical set of reforms next time around. The days of cutting farm bill deals among a small number of agribusiness interests behind closed doors is over — or at least, almost over."

His newest book, "In Defense of Food: An Eater's Manifesto," will appear in bookstores in January.