

REAP Saved, Farm Bill, WOTUS Defined and Corrupt Organic Growers



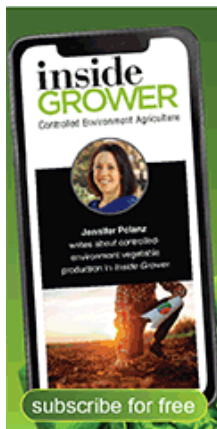
*A sustainable e-newsletter from GrowerTalks and Green Profit*



**2024**  
PERENNIAL PLANT ASSOCIATION  
NATIONAL SYMPOSIUM  
July 29 - August 1  
Asheville, North Carolina

- 2 days of Education
- 2 days of Tours
- 2 Dinners
- 2 Receptions
- 500 perennial plant peeps to meet from the US and Canada!

Details + Info:  
perennialplant.org  
888-440-3122



**Ball Culture Guide**  
THE  
ENCYCLOPEDIA  
OF SEED  
GERMINATION

By JIM NAU



subscribe

# greenTalks

sustainability e-news

## COMING UP THIS WEEK:

REAP Saved  
Farm Bill Notes  
New WOTUS Definition  
Corrupt Organic Growers



PW  
PROVEN  
WINNERS  
**Eco+Grande**  
ZERO PLASTIC

**AWARD-WINNING INNOVATION**

## Rural Energy for America Program Saved

On Wednesday, December 12, 2018, Congress passed a new version of the Farm Bill in a swift bipartisan vote. Right now, the bill is just awaiting the President's signature to be enacted into law.

The big news is that after some serious hints earlier this year that the Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) might be gutted or eliminated, it received full funding at \$50 million annually. This grant and loan program helps greenhouses, retailers and other rural businesses pay for both renewable energy and energy efficiency improvements. An amendment also broadened the scope of what will qualify for funding, so that energy efficient equipment and systems will be eligible for grants and loans.

If you're looking at upgrades or new construction with an eye towards energy efficiency in the next few years, be sure to look into applying for REAP assistance. The next big deadline for grants and loans is April 1, 2019. And it can be well worth the application: grants can cover up to 25% of a project. Guaranteed loans can cover up to 75% of the project. Find more information [HERE](#).

**Come Grow With Us!**  
June 4-6, 2024



**Register**  
[SoutheastGreen.org](http://SoutheastGreen.org)

## Other Farm Bill Notes for Horticulture

Here are a few other important Farm Bill notes. All of these will be effective until 2023.

The **Specialty Crop Research Initiative (SCRI)** allows for specialty crops to compete for the full \$80 million per year for specialty crop research. This was achieved by moving \$25 million in dedicated citrus industry funding, which was previously taken from the overall funding, into a separate trust fund. The new provisions provide a \$125 million increase over current law for the new five-year Farm Bill.

**Specialty Crop Block Grants** provides continued funding at \$85 million a year. This represents a significant increase in total funding for the program over the five-year lifespan of the Farm Bill from \$375 million to \$425 million. The legislation also works to help ease existing hurdles in current law that have made the funding of marketing and multi-state projects more difficult.

**Pest and disease research and prevention**, which maintains FY2018 funding at \$75 million per year. Overall, this is an increase of \$50 million over the life of the 2018 Farm Bill. It also reauthorizes the National Clean Plant Network, which protects key sectors from pathogen threats by providing access to pathogen-tested accessions of the newest varieties of tree fruit, berry, roses, and other high-value horticultural crops.

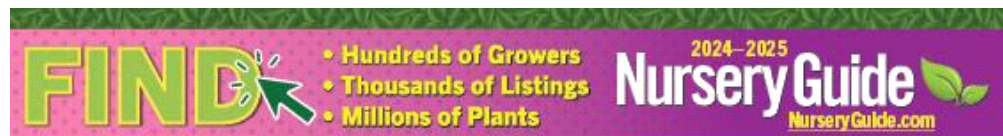
**Greenhouse Crop Insurance**, which initiates research and development into potential expansion/improvement of greenhouse crop insurance coverage.

Other key provisions include one that affects the breeding side of the industry, which is expanded plant intellectual property rights options, as well as language throughout the research title to ensure prioritization of research into labor-saving mechanization and automation in various USDA programs.

AmericanHort Senior VP Craig Regelbrugge called passage of the Farm Bill “a monumental win for the horticulture industry” in a press release. And Tal Coley, director of government relations, said, “Passing the Farm Bill was a critical priority for our organization in 2018, as grassroots action and lobbying efforts in Washington, D.C. played a big part in the success of this effort. AmericanHort members and grassroots partners sent hundreds of emails to their elected officials, while our advocacy team engaged directly with lawmakers and staff via joint efforts with the Specialty Crop Farm Bill Alliance.”

If you're interested in what else is included in the new Farm Bill, including the legalization of hemp (no, really!), go to <https://agriculture.house.gov/farmbill>.

(Thanks to Jen Zurko for contributing this article.)



## New Definition for WOTUS Approved, Part 1

Here we are again, talking about WOTUS. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of the Army have come out with a new proposed definition of what qualified as WOTUS.

**What's WOTUS?** It stands for “Waters of the United States” and it's used in several pieces of EPA regulatory language, including the Clean Water Act.

**What's the big deal?** Well, the definition is the big deal. The final ruling on the definition determines which streams, ponds, wetlands and rivers fall under federal water rules. It determines where and how people can develop land, where they till new fields, and so on.

**And how'd this get started?** Originally, WOTUS wasn't too clear, and because of that, water issues ended up in litigation all the time. The Supreme Court finally made it clear that the EPA

and Army Corps of Engineers needed to clarify it. They did that in 2015 under the Obama Administration. But it riled some feathers, as many thought they included too much in the definition (while others thought it was too lax). There were also some major conflicting rumors floating around about what it did and didn't include. In short, it became a political hot issue. The Trump Administration stayed the new rule and ordered yet another review and definition.



## WOTUS, Part 2

And now? This week we received a new definition. It's open for public comment for 60 days.

**The definition?** WOTUS now includes traditional navigable waters, tributaries to those waters, certain ditches, certain lakes and ponds, impoundments of jurisdictional waters, and only those wetlands adjacent to jurisdictional waters.

The big change is that it does not include any ephemeral water features, such as seasonal streams and ponds. Similar to the 2015 definition, it still does not include certain ditches, stormwater control features, or wastewater treatment/recycling. (You can find more background on the ins and outs of WOTUS in this [March 2017 article](#) I wrote on the issue.)

**The reaction?** Agriculture groups seem pretty pleased with this new definition. USDA Secretary Perdue stated, "When I meet with the men and women of American agriculture, one of their chief concerns is always the overreach of federal regulations. The WOTUS rule is regularly singled out as particularly egregious, as it impedes the use of their own land and stifles productivity."

Other groups are concerned about no ephemeral features falling under federal jurisdiction—in arid regions, this accounts for much of their water. And many are upset that only wetlands adjacent to a federal jurisdictional water will be covered.

The EPA says this new definition gives states and tribes more flexibility in determining how to manage their water resources.

Learn more [HERE](#).

## Corrupt Organic Growers

It's been heating up for a while—this conflict between those who believe the definition of organic is fully rooted in the soil they grow in and those who believe it can also include other forms of growing, such as hydroponics.

This week, it reached full-on mud slinging. The Cornucopia Institute released a report, "[Troubling Waters: How the USDA and Hydroponic Agribusiness Diluted Organics by Sanctioning Soil-less Growing.](#)"

The tagline on their report: "Profiling illicit produce brands grown in liquid fertilizer rather than nutrient-rich soils."

Cornucopia also put out a companion buyer's guide that they say "lifts the veil on the brands that clandestinely market hydroponic production as organic."

So what's the deal? Well, it's true that Canada, Mexico, Europe and other countries do not allow hydroponic produce to be labeled as organic. It goes back to one of the tenants of organic farming being that you "feed the soil, not the plants." Conversely, in the U.S., the USDA's stance has been to allow hydroponic to be certified as organic, though the National Organic Program does not have any regulations directly addressing hydroponics. The National Organic Standards Review Board recently voted to recommend to explicitly allow it.

It has created a big divide.

Now, a [large group of organic growers](#) have begun piloting an add-on label that will differentiate them from USDA organic.

*Until next time,*



*Jennifer Duffield White*

[jwhite@ballpublishing.com](mailto:jwhite@ballpublishing.com)

**This email received by 24,811 loyal readers!**

Want to be one of the lucky sponsors who reach those readers of *GreenTalks*? Drop [Paul Black](#) a line and he'll tell you what a bargain it is!

**GreenTalks® is a registered trademark of Ball Horticultural Company in the U.S.**