



DEVELOPING THE GLOBAL COLD CHAIN

GCCA Farm Bill Initiative introduced in the U.S. House and Senate.

By Lowell Randel

The Global Cold Chain Alliance (GCCA) is actively pursuing the inclusion of language in the next Farm Bill that would support the development of the global cold chain.

The process began in early 2023 with exploring the potential policy options to promote the cold chain and the development of a concept paper for the creation of a new program at the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to build cold chain capacity in developing markets to boost trade.

Agricultural trade is a major contributor to the economy and supports numerous jobs across the food supply chain. According to USDA's Economic Research Service, the United States produced \$177.3 billion of agricultural exports in calendar year 2021, and those exports produced an additional \$190.5 billion in economic activity leading to a total economic output of \$367.8 billion.

As evidenced by recent disruptions, one of the biggest barriers to a strong and resilient global food supply chain is the lack of cold chain capacity in emerging markets. According to the U.S. International Trade

Administration, cold chain systems are crucial to the growth of global trade in perishable products and to the worldwide availability of food.

Each year, billions of tons of perishable food products and millions of dollars of U.S. exports are lost due to poor cold chain systems in developing markets. Increased investments in cold chain capacity will also help to decrease the more than 1 billion metric tons of global food waste created every year. Many of these losses result from a lack of proper facilities, improper food safety handling procedures and insufficient training for those personnel working in the cold chain.

In spring 2023, GCCA staff and GCCA Warehouse Chairman Mike McClendon met with staff from the House and Senate Agriculture Committees, Members of Congress and officials from USDA to discuss GCCA's initiative and opportunities to include it as part

of the 2023 Farm Bill. These efforts resulted in drafting legislation entitled the Fortifying Refrigeration Infrastructure and Developing Global Exports (FRIDGE) Act.

The FRIDGE Act would add a section promoting infrastructure in the Foreign Market Development (FMD) program and authorize \$1,000,000 annually to fund the initiative. The FRIDGE Act, by prioritizing infrastructure, is intended to enhance and supplement the current MAP/FMD programs that have shown great benefits in promoting food and agriculture products, all of which are reliant on an efficient and effective supply chain. By establishing infrastructure for trade, the current trade programs within USDA would be strengthened by new and emerging markets that may have been inaccessible before.

Major benefits of the FRIDGE Act will include:

1. Increasing export market potential for perishable products
2. Reducing food loss and waste
3. Improving food security and nutrition in emerging markets

During the GCCA Policy Forum this past June, GCCA members visited Capitol Hill to



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build support for the FRIDGE Act. GCCA members and staff met with 30 House and Senate offices to brief them on the legislative proposal. Rep. Feenstra (R-IA) gave a keynote address during the Policy Forum and highlighted the importance of cold chain infrastructure to trade. During his speech, Rep. Feenstra shared his plans to introduce the FRIDGE Act for consideration as part of the next Farm Bill.

On July 13, Rep. Feenstra was joined by Representatives Tracey Mann (R-KS), Jim Costa (D-CA) and Salud Carbajal (D-CA) in introducing H.R. 4612, the Fortifying Refrigeration Infrastructure and Developing Global Exports (FRIDGE) Act. A companion bill was introduced in the Senate on July 27 led by Senators Mike Braun (R-IN) and John Fetterman (D-PA).

It is important to note that all of the original co-sponsors of the FRIDGE Act in both the House and Senate are members of the Agriculture Committee and represent bipartisan support for the bill. “The FRIDGE

would strengthen the ability of these markets to safely and efficiently receive high quality U.S. perishable commodities, creating new trade opportunities, improving food security and nutrition, and reducing waste due to food loss,” says GCCA Warehouse Chairman Mike McClendon. “GCCA strongly supports the FRIDGE Act and thanks Representatives Feenstra, Mann, Costa and Carbajal and Senators Braun and Fetterman for their leadership in introducing this important legislation.”

“GCCA greatly appreciates the vision of the FRIDGE Act sponsors in drafting this legislation,” says Matthew Ott, President and CEO, GCCA. “These efforts will expand export markets and will add to additional cold chain capacity while reducing food loss and waste globally.”

The overall goal is for the FRIDGE Act to be incorporated into the Farm Bill, which is currently being developed by the House and Senate Agriculture Committees. The committees have conducted numerous hearings over the last two years and are now beginning to

draft legislative language for the 2023 Farm Bill. The last Farm Bill, passed in 2018, expires on September 30, 2023.

Given the timing and complexity of putting together comprehensive food and agriculture legislation, there is an increasing likelihood that a short-term extension of current policies may be needed to afford the committees sufficient time to complete their work. GCCA will continue to work with FRIDGE Act sponsors and the agriculture committees throughout the Farm Bill process to communicate the importance of the FRIDGE Act to building global cold chain capacity, increasing trade and improving food security. ☞

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