

### **Obama Signing Farm Bill That Trims Food Stamps** **News**

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WASHINGTON (AP) -- President Barack Obama is carrying out a presidential duty that he hasn't had a lot of opportunity to perform recently: signing into law a major piece of bipartisan legislation.



Obama planned to sign a far-reaching farm bill Friday at Michigan State University, a rare celebration of Washington political compromise being held in heartland America. The bill expands federal crop insurance and ends direct government payments to farmers, but the bulk of its cost is for the food stamp program that aids 1 in 7 Americans.

The bill cuts food stamps by \$800 million a year, or around 1 percent, one-fifth of the cut approved last fall by the Republican-led House. Conservatives remain unhappy with the bill and its subsidies for groups ranging from sheep farmers to the maple syrup industry.

A partisan dispute over food stamp spending held up the legislation for two years, and last fall lawmakers were warning of an impending spike in milk prices without a deal on the bill, which contains federal dairy supports. The prospect of compromise seemed bleak at the time, when lawmakers couldn't even pass a budget to keep the government running.

The first thing Obama did after a deal finally was reached to end the partial government shutdown was to call on Congress to build on that progress by passing the farm bill, along with a budget and an immigration overhaul. In four months he's gone 2 for 3, with chances for achieving immigration legislation appearing increasingly iffy.

Obama promised in his State of the Union address last week to make 2014 a year of action, using his presidential powers besides pushing a Congress that usually is reluctant to go along with his ideas. In that spirit, he's coupling the signing of the farm bill with a new administration initiative to boost exports called "Made in Rural America."

According to a draft of the initiative, Obama plans to direct his administration to work on connecting rural businesses with federal resources that can help sell their products and services abroad. The steps he's directing agencies to take include hosting five regional forums for rural businesses, training Agriculture Department staff in all 50 states to advise on export opportunities and putting on a national conference to highlight successful projects.

The program's creation comes as U.S. farmers are sending record exports overseas - more than \$140 billion in the past year, driven in large part by increasing demand from China. But administration officials say additional opportunities exist for farmers and other rural business owners.

Obama's trip Friday is a reward for Sen. Debbie Stabenow, D-Mich., who as chairwomen of the Senate Agriculture Committee helped broker a hard-fought farm bill compromise after years of setbacks. Michigan State, a leading agricultural research school, is Stabenow's alma mater.