

Senate farm bill to fund preservation- Cape Gazette

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The Senate passed its version of a farm bill that will expand Delaware's nationally recognized farmland preservation program and provide support for biodiesel education. Sen. Tom Carper spoke in favor of the bill, saying: "Delaware is a national leader in open space preservation. But to make Delaware more livable, we must expand on our successes. This bill gives us the funding we need for that to happen."

The Senate farm bill, S.1731, authorizes \$73.5 billion in new agriculture funds over the next 19 years, bringing the total to \$170 billion in agricultural and nutrition funding over 10 years. It expands farmland protection authorizations from \$35 million last year to \$150 million for this year. By fiscal year 2006, preservation money would be authorized at \$500 million.

The bill authorizes \$5 million to encourage wider distribution of bio-diesel fuels and to educate about their benefits. It also provides protections for Delaware's farming families. Using current levels of production as a base, the bill offers an income protection level of \$2.35 per bushel for corn, \$5.75 per bushel for soybeans and \$3.45 per bushel for wheat. Assistance of \$500 million over three and a half years is also set for dairy farmers transitioning from the Northeast Dairy Compact.

"Our state's history has its roots in farmland success, Carper said. "These commodity supports are needed now. But I see a day, through investments in technologies like biomass energy and biodiesels, when the crops grown in Delaware not only feed the nation, but power it."