Consideration of the national Farm Bill in the United States House has been put off until after the November election, putting many agriculture programs on hold. The House of Representatives did, however, recently approve a continuing resolution to fund the federal government through next March, a six-month extension of 2012 spending.

John Crabtree with the Center for Rural Affairs says consideration of the Farm Bill in the “lame duck” session of Congress won’t be good for rural areas.

“Every time we end up in the 11th hour in these debates, the important, I mean vital, details of the Farm Bill sometime get pushed aside. Our rural communities need a Farm Bill, need it done right.”

Crabtree said while the continuing resolution funds programs such as the Value Added Producer Grant Program, it cuts other rural development programs, like the Rural Micro Entrepreneur Assistance Program, which provides loans and technical assistance for rural small business development.

He says that while members of Congress are home campaigning for votes, people should ask them to get their work done.

“It’s a perfect opportunity for people to stand up and say to their member of Congress, ‘We need a Farm Bill, we need it done right, we need to invest in rural development, we need to invest in conservation and we need to invest in the next generation of beginning farmers and ranchers, to do the things that really matter out here in the countryside.’”

Crabtree says the world won’t end if the current Farm Bill expires on Sept. 30, but it will make it much more difficult to restart many of the programs that are crucial to rural areas.

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