



KANSAS FARM BUREAU
The Voice of Agriculture

2627 KFB Plaza, Manhattan, Kansas 66503-8508 • 785-587-6000 • Fax 785-587-6914 • www.kfb.org
800 SW Jackson St., Suite 1300, Topeka, Kansas 66612-1219 • 785-234-4535 • Fax 785-234-0278

***Kansas Farm Bureau
Policy Statement***

**House Agriculture & Natural Resources Committee
SB 272; An act concerning water**

February 8, 2012

Submitted by:

Kent Askren

Kansas Farm Bureau

Assistant Director of Natural Resources

Chairman Powell and members of the committee, thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony on Senate Bill 272 relating to multi-year flex accounts. I am Kent Askren, Assistant Director of Natural Resources for the Kansas Farm Bureau. KFB stands in support of SB 272 as amended by the Senate.

Persistent drought in 2011 resulted in difficult water management decisions for agricultural producers trying to make the most profitable utilization of their water rights. Many were faced with the options of either illegally exceeding their annual allocation or stop pumping only to watch their crop fail. Neither of these options was a good one and both would have been detrimental to the Kansas economy.

Better water management tools are needed to help maximize the economic gain derived from using precious Kansas water. The 2 year drought emergency term permit initiated last summer by the chief engineer was a good stopgap effort but it was just that. A more long term, carefully planned water management strategy is needed for future water management decisions and maximum economic benefit.

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The long standing Multi-year Flex Account program authorized in K.S.A. 82a-736 has historically failed to produce much interest or participation. This is due primarily to it being a regulatory water reduction tool instead of a water management tool. The concept of having water use flexibility however, is exactly what is needed to provide more productive water use strategies.

Kansas Farm Bureau and other stakeholders have worked with KDA to help craft many of the concepts improving the multi-year flex account program. As amended, SB 272 would allow a volume of water to be resourcefully applied over several years, increasing its economic potential while at the same time protecting the natural resource and respecting existing water rights.

Those who enrolled in 2 year drought emergency term permits for calendar years 2011 and 2012 do not have any time to waste; in fact, every day this legislation is delayed it harms producers waiting to make management decisions and reduces local and state income. Inputs like fertilizer, fuel and seed have already been contracted or purchased for the coming year, many with the expectation that relief is on the way. SB 272 can provide that immediate relief.

We respectfully urge the legislature to act quickly in the passage of SB 272 to improve the Multi-year Flex Accounts program and provide a viable tool for users seeking greater economic gain from the use of water in Kansas. To delay the favorable advancement of this bill will be costly to Kansas and potentially drive Kansas farmers out of business.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony, I would be happy to answer questions at the appropriate time.

Kansas Farm Bureau represents grassroots agriculture. Established in 1919, this non-profit advocacy organization supports farm families who earn their living in a changing industry.

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