

**OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD, AND FORESTRY**  
**2800 N. Lincoln Blvd., Oklahoma City, OK 73105**  
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**AGRICULTURAL INPUT COSTS COULD THREATEN  
U.S. FOOD SUPPLY, STATE COMMISSIONERS WARN,  
State Ag Secretary Says Some Farmers at Breaking Point**

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LEXINGTON, Ky. – The long-term safety and affordability of the American food supply is threatened by skyrocketing input costs that are straining American farm families, agriculture leaders from the southern United States said today. They called on Congress and the federal government to address the crisis immediately.

Many farmers could go out of business if solutions aren't found, forcing the nation to import more food, the state agriculture commissioners warned.

"I've had farmers in my state come to me in tears because they don't know what they're going to do," Commissioner Ron Sparks of Alabama said during the annual conference of the Southern Association of State Departments of Agriculture in Lexington, Ky.

Costs of fuel, fertilizer and livestock feed are wiping out gains in crop prices. Livestock and poultry prices generally are flat, so higher input costs are eating into producers' bottom lines. Record oil prices are driving up the cost of virtually all farm inputs.

"Everybody feels squeezed when they have to pay more to put gas in their cars," **Commissioner Terry Peach of Oklahoma** said. "They have to cut back on eating out or going to the movies. But for farmers, this raises their costs to run a business, and some people are at the breaking point."

Rising expenses could put some farmers in danger of losing their homes, the agriculture commissioners said. The pressure is especially intense for young farmers who are paying for land and equipment.

"If we lose very many family farms, we'll end up importing food the way we import oil," Commissioner Steve Troxler of North Carolina said. "America has the highest food safety standards in the world, yet we already import food from countries with less stringent food safety rules. If we end up importing most of our food, American consumers could suffer."

The pressures on farmers have been intensified by other events beyond their control such as recent flooding in the Midwest and the deep drought in the southeastern United States last summer.

Higher producer input costs, production and transportation disruptions, and increasing demand in developing countries have combined to raise prices for food in American supermarkets.

"That hurts everyone, but it's especially hard on the poor and on our children," Commissioner Richie Farmer of Kentucky said. "The financial strain on American farmers is an issue of public health and safety for all Americans. The federal government

needs to help us find solutions that will enable family farmers to make a living while maintaining this country's safe, abundant and affordable food supply.”

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