**Common Core State Standards: CTE Writing Prompt and Literacy Close Reading Task**

**“The Farm Bill” – Understanding Agriculture Subsidies**

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| **Career Cluster** | Agriculture, Food, & Natural Resources |
| **Grade-Band** | 11-12 |
| **Texts** | **Text Complexity Analysis** |
| **Title:** Excerpt: “Overhauling the Farm Bill: The Real Beneficiaries of Subsidies”**Author:** Daniel Imhoff**Citation/Publication Information:** Imhoff, D. (2012, March 21). “Food Fight: The Citizen's Guide to the Next Food and Farm Bill.” *The Atlantic*. Retrieved July 15, 2013.**Link:** <http://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2012/03/overhauling-the-farm-bill-the-real-beneficiaries-of-subsidies/254422/> | **Quantitative:** Lexile: 1330 |
| **Qualitative:**This article provides students background information and statistics about America’s farmers. Students should find the text less complex because of their understanding of the subject matter and vocabulary. However, relationships drawn between concepts (such as income, subsidies, commodity prices, and lobbying) may require scaffolding.  |
| **Reader and Task:** Students need to have a strong knowledge of agriculture vocabulary and a basic understanding of economics to be able to build knowledge about the government’s role in agriculture prices and profits. |
| **Title:** “How Farm Subsidies Harm Taxpayers, Consumers, and Farmers, Too”**Author:** Brian M. Riedl **Citation/Publication Information:** Riedl, B. (2007, June 20). “How Farm Subsidies Harm Taxpayers, Consumers, and Farmers, Too” *The Heritage Foundation*. Retrieved July 15, 2013.**Link:** <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2007/06/how-farm-subsidies-harm-taxpayers-consumers-and-farmers-too> | **Quantitative:** Lexile: 1120 |
| **Qualitative:**This article provides students with a lot of graphs, data, and information addressing specific challenges to farm subsidies. Longer sentences, graphs and charts, and challenging vocabulary make this more complex to read as a whole, despite lower quantitative score. |
| **Reader and Task:** In addition to foundational knowledge of agriculture vocabulary, economic policy knowledge will assist students in understanding. Text complexity could be overcome by breaking text into smaller excerpts for close reading. |
| **Title:** “The 2013 Farm Bill: Limiting waste by Limiting Farm-Subsidy Budgets”**Author:** Vincent H. Smith **Citation/Publication Information:** Smith, V. (2013, June 17). “The 2013 Farm Bill: Limiting waste by Limiting Farm-Subsidy Budgets.” *Meracatus Center at George Mason University*. Retrieved July 15, 2013.**Link:** <http://mercatus.org/publication/bloated-farm-subsidies-will-2013-farm-bill-really-cut-fat>  | **Quantitative:** Lexile: 1420 |
| **Qualitative:**This online article introduces and summarizes a large research study. Differences in sentence structure, organization, and charts make this text more complex, but a good learning tool for students. |
| **Reader and Task:** In addition to foundational knowledge of agriculture vocabulary, students should have a strong grasp of how laws are made to be able to fully engage in text.  |

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| **ELA/Literacy Common Core State Standards addressed by task\*** |
| **Strand** | **Grades 11-12** |
| CCSS Reading for Technical Subjects: Key Ideas and Details | **1.** Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of science and technical texts, attending to important distinctions the author makes and to any gaps or inconsistencies in the account.**2.** Determine the central ideas or conclusions of a text; summarize complex concepts, processes, or information presented in a text by paraphrasing them in simpler but still accurate terms. |
| CCSS Reading for Technical Subjects: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas | **7.** Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., quantitative data, video, multimedia) in order to address a question or solve a problem. |
| CCSS Writing for Technical Subjects: Text Types and Purposes | **1.** Write arguments focused on *discipline-specific content.*1. Introduce precise, knowledgeable claim(s), establish the significance of the claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that logically sequences the claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.
2. Develop claim(s) and counterclaims fairly and thoroughly, supplying the most relevant data and evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both claims(s) and counterclaims in a discipline-appropriate form that anticipates the audience’s knowledge level, concerns, values, and possible biases.
3. Use words, phrases, and clauses as well as varied syntax to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships between claim(s) and reasons, between reasons and evidence, and between claim(s) and counterclaims.
4. Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.
5. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from or supports the argument presented.
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| CCSS Writing for Technical Subjects: Production and Distribution of Writing | **4.** Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.**5.** Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.\* |
| CCSS Writing for Technical Subjects: Research to Build and Present Knowledge | **9.** Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research. |
| **Tennessee Agriculture Standards addressed by task** |
| Tennessee Standards for Agricultural Business/Finance | **3.1** Examine different forms of credit payment in agribusiness and personal finances.**4.1** Evaluate and explain the different kinds of economic systems and describe the role of government in each.**8.6** Discuss the importance and proper use of credit/loans in an agribusiness venture.**8.8** Demonstrate an understanding of inflation and its impact on the purchasing power in an agribusiness.**8.9** Examine the meaning and importance of taxation, insurance, and depreciation in the agricultural industry. |

\* Standards noted with an asterisk (\*) will only be covered if this activity is conducted as a longer form lesson and writing project. Other standards may be covered and/or assessed through using this activity as an assessment or writing prompt.

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| **What key insights should students take from these texts?** |
| 1. U.S. Government spends more than $20 billion annually on farm subsidies.
2. History and intent of government subsidies to farmers.
3. Differences in interpretation of data to support the success or failure of specific farm subsidies, as measured against their intent.
4. How changes to subsidies from the U.S. Government – as governed by the “Farm Bill” – impact farmers, taxpayers, and the U.S. economy.
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| **Text-Dependent Questions** |
| 1. What data does Imhoff use to refute the claim that we see Smith make that the richest farm subsidy recipients take in the majority of the payments?
2. How does Riedl structure his argument against farm subsidies?
3. What potential outcomes does Smith outline as possible approaches to reforming (and reducing) agriculture subsidies? What evidence does he give for either his support or opposition to each approach?
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| **Writing Mode** | **Writing Prompt** |
| Argumentative | Based on the articles that you have read, develop a logical argumentative essay supporting or opposing government subsidization of agriculture commodities. Based on the evidence presented, either support or oppose the need for government subsidies in your concluding paragraph. Be sure to develop your claim and counterclaim, include the strengths and limitations of each, and cite evidence from the text using simpler, but still accurate, terms in your explanation. |

**Discussion:** These texts could be explored orally and used to form the basic foundation of a lesson or series of lessons. Close-reading questions should be developed in advance in order to drive student understanding of the material while also practicing reading skills. For information on how to develop questions for this type of discussion, visit <http://www.tncore.org/english_language_arts/curricular_resources/text_dependent_questions.aspx>.

**Writing and/or Assessment:** The writing prompt included can be either a constructed-response assessment or a longer-term writing assignment for students to develop and refine over time to gauge student understanding of agriculture content as well as reading and writing skills as outlined by the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts in Technical Subjects. An appropriate writing rubric – such as those found at <http://tncore.org/literacy_in_science_and_technology/assessment/scoring_resources.aspx> – should be used to assess student work.

* **Assessment:** If using this material as an assessment, present all three texts to students at once, and provide them with the prompt and materials to use to construct their response. This should be a timed exercise (for example, 90 minutes). Use this exercise as an assessment to measure student progress toward reading and writing expectations as well as content knowledge. This is a good primer activity for state assessments.
* **Task:** If using this material as a writing task, you may scaffold the texts with close readings and text-based questions to guide student exploration of the text(s). A culminating task of this lesson or sequence of lessons could be the writing prompt – either assigned in class, as homework, or as a report that is drafted and refined over time to build writing skills.

**Scaffolding and support for special education students, English language learners, and struggling readers:** Consider pre-teaching synonyms of difficult vocabulary words. Lower-level readers and ELL students can still be challenged without being overloaded with difficulty. This strategy can also be used to differentiate for stronger readers by introducing new, and more challenging, vocabulary. Struggling readers would also benefit from visual aids to illustrate many of the ideas presented. Pictures, diagrams, and charts alongside the text will go far to aide students as they dissect the article.

**Note:** Social, ethnic, racial, religious, and gender bias is best determined at the local level where educators have in-depth knowledge of the culture and values of the community in which students live. TDOE asks local districts to review these materials for social, ethnic, racial, religious, and gender bias before use in local schools.