

(U.S.)-Congress Eyes Milk Prices, Politics In Farm Talks

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WASHINGTON (ASSOCIATED PRESS) - The fight over renewing the nation's farm bill has centered on cuts to the \$80 billion-a-year food stamp program. But there could be unintended consequences if no agreement is reached: higher milk prices.

Members of the House and Senate are scheduled to begin long-awaited negotiations on the five-year, roughly \$500 billion bill this week. If they don't finish it, dairy supports could expire at the end of the year and send the price of milk skyward.

There could be political ramifications, too. The House and Senate are far apart on the sensitive issue of how much money to cut from food stamps, and lawmakers are hoping to resolve that debate before election-year politics set in.

The farm bill sets policy for farm subsidies, food stamps and other rural development projects.