



Farm Bill 101



What is the Farm Bill?

The farm bill is the major food and farm legislation that gets revisited or reauthorized by Congress every 5 years. The next farm bill is scheduled to be reauthorized by October 2018. It sets U.S. food and farm priorities by developing policies and funding programs that provide a safety-net for agricultural producers and for low-income Americans. The farm bill includes 12 titles that each address broad categories of related programs, including:

- ❖ Nutrition
- ❖ Commodity crops and subsidies
- ❖ Crop insurance
- ❖ Land conservation
- ❖ Agricultural research
- ❖ International aid

During this process, Congress has the opportunity to strengthen and improve the programs, address implementation challenges, and develop new policies to make sure individuals across this nation have access to healthy, nutritious food.

Why Does This Matter To Me?

Families, churches, food banks, businesses, communities, and governments working together can ensure all families have the resources and nutrition needed to succeed. To support our charitable network to meet current needs, our nation depends upon strong federal nutrition assistance programs, including SNAP and federal commodity foods through TEFAP, CSFP, and FDPIR. Feeding America could not provide current levels of food assistance without significant support from TEFAP, nor could we effectively address the increased demand if the current funding levels and structure of SNAP and other federal nutrition programs were eroded.

Millions of low-income families rely on the federal nutrition programs funded through the farm bill. SNAP alone provides ten times the meals enabled through the Feeding America network, underscoring the significant role it plays in connecting families with meals nationwide.

- SNAP served 43.2 million individuals in November 2016. Nearly 2 out of 3 SNAP recipients are children, elderly or disabled.
- SNAP responds to changes in poverty and the economy, rising during economic downturns or natural disasters and falling as times improve.
- SNAP supports the economy. Every \$1 in SNAP benefits generates roughly \$1.73 in economic activity benefiting grocers, retailers, manufacturers, producers and farmers.
- SNAP helps individuals lift themselves out of poverty. In 2012, SNAP kept 10.3 million people out of poverty, including 4.9 million children.
- TEFAP provides \$298 million in commodity assistance to states
- FDPIR provided food for 88,000 individuals living on Indian reservations in 2015.
- CSFP provided 619,000 low-income seniors with USDA foods in 2016.

What Programs Does the Farm Bill Cover?

The farm bill dictates policy around the largest, most meaningful programs affecting food insecure individuals, as well as food banks and other charities working to address hunger. Around 80% of farm bill funding goes to nutrition programs, including:

SNAP. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly called food stamps) is the bedrock of the nation's anti-hunger system. Serving more than 43 million Americans, SNAP is the largest anti-hunger program in the United States. SNAP works by issuing low-income Americans Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) debit cards with money that can only be used to purchase food.

TEFAP. The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) is a commodity program that purchases and distributes food to low-income Americans. Much of the food purchased by the USDA is distributed by Feeding America network food banks and other local emergency food assistance programs. TEFAP foods provide approximately 17-20% of the food distributed by the Feeding America network each year.

CSFP. The Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) is a program for low-income seniors aged 60 years or older. It provides nutritious food to help supplement their diet. The 2014 Farm Bill changed the program to be seniors-only, a very small number of low-income women and children are also served by this program as the program transitions. The program operates in all but one state and local non-profits are a key partner in CSFP distribution; in 22 states Feeding America's network are the primary distributors.

FDPIR. The Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) provides USDA foods to low-income households, including the elderly, living on Indian reservations as well as to Native American families residing in designated areas near reservations.

Food Waste. Between 25-40% of America's food is wasted. The Farm Bill could be a tool to adjust regulations governing donated food and make other changes to help facilitate capturing food that would be thrown in the trash. Feeding America is working hard to try and capture that food, and help connect it to the people who need it the most.

How can I ensure the strongest possible Farm Bill?

The Farm Bill provides the opportunity to make these good programs even better. Congress has begun working on the next Farm Bill and it is important to share opportunities for improving programs with the committees with jurisdiction.

- House Agriculture Subcommittee on Nutrition. www.agriculture.senate.gov
- Senate Agriculture Subcommittee on Nutrition, Specialty Crops and Agriculture Research. <http://agriculture.house.gov/>

For more information on the Farm Bill including policy priorities, visit www.feedingamerica.org/advocacy or contact policy@feedingamerica.org.