



Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development

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United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative:

As the House deliberates a pathway forward for the 2013 Farm Bill, I write to urge you to resist harmful changes and cuts to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Although the USCCB does not take a position on the procedures or processes for advancing this important agriculture legislation, the House must prevent cuts and harmful structural changes to nutrition programs such as SNAP that will harm hungry children, poor families, vulnerable seniors and workers who are underemployed or unable to find employment. How the House addresses these concerns has profound human and moral consequences.

Adequate and nutritious food is a basic need and a fundamental human right that is integral to protecting the life and dignity of the human person. SNAP is one of the most effective and important federal programs to combat hunger in the nation by helping to feed millions of persons in need every year. In 2011, SNAP lifted 3.9 million Americans above the poverty line, including 1.7 million children and 280,000 seniors. With continued high unemployment and a struggling economy, the need for adequate funding levels for SNAP and other nutrition programs is essential.

The Catholic community knows from direct experience in communities at home and throughout the world how the Farm Bill affects us all, but most significantly, those who are hungry, living in poverty, and struggling to keep farming a viable way of life. Government has an indispensable role in safeguarding the common good of all. SNAP, as a crucial part of the Farm Bill, helps relieve pressure on overwhelmed parishes, charities, food banks, pantries and other emergency food providers across the country who could not begin to meet the need for food assistance if SNAP eligibility or benefits were reduced.

Comprehensive legislation such as the Farm Bill invariably involves compromise but this compromise cannot come at the expense of poor and hungry people. This is a crucial time to build a more just framework that puts poor and hungry people first. I respectfully urge you to reject efforts to reduce or restructure SNAP and pursue the common good in agriculture and food policy that works from a genuine preferential option for the poor.

Sincerely,

Most Reverend Stephen E. Blaire
Bishop of Stockton
Chairman, Committee on Domestic Justice
and Human Development