



United States
Conference of
Catholic Bishops



Catholic
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CATHOLIC RURAL LIFE



February 20, 2026

The Honorable Glenn “GT” Thompson
Chairman
Committee on Agriculture
United States House of Representatives

The Honorable Angie Craig
Ranking Member
Committee on Agriculture
United States House of Representatives

Dear Chairman Thompson and Ranking Member Craig:

On World Food Day, Pope Leo XIV expressed, “Hunger... is a cry that rises to heaven and requires a swift response from every nation, every international organization, every regional, local or private body. No one can remain on the sidelines in the fight against hunger.”¹ In this spirit, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Catholic Relief Services, Catholic Charities USA, Catholic Rural Life, and the U.S. Society of St. Vincent de Paul continue to unite in our shared commitment to alleviate hunger and urge Congress to pass a Farm Bill that furthers this goal.²

Historically, the Farm Bill has stood as a clear example of Congress’ ability to work across differences to advance the common good. For decades, members of both parties have come together to craft legislation that recognized the interconnected needs of farmers, families, and communities, particularly those facing food insecurity. That bipartisan spirit has long been essential to ensuring that the Farm Bill responds effectively to the realities on the ground. Unfortunately, the current proposal falls short of the Farm Bill’s historic bipartisanship.

Domestic Hunger and Nutrition: We welcome provisions in the House’s current proposal to improve EBT card security (Sec. 4108) and make SNAP online purchasing a permanent option nationwide (Sec. 4111). We also support reauthorization of: the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) with pilot programs targeted to Tribal organizations and rural communities (Sec. 4202-4204); the Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) (Sec. 4112); the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Incentive Program (SFMNP) (Sec. 4201), moderately expanding its offerings; the Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program (GusNIP), strengthened through cost-share waivers for persistent poverty counties and expansion of offerings to all forms of fruits, vegetables, and legumes (Sec. 4303); and the Local Farmers Feeding Our Communities Program (Sec. 4306).

However, at a time when more than 47 million people across every state and congressional district struggle to put food on the table, the bill before the committee does not sufficiently strengthen or modernize the **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)**, our nation’s core nutrition program. Instead, it shifts focus away from addressing hunger itself and toward additional

¹ Pope Leo XIV, Visit of the Holy Father to the FAO Headquarters on the Occasion of World Food Day and the Celebration of the Eightieth Anniversary of the Foundation of the organization (Oct 16, 2025). <https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/speeches/2025/october/documents/20251016-fao.html>

² Letter to Congress Regarding 2023 Farm Bill (April 24, 2023). <https://www.usccb.org/resources/letter-congress-regarding-2023-farm-bill-april-24-2023>; Letter to Congress on the Farm Bill (May 22, 2024). <https://www.usccb.org/resources/letter-congress-farm-bill-may-22-2024>; Letter to Congress on the Farm Bill (June 25, 2025). <https://www.usccb.org/resources/letter-congress-regarding-farm-bill-june-25-2025>.

administrative and compliance requirements imposed in the reconciliation legislation enacted last year that risk undermining the effectiveness of SNAP and related programs.

SNAP remains our nation's most effective and responsive tool to combat hunger, particularly during periods of economic uncertainty, rising food costs, and persistent poverty. Policies that weaken its reach or add unnecessary barriers ultimately harm low-income families, seniors, people with disabilities, and children who rely on these programs to meet their basic nutritional needs. Consistent with these principles, we respectfully urge the committee to consider targeted improvements to the nutrition title that would strengthen SNAP's effectiveness and equity. In particular, we recommend:

- **Delaying newly enacted state cost-sharing requirements** for SNAP benefits and administrative expenses by one to two years, by amending the provisions added last year to the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. §§ 2020, 2025). A measured delay would allow states adequate time to plan and fix error rates and would help prevent disruptions in access to nutrition assistance for vulnerable households.
- **Eliminating the felony-based exclusion from SNAP participation**, by repealing or substantially modifying the lifetime ban under 21 U.S.C. § 862a. Removing this restriction would better support successful reentry, reduce food insecurity, and promote family stability without compromising program integrity.
- **Providing Puerto Rico a structured opportunity to transition from the Nutrition Assistance Program (NAP) to full SNAP participation over a ten-year period**, through amendments to 7 U.S.C. § 2028. A phased transition would align benefits more closely with demonstrated need, improve program responsiveness during economic downturns and natural disasters, and advance parity for U.S. citizens residing in the territories.

International Food Security and Development: We appreciate the continued support for the international food assistance programs, including **Food for Peace, McGovern-Dole Food for Education, Food for Progress, Farmer-to-Farmer and the Bill Emerson Humanitarian Trust**. These programs advance US foreign policy priorities as they keep famine at bay, improve the livelihoods of smallholder farmers so they can feed their families, help school children excel in their studies, and leverage the expertise of American farming volunteers to support food security outcomes. They reflect an enduring partnership between USDA and American faith-based and other private voluntary organizations. We urge you to use the Farm Bill to preserve this critical partnership. We welcome the retention of prior legislative changes in the 2014 and 2018 Farm Bills that helped improve the cost-effectiveness of the programs and self-reliance of the families and communities being served, such as eliminating the monetization requirement in Food for Peace, making funding available for local and regional procurement (LRP) in McGovern-Dole, and allowing the pairing of Community Development Funds with Food for Peace development activities to strengthen and enhance the impact of these programs.

There are several changes we note regarding the Food for Peace program, including moving the administration of Food for Peace to USDA. **While our organizations do not have a formal position on where Food for Peace should be managed, we do have recommendations on how its operations continue.** It is imperative that interruption of program services during any transition period be as limited as possible and that appropriate levels of staff, expertise, resources and oversight are maintained to be fully operational and accountable. We recommend maintaining a focus on the most hungry and malnourished places around the world using market-appropriate food aid. We urge

the Committee to ensure USDA, the State Department and other relevant stakeholders coordinate closely and consult as policy changes and award decisions are made to this program going forward. This will allow the US government to make the most of this foreign policy tool, avoiding possible duplication of efforts and ensuring the right mix of food aid tools is available to meet the needs of a community – whether that is in-kind food sourced from the U.S. and other local and regional markets or market-based assistance like mobile money, vouchers, etc.

Rural Development: Rural communities are vital to our social and economic wellbeing. It is critical that Congress provide a safety net for farmers, prioritizing vulnerable farmers and small and moderate-sized family farms. We are grateful for the bill's proposals to moderately strengthen rural health care and mental health supports; expand broadband connectivity; invest in water and wastewater infrastructure; support beginning farmers through increased access to credit, insurance, and education; reauthorize scholarships and grants for 1890 Institutions, 1994 Institutions, and Hispanic-serving institutions; and reauthorize Heirs Property Relending while helping provide pro-bono legal and accounting services (Sec. 5109). We support the promotion of rural infrastructure investments and innovative programs by reauthorizing: Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BFRDP) (Sec. 5401), Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative (OREI) (Sec. 7205), Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program (Sec. 6422), and Appropriate Technology Transfer for Rural America (ATTRA) (Sec. 6414).

We are disappointed that the current bill does nothing to remedy huge cuts H.R. 1 made to SNAP in order to fund large increases in **commodity supports**, disproportionately benefitting large-scale farmers rather than vulnerable farmers and small and moderate-sized family farms. As we stated in previous letters, a more targeted approach to commodity supports could help ensure the legitimate needs of farmers are not pitted against families struggling to put food on the table and more needs to be done to integrate climate change mitigation and adaptation into rural development policies.

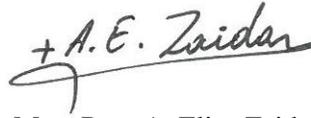
Conservation: We welcome the reauthorization of all key conservation funds and increased mandatory funding for these programs included in this legislation and H.R. 1; however, we are concerned that funding is still insufficient given increased costs from inflation and funds rescinded from the Inflation Reduction Act in H.R. 1. We are pleased that the proposed Farm Bill reauthorizes and creates research programs, such as for states and Indian Tribes to study soil health on agricultural land and the uses of biochar from forest fires for climate mitigation. We additionally appreciate the bill's proposed funding for programs and technologies to prevent, prepare, and respond to extreme weather disasters such as floods, wildfires, and droughts; increased investments in programs to sequester carbon and other greenhouse gases; and funding for the Rural Energy Affordability Program to support tribal and rural small-business energy security and affordability.

As Catholic organizations committed to upholding human dignity and caring for those most in need, we respectfully urge the committee to recommit to the Farm Bill's longstanding bipartisan legacy. We encourage members to work together to advance nutrition, rural development, international assistance, and conservation policies that are practical, compassionate, and responsive to current challenges. We stand ready to work with the committee in a constructive and collaborative manner to ensure that the final Farm Bill reflects our shared responsibility to protect vulnerable families, support thriving communities, and promote the common good.

Sincerely,



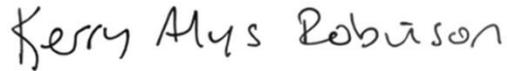
Most Rev. Shelton J. Fabre
Archbishop of Louisville
Chair, Committee on Domestic Justice
and Human Development



Most Rev. A. Elias Zaidan
of Our Lady of Lebanon
Chair, Committee on International Justice
and Peace



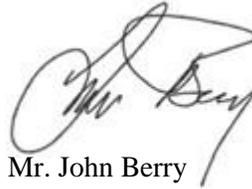
Mr. Sean Callahan
President
Catholic Relief Services



Ms. Kerry Alys Robinson
President and CEO
Catholic Charities, USA



Mr. James Ennis
Executive Director
Catholic Rural Life



Mr. John Berry
President
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