



United States
Conference of
Catholic Bishops

Office of
Domestic Justice and
Human Development



Catholic
Charities
USA®



CATHOLIC RURAL LIFE



July 9, 2026

The Honorable John Boozman
Chairman
Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and
Forestry
United States Senate

The Honorable Amy Klobuchar
Ranking Member
Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and
Forestry
United States Senate

Dear Chairman Boozman and Ranking Member Klobuchar:

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 Senate proposal falls short of the Farm Bill’s historic bipartisanship.

Domestic Hunger and Nutrition:

Our greatest concern with the current draft is with the **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)**, our nation’s core nutrition program. We strongly encourage you to address the areas we identify below before moving forward with the legislation.

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 SNAP. Instead, it shifts focus away from addressing hunger itself and toward additional administrative and compliance requirements imposed in the reconciliation legislation enacted last year that risk undermining the effectiveness of SNAP and related programs.

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>.

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.

We welcome provisions in the Senate’s current proposal to make SNAP online purchasing a permanent option nationwide (Sec. 4103). We also support reauthorization of: the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) with a pilot program supporting seniors in rural communities (Sec. 4201-4204); the Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) (Sec. 4111); the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Incentive Program (SFMNP) (Sec. 4301), 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 Strengthening Local Food Security Program (Sec. 4306).

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. 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.

We are aware of ongoing discussions about how to best administer the Food for Peace program going forward. **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 also support efforts to ensure cooperation and consultation between USDA, the State Department and other relevant stakeholders as policy changes and award decisions are made to this program going forward. This will allow the US government to make the most of where this foreign policy tool is used, 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.

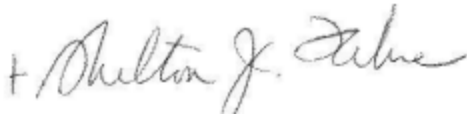
Rural Development: Rural communities are vital to our social and economic wellbeing. It is critical that Congress provide a safety net for farmers, prioritizing vulnerable farmers and small and moderate-sized family farms. We are grateful for the bill’s proposals to moderately strengthen rural health 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. 5207). We support the promotion of rural infrastructure investments and innovative programs by reauthorizing: Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BFRDP) (Sec. 5301), Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative (OREI) (Sec. 7209), Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program (Sec. 6230), and Appropriate Technology Transfer for Rural America (ATTRA) (Sec. 6221).

We reiterate our call for **commodity supports** to benefit vulnerable farmers and small and moderate-sized family farms.

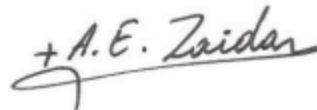
Conservation: We welcome the reauthorization of all key conservation funds with some mandatory funding increases, but we are disappointed by significant cuts to the popular and over-subscribed Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) and Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). The bill doesn’t address local staffing needs at the Natural Resources Conservation Service to provide technical support to farmers in conservation program participation. We are pleased that the proposed Farm Bill reauthorizes and creates new research programs, such as for states and Indian Tribes to study soil health on agricultural land; technologies to prevent, prepare and respond to climate change; and the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program. We are also pleased to see reauthorization of the Rural Energy Affordability Program (REAP) to support tribal and rural small-business energy security. We affirm our support for bedrock environmental laws that protect species, wildlife habitats, and human health. We hope that the bill will not undermine their ability to do so.

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, 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,



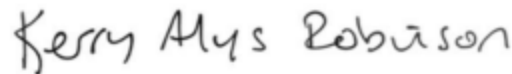
Most Rev. Shelton J. Fabre
Archbishop of Louisville
Chair, USCCB Committee on Domestic Justice
and Human Development



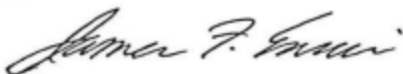
Most Rev. A. Elias Zaidan
of Our Lady of Lebanon
Chair, USCCB Committee on International
Justice and Peace



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
National Council of the United States Society of
St. Vincent de Paul