



June 8, 2022

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin, Chair  
Committee on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development,  
Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Hoeven, Ranking Member  
Committee on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development,  
Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Baldwin and Ranking Member Hoeven:

We write on behalf of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development and Committee on International Justice and Peace, joined by Catholic Charities USA, Catholic Relief Services, and Catholic Rural Life. Our Catholic organizations work with Congress each year on a range of our priorities, including protecting migrants and refugees, supporting the poor and vulnerable, and protecting the unborn. Here, we wish to address the moral and human dimensions of the FY 2023 Agriculture Appropriations legislation.

We are faced with historic inflation. We know this is not merely an economic concept but a daily reality for families, farmers, and food pantries struggling to afford rising costs. This is especially evident in grocery aisles where prices have risen 10% since last year,<sup>1</sup> putting great pressure on family budgets that often have no flexibility to absorb price increases.

In a pastoral reflection, [For I Was Hungry and You Gave Me Food](#), the U.S. bishops wrote, "The primary goals of agricultural policies should be providing food for all people and reducing poverty among farmers and farm workers in this country and abroad." We must work to ensure every person has enough nutritious food to sustain a life with dignity, promote good stewardship of the land and natural resources, and provide support to struggling farmers, ranchers, and farm workers. The Catholic Church is committed to this mission and will continue to serve those in need of food and support. USDA programs play a key role in strengthening and complementing this work, allowing us to be more effective and extend our reach.

To help families and service providers cope with rising costs, please increase funding for the vital programs listed below. At a minimum, we urge you to maintain FY 2022 funding levels for these programs.

**Women, Infants, and Children (WIC):** Fully fund the WIC nutrition program ensuring that all families in need have access to life-saving nutritional and health services. Provide investments to extend the benefit increase for fruits and vegetables and to ensure program operations can respond adequately to changes in the economy and rising caseloads and food costs.

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<sup>1</sup> [According to the March 2022 Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Price Index report, year-over-year prices for food prepared at home have risen 10%.](#)

**Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP):** We urge you to ensure adequate funds for SNAP and to fully fund state education and training programs. Investment in SNAP ensures those in need of food assistance have access to critical programs. Adequate funding for state education and training programs, including case management, can help low-income families find work and self-sufficiency.

**The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) and Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP):** Provide full funding levels as required by the 2018 Farm Bill for these programs. The TEFAP program is the backstop for food security in communities across the country, providing roughly 20% of food distributed by local hunger-relief organizations. The CSFP helps to ensure adequate food assistance is provided to the growing population of low-income seniors. Faith communities and other charities are essential in providing food packages to hungry seniors in their local communities and are critical partners in the TEFAP program.

**Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP):** For 50 years CACFP has supplemented the diets of vulnerable Americans by providing nutritious meals and snacks. It is imperative to increase funding for CACFP to continue supporting the health and wellness of the over 4 million Americans served by this program.

**Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP):** Provide robust funding for CSP to help farmers and ranchers better conserve and care for farmland for future generations. Strong conservation programs are essential to enhancing natural resources and environmental protection and provide needed support to family farms.

**Local Agriculture Market Program (LAMP):** Maintain 2018 Farm Bill mandatory funding for LAMP to expand access to local fresh and nutritious food. LAMP also helps farmers and ranchers start new farm and food-related businesses to increase rural economic opportunity and help rural communities thrive.

**International Food Assistance:** International food assistance programs continue to provide much-needed resources in both emergency and development settings for people impacted by severe and chronic hunger. As famine looms in Yemen, Afghanistan, the Horn of Africa, Madagascar, and in parts of the Sahel, unprecedented hunger needs continue to multiply with millions of people relying on emergency food assistance to meet their basic food needs. According to the 2022 Global Report on Food Crises, nearly 193 million people experienced crisis level or worse food insecurity in 2021, an increase of 40 million over the previous record in 2020. Rising hunger needs are the consequence of compounding drivers – conflict, climate change, and COVID-19 – that pose grave threats to global food security. Furthermore, the recent conflict in Ukraine is reducing the purchasing power of organizations programming humanitarian assistance due to global supply chain shortages that have inflated the price of staple commodities, as well as transportation costs due to oil price spikes. We welcome the Administration's FY 2023 request, which includes renewed support for international food assistance. Taking into consideration increasing costs and growing global needs, we ask Congress to allocate \$2 billion in fiscal year 2023 for Title II Food for Peace funding.

**McGovern-Dole International Food for Education Program:** We also recognize the achievements of the McGovern-Dole program – now in its 20th year– in successfully improving maternal and child nutrition outcomes, promoting childhood literacy, supporting local farmers and markets, and helping transition at-risk schools to a sustainable homegrown school feeding model. Additionally, Catholic Relief Services welcomes the integration of local and regional procurement interventions into programs across the board to support sustainability efforts that ensure long-term success even when the program ceases to receive U.S. government investments. We ask Congress to allocate \$265 million for the McGovern-Dole program.

**Food for Peace Non-Emergency:** Resilience Food Security Activity awards (RFSAs) help communities recover from disasters and conflict with a multi-sector approach designed to build resilience, strengthen agricultural capacity, and improve livelihoods for the most vulnerable. These programs aim to reduce the need for future emergency assistance. Non-emergency funding also supports the Farmer-to-Farmer program, which matches volunteer U.S. farming and agriculture experts with development programs overseas. Pursuant to the 2018 Farm Bill, a minimum of \$365 million of Food for Peace Title II funding should go to non-emergency programs, though additional funding could be allocated for this purpose. We ask that you support at least the minimum funding level for Food for Peace Title II non-emergency programs in the FY 2023 appropriations with clear direction that at least \$350 million be used for RFSAs.

**Rural Housing:** Support rural residents by preserving affordable rural rental housing through adequate funding for Section 514 and 515 programs and the Multifamily Preservation and Revitalization Demonstration. Ensure that sufficient rental assistance and rural housing vouchers are available to keep these units affordable to rural workers and families.

Inflationary pressures on the poor and vulnerable call for robust investments to provide essential nutrition and support for those in need. Thank you for your consideration and efforts to protect and fund programs that support families, feed hungry people, help the most vulnerable farmers and farmworkers, strengthen rural communities, and promote good stewardship of God's creation.

Sincerely yours,



Most Reverend Paul S. Coakley  
Archbishop of Oklahoma City  
Chairman, Committee on Domestic Justice  
and Human Development



Most Reverend David J. Malloy  
Bishop of Rockford  
Chairman, Committee on International Justice  
and Peace



Sr. Donna Markham, OP, Ph.D.  
President & CEO  
Catholic Charities USA



Mr. Sean Callahan  
President  
Catholic Relief Services



Mr. James Ennis  
Executive Director  
Catholic Rural Life