



House Committee on Agriculture Advances Farm Bill

Thank you for your advocacy for a Farm Bill that feeds the hungry, preserves creation, supports small family farmers and helps rural America thrive.

“Liberation from the yoke of hunger is the first concrete expression of the right to life.”
Pope Benedict XVI

UPDATE

Thank you for your continued advocacy for a Farm Bill that protects hungry people, preserves creation, supports family farmers and helps rural communities thrive. On Thursday, July 12, the House Committee on Agriculture passed by a vote of 35-11, the *Federal Agriculture Reform and Risk Management Act* (FARRM), the Committee’s version of the Farm Bill. In these past weeks, we have worked together to remind Congress that the moral measure of our nation's agriculture policies is how they serve "the least of these." See a recent letter by the USCCB, Catholic Relief Services and the National Catholic Rural Life Conference expressing their hopes and concerns regarding the House’s Farm Bill proposal by clicking [here](#).

WHAT’S IN THE COMMITTEE VERSION OF THE FARM BILL?

In light of our common principles and priorities, the House Committee Bill both improves on some programs but also fails to protect other essential efforts to help hungry people in need. Here are some of the provisions contained in the Committee’s proposal:

- **Domestic Hunger and Nutrition:** The **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program** (SNAP-formerly Food Stamps): The majority of cuts to domestic hunger and nutrition programs is from the SNAP program and exceeds \$16 billion over ten years. The Committee bill makes these reductions by unfairly restricting who is eligible to receive food stamps. These cuts will reduce the benefits of approximately 2 to 3 million low-income Americans including some of the most vulnerable children, seniors, people with disabilities and workers still struggling in this economy. To cut programs that feed hungry people in the midst of economic hardship is as the bishops recently stated, “unjustified and wrong.” On a positive note, the Committee bill calls for increased funding for **The Emergency Food Assistance Program** (TEFAP) which helps parishes, charities and food pantries reach out to hungry people in need with emergency food aid.
- **International Food Security and Development:** The House Committee provided \$2 billion to the **Food for Peace** program maintaining the minimum level of funding required for development and emergency food assistance. It also directed \$400 million in annual **Food for Peace** funding to long-term anti-hunger programs. The House proposal calls for new reporting requirements for implementers of

international food aid programs to demonstrate their efficiency in providing aid to people in need overseas.

- **Conservation and Rural Development:** Conservation programs continue to be targeted for significant reductions at approximately \$6 billion over ten years. We continue to urge full funding for conservation and rural development programs such as the **Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)**, the **Rural Micro-Entrepreneur Assistance Program (RMAP)** and expanding broadband access to promote stewardship of creation and help rural communities thrive.
- **Subsidies/Crop Insurance:** The House Committee eliminates some agriculture subsidies such as direct payments, which have been provided to many large farm owners. This mirrors the Senate proposal and is a step in the right direction. However, the House bill further expands crop insurance in ways that mostly benefits large, agri-businesses over smaller farmers in need. Agriculture subsidies should be reduced overall and subsidized crop insurance should be targeted to small and medium-sized farmers, which truly need assistance. Savings from reductions to agriculture subsidies should be used to support hunger and nutrition programs that feed poor and vulnerable people.

WHAT'S NEXT?

It is unclear what the next step will be for the Farm Bill as House Leadership has not agreed to bring the bill to the floor for a vote. Most of the provisions of the Farm Bill are set to expire on September 30, 2012, and if Congress is unable to agree to a Farm Bill reauthorization by that time, they will have to come up with some form of temporary extension in a continuing resolution (CR). For more information, including updates and alerts see the USCCB Farm Bill page by clicking [here](#).

We will keep you informed as the process moves forward and continue to ask you to raise your voices and join with us to remind Congress that our nation's agriculture priorities must help the "least of these" by promoting a Farm Bill that feeds hungry, poor and vulnerable people and promotes stewardship of creation. Again, we thank you for your hard work, advocacy and dedication.

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