

seeking balance

in U.S. Farm

and

Food Policy

January 2007

introduction

All people want what's best for their children and for future generations. All community members – whether rural, suburban, or urban – want strong local economies and the ability to buy healthy and affordable food. All Americans, whether farmers or not, recognize that agriculture is vital to the nation and must remain productive, profitable, and sustainable.

But what we want from our food system and what our national food and farm policies deliver are increasingly out of balance. This is especially true for the “Farm Bill” – which Congress will renew in 2007 – and which addresses such critical issues as agricultural production, food and nutrition assistance, rural development, renewable energy, equity, and conservation policies. These public policies need to result in better management of the farm and food system that serves us all.

Evidence of the current imbalance is all too apparent:

Most farmers and ranchers don't benefit from current farm policies: According to USDA estimates, commodity subsidy programs directly supported just 39 percent of the nation's farms in 2003. The bulk of commodity payments go to a small number of the largest farms, subsidizing farm consolidation and hastening the disappearance of moderately-sized family farms.

Fewer farmers, lost farmland: The health and security of our food system depends on a viable base of farmland and a new generation to work in agriculture. Currently 1.2 million acres of farmland are lost every year – roughly 2 acres a minute – and farmers over 65 outnumber those under 35 by more than two to one.

A legacy of unfair treatment: A long history of discrimination in farm program delivery has prevented many minority farmers from obtaining credit and participating in crop insurance, commodity, and conservation programs.

Rural communities are losing population and lagging in job growth: Rural communities

are the backbone of our agriculture and food system. But between 2000 and 2005, nearly 80% of farm-dependent counties in the United States lost population due to a lack of employment opportunities, declining education and health services, and the erosion of other community assets needed to attract and retain young people.

Health care costs are rising because of diet-related diseases: The Institute of Medicine estimates that national health care expenditures related to obesity range from \$98 billion to \$117 billion annually, with taxpayers footing an increasingly large share of these costs through Medicare and Medicaid. Due to these diet-related diseases, the U.S. Surgeon General predicts that children of this generation may be the first to be less healthy and have a shorter life span than their parents.

Too many Americans face hunger in a land of plenty: Over 35 million Americans, a population equivalent to those of Pennsylvania and Texas combined, live in households unable to afford the food they need throughout the year. Farm workers – those who harvest the food for our tables – are particularly

vulnerable to hunger, with three out of five farm worker families living below the federal poverty line.

Many communities lack access to healthy foods:

Experts know that limited access to supermarkets reduces the consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables, a problem especially acute in lower-income and minority neighborhoods. Lacking access to affordable and nutritious foods, individuals in these underserved communities are unable to make positive changes to their diets and those of their children.

Farmers seeking to improve the environment are turned away: America's farmers and ranchers, as stewards of more than half the country's lands, are the key to solving many of the nation's greatest environmental challenges. Yet conservation programs designed to address water, air and wildlife challenges are not available to 75% of farmer applicants. Support for organic farming and other sustainable alternatives is inadequate to the fast growing demand from farmers and consumers.

As a nation, we can and must do better. These problems and trends are not inevitable, but rather

the result of public policy choices. The renewal of the Farm Bill in 2007 creates a rare opportunity to take significant steps towards reversing these trends. More than \$300 billion in taxpayer dollars is at stake over the next five years. These resources must be managed more responsibly and used to create greater balance in our public policies and ultimately in our farm and food system.

A diverse alliance of farm, rural, public health, anti-hunger, nutrition, conservation, renewable energy, faith-based, and other groups is joining together to support a 2007 Farm Bill that better serves the common good. **This broad, growing alliance is calling for a new direction in farm and food policy – one that takes the patchwork of existing programs that serve too few and creates instead a system that advances the interests of all Americans.** Working together, we can bring balance to federal farm and food policies and advance innovations that will help revitalize our agriculture, create healthier people and more prosperous communities, and leave a legacy of healthy land, water, and air for our children.

i. prosperous farms and ranches: *renewing american agriculture*

A strong agricultural economy and healthy food supply are part of the foundation of our society. Each and every one of us depends on a vital farm sector to provide food and fiber. We also look to agriculture for renewable energy sources and the open lands that maintain America's scenic vistas, recreational opportunities, and wildlife habitat.

If better designed and managed, federal farm and food policies can provide critical tools and resources needed to maintain a strong and vibrant farm sector. Under current policies, however, we have witnessed the continued loss of farms, farmers and valuable farmland. Unprecedented farm and agri-business consolidation limits competition and innovation in the marketplace.

Current farm and food policies have contributed to the overproduction of certain crops, creating artificially low prices that imperil the livelihoods of farmers here and abroad. Moreover, the benefits of farm subsidies flow disproportionately to very large farms and specific regions of the country, neglecting more entrepreneurial and diversified farms and regions that raise livestock and grow other types of crops, including fruits and vegetables.

The good news is that farm leaders across the country recognize that the status quo in farm and food policy is inadequate and that practical changes are necessary. Broad consensus is building around the need to reform existing commodity programs. Green payments, limits on subsidies, revenue-based risk management,

Renewing American Agriculture

- Create fair and cost-effective farm programs that serve the needs of all farmers and ranchers, support diversified farming systems, reward conservation, and minimize adverse impacts on producers in developing nations.
- Implement meaningful payment limitation reform and stronger conservation compliance requirements for commodity and crop insurance programs.
- Ensure that farm policies are implemented fairly and increase outreach and assistance to minority and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers.

Fostering Market-Based Solutions

- Create a balanced marketing support structure to address local, regional, national, and global markets.
- Secure open and competitive markets and contract reform to ensure fair prices for farmers and ranchers.
- Encourage certification, inspection, and labeling initiatives that spur market-based efforts to increase farm income, environmental and farm worker protection, and meet increasing consumer demand for high-quality and traceable products.
- Provide targeted investments to assist fruit and vegetable growers and other producers meet the increasing consumer demand for foods recommended in the federal dietary guidelines.

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and savings programs all hold promise as means of reforming farm policy and improving farm viability.

For decades, farm policy has focused on developing export markets for bulk commodities. At the same time, policymakers have severely neglected the local and regional markets in our own backyards – markets that can increase the income of farmers and rural communities and provide fresh, healthy food to our citizens. Last year, for example, Congress dedicated less than \$40 million dollars to innovative state and federal marketing programs designed to promote new markets that provide locally grown products to millions of customers across the U.S. – a tiny fraction of the \$20 billion spent some years on commodity programs and export subsidies. This imbalance needs to be corrected.

There is great reason for optimism about emerging domestic markets, which are among the fastest growing. These include organic foods, a market with sales projected to reach \$30.7 billion in 2007 as well as the rapidly expanding farm-based energy market for traditional crops (corn and soybeans) and non-traditional ones (switchgrass and wood by-products). To spur entrepreneurship and entry into these growing and more profitable domestic markets, the 2007 Farm Bill should make a dramatic investment in support for business planning and transition assistance, grants and loans for value-added enterprises, and marketing tools and infrastructure to support local and regional market development. A priority focus of these programs should be to improve the viability of small

and moderate-sized family farms, including limited resource and socially disadvantaged producers.

We can and must cultivate a new generation of farmers and ranchers. Public policies can do a great deal to ensure that there are incentives in place to help new farmers and ranchers buy land, meet the challenges of farm succession, and establish viable farm businesses. For new farmers and ranchers, the challenges to entry and success include the high cost of land as well as difficulties obtaining credit and insurance. A shortage of farm mentoring and training opportunities make it difficult to obtain the critical management, marketing, and communications skills necessary for success in entrepreneurial agriculture. Immigrant and refugee farmers as well as transitioning farm workers – who together make up the fastest-growing population of farmers in the United States – face special challenges and cultural barriers, including understanding how to buy or lease land, how to obtain basic farming resources, and how to access public and private agricultural services and programs.

Without changes to farm and food policies that unfairly distribute benefits and limit opportunities, our farm and food system will continue to be out of balance. To ensure the future vitality of our food system, future farm and food policies should encourage the development of new farmers and ranchers, ensure that cost-effective assistance is available to all farmers, and support the new markets growing in our own backyard.

Advance New Opportunities in Farming

- Create a comprehensive initiative to assist new and beginning farmers and ranchers, including transitioning farmers and farm workers.
- Target programs and resources to the growing ranks of women farmers, landowners, and food system entrepreneurs.
- Establish organic transition assistance and certification cost-share for farmers seeking to develop more sustainable systems and meet growing consumer demand for organic foods.
- Reorient investments in research and extension to better support new farmers, new and ethnic markets, rural entrepreneurship, sustainable and organic farming, renewable energy production, and ecosystem services.
- Improve risk management options for sustainable production systems, organic farmers, socially disadvantaged producers, and new and transitioning farmers.

Expand New Markets

- Provide increased support for value-added agricultural enterprises and for supply chain innovations that link family farm businesses with new markets and distribution networks.
- Make a major investment in grants to spur farmers markets and other direct farmer-to-consumer marketing innovations.
- Reduce regulatory barriers and provide support for processing and distribution infrastructure to complement emerging retail and institutional markets for local and regional farm products, including sustainably raised meats, eggs, and milk.
- Improve the enforceability of laws designed to ensure competitive and fair agricultural markets and to increase access to market information.

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ii. healthy people: *reducing hunger and improving nutrition*

The first measure of both a healthy food system and a responsible society is its capacity to provide for the basic nutritional needs of all members of society. Even though the United States is the wealthiest country in the world and produces an abundance of crops and livestock, too many Americans remain hungry or uncertain about where their next meal will come from.

The lack of healthy, affordable retail food outlets in many rural and urban communities aggravates health disparities between income groups. Many chronic diseases – including obesity, type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and certain forms of cancer – are directly influenced by individual dietary intake, which is in turn influenced by the ability to purchase healthy and affordable food. Every dollar responsibly invested in encouraging healthy eating behaviors and preventing obesity, especially among children, will payoff many times in the reduced long-term costs to society of treating diet-related illnesses.

Federal nutrition programs are vital to the food security and health of lower income Americans. For these individuals and families, Food Stamps and other supporting programs are a critical source of food and must be strengthened in the next Farm Bill through broadening and simplifying eligibility, especially for legal immigrants, and providing

benefits adequate to purchase healthy foods by Food Stamp recipients.

It is common sense that farm and food policy be linked more strongly with national health and nutrition goals. Federal nutrition programs, such as the Food Stamp Program, Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC), and the National School Lunch Program are recognizing the important impact that food quality has on individual health. Promising changes are underway to ensure that these programs provide quality foods, while maintaining an emphasis on personal choice. This is especially important in public schools that participate in federal nutrition programs, where policies should require that all food served meets US dietary guidelines.

New stakeholders – in public health, nutrition, local and state government, and entrepreneurial businesses – are identifying business models, procurement policies, and supply chain innovations that can make our system of food production, processing, and distribution more responsive to the health needs of all Americans. The next Farm Bill should support these and other efforts to increase the availability of healthful, nutritious foods for all Americans, especially children. Policymakers should take special care to increase funding for programs

Reducing Hunger, Improving Nutrition

- Strengthen critical federal food assistance programs, especially the Food Stamp Program.
- Expand and improve nutrition education to support community-based solutions to obesity and food insecurity.
- Increase access to healthier foods for all Americans, including through government food assistance programs.

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that make healthy and affordable food accessible to the most vulnerable in our society. In addition to linking consumers directly with farmers generally, Congress should expand coupon programs that allow low-income and elderly Americans to shop at farmers markets. Expanded nutrition education programs are needed so that consumers better understand the health benefits of consuming more fruits, vegetables, whole grains, beans and legumes, and other minimally processed foods.

Fostering local and regional food systems that afford access to healthy food at peak nutritional value should be a policy priority. Community gardens in neighborhoods and on working farms close to cities and towns are important for children and families seeking to learn about agriculture, produce fresh foods for themselves, and purchase it from local

growers. These community-based food projects create a more diverse and healthy food supply – one that helps individuals improve the quality of the food they eat and builds connections between urban and rural communities.

On a broader scale, federal policies should facilitate increased institutional and agency procurement of local and regional agricultural products by schools, hospitals, food banks, retirement centers, governmental offices, and prisons. The scaling up of these supply chains and the retail outlets they serve – from supermarkets and corner stores to restaurants and farmers markets – is an important new avenue for expanding consumer access to healthy foods and increasing markets for farmers.

Increase Food Access and Improve Health

- Encourage greater consumption of fruits and vegetables by enabling federal nutrition program beneficiaries to purchase food at local farmers markets and other retail food outlets.
- Expand innovative, community-based food programs to increase the scale and scope of institutional and emergency food purchasing programs, including through changes in procurement policy and support for infrastructure development.
- Create new and expanded food systems programs to help communities develop retail food markets, urban agriculture projects, and marketing networks to address the needs of underserved neighborhoods.
- Provide funding to school child nutrition programs to provide fruits and vegetables in schools, implement wellness policies, and expand nutrition education.

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iii. vital communities: *building rural businesses and promoting entrepreneurship*

Spurring innovation and job creation in rural communities is the key to ensuring the long-term future of rural America, which in turn supports the nation's farm economy and food system. More than half of all new jobs created in the most rural regions of the nation come from small, non-farm business ventures. With farm households now earning most of their income from off-farm sources, the future of our food system depends increasingly on a strong and broad-based rural economy.

Farm subsidies to commodity crop growers are no substitute for sound rural development policy. Indeed, rural counties with the highest concentrations of subsidies also have lower levels of job creation and negative population growth.

When the lack of opportunities forces young people out of rural communities, these communities lose talent in the form of potential teachers, farmers and business leaders. This situation is particularly pressing in high-poverty counties across the US, where a majority of the poor are often people of color. The next Farm Bill needs to focus on rural development policies that promote entrepreneurship – in the agriculture and non-agriculture sectors – and build individual and community assets.

Entrepreneurship is an economic development model that can better serve rural people and rural places. The Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City states that “rural policymakers, who once followed traditional strategies of recruiting manufacturers that export low-value products, have realized that entrepreneurs can generate new economic value for their communities. Entrepreneurs add jobs, raise incomes, create wealth, improve the quality of life of citizens and help rural communities operate in the global economy.”

Building the assets of rural communities is equally important. Greater income alone cannot lead to economic well-being for individuals and families. When people own their own homes and businesses, communities are strengthened and stabilized. Participation in civic life increases and as a result schools improve, roads are better maintained, and governments become more responsive. A commitment to rural asset-and wealth-building strategies leads to stronger individuals, families, and communities.

Rural communities provide a secure economic foundation for our farm and food system. In an increasingly interconnected world, rural communities are becoming regional centers of innovation

Building Rural Businesses, Improving Rural Communities

- Foster rural cooperative and business development opportunities.
- Promote local and farmer ownership and investment opportunities in farm-based renewable energy production.
- Strengthen key USDA rural development programs for housing, community facilities, and water and telecommunications infrastructure.

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and entrepreneurship. These communities retain their own young people and attract new workers by creating attractive, livable places with top-notch schools, health care centers, and employment opportunities.

For rural businesses linked to agriculture, there are significant opportunities to build bridges to nearby urban areas. Investments in locally owned value-adding enterprises, processing facilities, and marketing cooperatives can build rural assets by capital-

izing on emerging regional markets for food, fiber, and energy.

To ensure a viable agricultural system for generations to come, we must retain and attract rural residents, attack the root causes of rural poverty, and address the continuing and growing economic disparity between rural and urban areas of the nation. The Rural Development Title of the 2007 Farm Bill should focus on entrepreneurial development and asset-and wealth-building for rural people and communities.

Capitalize on Rural Strengths and Promote Community Development

- Promote rural entrepreneurship and micro-enterprise business development.
- Advance rural community and economic development through local leadership, wealth creation, entrepreneurship, and youth involvement.
- Create savings incentives for families living and working in rural areas losing population.
- Create entrepreneurial networks and partnerships to create rural jobs, assist small business startups, and spur community innovations.

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iv. sustainable lands: *cultivating stewardship*

Farmers and ranchers manage more than half of the land in the United States. If not properly managed, agricultural activities on farm and rangeland can impair the nation's water, air, and soil and disrupt and destroy habitat for endangered and other wildlife species. Farmers and ranchers can produce far more than food, energy, and fiber – they can also produce clean air, clean water, and improved wildlife habitat if the 2007 Farm Bill provides significantly stronger incentives for better stewardship.

Current farm policies create incentives to adopt farming practices that accelerate erosion, consume scarce water resources, convert valuable wildlife habitat, and lead to the inefficient application of chemicals. Current policies demand that farmers squeeze more and more from the soil – putting short-term gains ahead of the land's capacity to supply our food into the future. In particular, current policies encourage farming on environmentally sensitive lands or in flood-prone areas, which often increases the costs associated with natural disasters.

A more balanced approach – and one that enjoys broad support from farmers and taxpayers – is to expand farm policies that reward farmers for being good

stewards. That's the idea behind green payments and other USDA conservation programs. These programs enable farmers, ranchers and forest landowners to protect our lakes, rivers and bays, mitigate the severity of climate change, reduce pesticide applications, serve as the frontline against sprawling development, and protect our wildlife heritage.

USDA conservation programs are the first stop for farmers seeking to increase production of these valuable public goods. While these programs are popular with farmers and ranchers across the nation, funding limitations create long waiting lists. Indeed, some three out of four applicants seeking USDA conservation assistance are turned away. This shortfall discourages other producers from seeking conservation assistance and contributes to an overall erosion of the farm community's ability to conserve the resources fundamental to our future food, fiber, and energy needs.

To meet the demand for conservation programs and address the continuing environmental challenges faced by the nation's farmers and ranchers, Congress must significantly increase funding for core working land and resource protection programs administered

Conserving Natural Resources and Protecting the Environment

- Significantly increase funding for working lands conservation programs.
- Maintain and reform land retirement programs by placing greater emphasis on long-term protection of environmentally sensitive lands and critical wildlife habitat and by expanding the enrollment of conservation buffers.
- Strengthen and improve enforcement of conservation standards linked to commodity and conservation programs, and re-establish conservation standards for crop and revenue insurance programs.
- Build the technical assistance infrastructure needed to assist farmers and ranchers with becoming better stewards of the nation's lands.

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by the USDA. These programs enable farmers and ranchers to implement practices that conserve precious soil and water resources and prevent pollution from farming operations. These programs are essential for the responsible management of our national agricultural productivity, our natural resource base, and our public health. Likewise, policymakers should renew their commitment to restoring and enhancing wildlife habitat through traditional easement programs. In addition, incentives should be increased to help recover rare species and to implement state

wildlife action plans. Policymakers should also invest in critical programs designed to conserve prime farm-and ranchland threatened by sprawl.

In addition to these broader policy goals, Congress must act to enhance the effectiveness of USDA conservation programs through reforms that encourage innovation and regional problem-solving, elevate performance and cost-effectiveness, and strengthen compliance with basic environmental standards.

Create a New Generation of Agricultural Conservation

- Reward stewardship by making the Conservation Security Program annually available to all farmers and ranchers who meet heightened environmental criteria and by streamlining the program's payment structure.
- Develop incentives to reward organic farming systems and establish an initiative to promote wider use of ecologically-based integrated pest management.
- Ensure that conservation programs better address the needs of new and beginning farmers and ranchers.
- Invest in farm-based renewable energy systems – from biofuels to wind power – that result in measurable, net environmental gains and build rural community assets.
- Re-establish quantifiable conservation objectives, and dedicate funds to monitor and assess the environmental benefits of conservation programs.

Promote Local Leadership in Conservation

- Encourage locally-led collaborations to solve environmental problems and meet community needs by establishing a Cooperative Conservation Partnerships Initiative.
- Create incentives designed to reward innovation and performance by states and localities.

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v. diversity and equity: *advancing opportunities for all*

Equal opportunity to advance and prosper is a core American value. But in our nation, discrimination has kept many socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers, farm workers, and minority residents of urban and rural communities from accessing farm, business development, and community improvement programs that have helped other Americans build assets and thrive.

Unfair treatment creates a cycle of diminished opportunity. It is well-documented that minority participation in farm programs lags far behind that of non-minorities. Lack of access to credit, marketing, risk management, conservation and other programs impedes the ability of socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers to modernize their operations and improve profitability – which in turn makes it more difficult to qualify for the very government programs that would provide needed assistance.

Evidence of civil rights violations and racial bias in the delivery of USDA programs is abundant. This is one of the reasons that the population and land base of African-American farmers – who numbered more than 925,000 in 1920 – has plummeted by some

97 percent. Black farmers continue to exit agriculture at a higher rate than other producers.

In 1999, a federal court approved a landmark civil rights consent decree in a class action suit brought by black farmers against USDA. Settlement actions have been inadequate, however, and similar lawsuits by American Indians, Hispanics, and women farmers remain unresolved. Even in cases where past discrimination may have been a significant contributor to bankruptcy, foreclosure proceedings have continued, forcing many of these farmers permanently off their land.

Despite these significant challenges, minority producers and farm workers are a vital part of US agriculture and our food system. USDA has documented that producers in four socially disadvantaged groups (Blacks, American Indians, Asians, and Hispanics) still own at least 25 million acres of agricultural land, valued at over \$44 billion. Latinos constitute the fastest growing sector of farmers in the United States, increasing by 50% between 1997 and 2002. Agricultural operations by Asian American and Pacific Island farmers – particularly in

Promoting Diversity and Equity

- Ensure that farm policies and programs are developed and implemented fairly and that current disparities in service are eliminated.
- Increase transparency and accountability in all USDA agencies and provide them with full authority to gather and report data on socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers.
- Create effective and adequate means of redress for farmers and ranchers denied access to USDA programs due to discrimination.
- Expand opportunities for socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers and communities of color to shape the future of the food system.

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urban-edge counties – are expanding. American Indian producers work millions of privately-held acres but also manage 46 million acres of grazing, crop, and forest lands on Indian reservations. And finally, women farmers – both minority and non-minority – are a rapidly growing sector in agriculture.

As the nation's overall population becomes increasingly diverse, people of color are poised to play a much larger role in creating a viable and sustainable farm and food system for the future. The 2007 Farm Bill must break the patterns of past – ensuring redress to those unjustly denied assistance in the past, removing barriers that continue to limit access, and opening new doors to participation. In the 2007 Farm Bill, Congress should enact policies to ensure that socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers – including immigrants, refugees, and transitioning farm workers – obtain the resources needed to purchase land, modernize farming operations, and strengthen farm businesses

The 2007 Farm Bill should also take significant steps to create a safer workplace and increased economic security for the farm workers. Farm workers typically earn only a fraction of the wages of other workers, have inadequate access to field sanitation facilities, and often live in substandard housing. They are

exposed to pesticides used in agriculture and face high rates of work-related injury – and most lack health insurance and access to health care. While stronger farm labor, health, and safety protections need to be addressed in other areas of law, our food system depends on farm workers having a voice at the table within agriculture and hence through the next Farm Bill.

The 2007 Farm Bill provides an opportunity to reexamine the relationship between rural and urban America – and to better understand how their futures are intertwined. A large and increasing share of U.S. agricultural production occurs in urban-influenced counties. These highly productive farmlands, which are increasingly threatened by urban sprawl, are used by a new generation of entrepreneurial producers – many of them people of color – to grow, process, and market higher value products into larger cities and towns. Large minority and ethnic populations comprise important new markets for farmers, especially those farming near cities. Finally, many people within urban communities are seeking to play an active role in developing stronger local food systems. Urban agriculture –including market farms, community gardens, and nurseries – can provide employment opportunities and help increase access to fresh, locally produced fruits, vegetables, and other products.

Eliminate Disparities and Ensure Fair Access

- Institute a farm viability program for socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers.
- Launch an initiative to increase conservation program participation by socially disadvantaged producers.
- Fully fund USDA offices and extension agents on Indian Reservations.
- Increase and expand the Outreach and Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Rancher Program (2501).
- Establish an independent review process and direct USDA to stop foreclosures and waive interest on loans of producers in unresolved discrimination cases.
- Expand innovative, community-based approaches to solving food access problems in urban and other underserved communities.

Assist Farm Workers

- Establish an Office of Farm Workers at USDA.
- Recognize farm worker experience as a qualification to enter USDA agriculture and credit programs.
- Expand the Emergency Grants to Farm Workers program to allow organizations to meet farm worker needs in times of disasters.
- Increase pesticide health and safety training for farm workers, including better labeling and reporting on pesticide use.

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who we are:

Over the past year, a diverse group of organizations – family farm, sustainable agriculture, conservation and environment, rural and community development, anti-hunger, nutrition, public health, faith, and others – has met under the auspices of the Farm and Food Policy Project (www.farmandfoodproject.org) to discuss the future of U.S. farm and food policy. This public statement, an initial result of that continuing dialogue, outlines a series of broad goals and specific measures that we believe will secure a brighter future for farmers and ranchers, for rural and urban communities, and for all of us who depend on a healthy food system.

supporting this statement:

We have asked organizations across the United States to join these efforts by supporting this statement and working to advance its goals. “Support” means that an organization sees significant opportunities for positive change in the next Farm Bill, endorses the general direction called for in this statement, and is willing to be listed on printed and web-based versions of this document. It indicates that an organization sees value in a cross-sector dialogue about the future of the U.S. agriculture and food system and supports efforts to identify cross-cutting policy innovations. It does not imply support for any particular piece of legislation or legislative language, or for any specific policy proposal included in this document. It does not mean an organization views all the policy issues addressed in the report as priorities but rather is generally supportive of efforts to join forces across the public interest community.

how to get involved:

Join the growing list of organizations supporting this statement by contacting Jessie Dowling at info@farmandfoodproject.org or 202-543-1300.

Go to www.farmandfoodproject.org to learn more about farm and food policy and read the specific recommendations of allied organizations. Or contact Allen Hance, Coordinator, Farm and Food Policy Project, at ahance@nemw.org or 202-464-4015.

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