



## **THE HOUSE FARM BILL MUST BE IMPROVED TO...**

### ***PROVIDE AN ADEQUATE SAFETY NET FOR FAMILY FARMERS AND CONSUMERS.***

The long-lasting slump in commodity prices prevents farmers from receiving a good price from the market. As a result, family farmers and ranchers are forced to rely on price supports that do not reflect the current state of the farm economy. The safety net needs to be improved to keep family farmers in business during down market cycles. Low-income Americans need a safety net too, including incentives for healthy eating and workforce training. The House Farm bill (H.R. 2) lacks the improvements needed to help farmers cope with sustained low prices and makes unnecessary cuts to programs that feed hungry Americans.

#### **Improve farm safety net to reflect the current state of the farm economy.**

Net farm income is less than half of what it was when the current Farm Bill was written. The current safety net doesn't provide enough support for family farmers and ranchers to make ends meet. Farmers need higher PLC reference prices for commodities that have been underwater for years. Dairy farmers need both price supports and a mechanism that manages our nation's oversupply of milk. At the same time, these programs should be implemented responsibly by capping payments and directing them solely to family farmers.

#### **Ensure credit availability for farmers and ranchers.**

FSA provides critical loans for new and beginning farmers as well as farmers that have fallen on difficult times. While H.R. 2 increases the guaranteed loan limit, it does nothing to increase loan authority for FSA's overall loan portfolio. This will lead to larger loans going out to fewer farmers. Additionally, the bill provides no increase for the direct loan program, which more often provides necessary credit to beginning farmers.

#### **Maintain funding levels for consumer benefits under nutrition programs.**

Farm Bill nutrition programs provide an important safety net for consumers who have fallen on hard times. Unfortunately, the comprehensive changes proposed in the bill would compromise food security for working families who currently use SNAP. Congress should maintain the existing eligibility standards for SNAP participants, while providing incentives for direct farmer-to-consumer sales.

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## ***PROMOTE THE LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY OF FAMILY FARMS AND RANCHES.***

Sustainability is critical for farm productivity and the health of rural communities now and for generations to come. The House Farm Bill must be improved to provide family farmers and ranchers the tools they need to be the best possible stewards of our natural resources.

### **Provide incentive-based working lands program to promote improved stewardship.**

By cutting working lands conservation funding by \$5 billion and eliminating the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), H.R. 2 falls woefully short in promoting active stewardship. The Environmental Quality Incentives Program and CSP currently serve distinct and complementary purposes, both of which are important to family farmers and ranchers. The Farm Bill must include a working lands program that provides incentives to farmers and ranchers who take a comprehensive approach to improving their overall stewardship levels.

### **Restore funding for energy programs.**

Farm Bill energy programs help family farmers and ranchers lower their environmental footprint, reduce their energy usage, and improve their bottom lines. Unfortunately, the bill eliminates mandatory funding for all of these programs, including the widely used Rural Energy for America Program (REAP). Congress should restore mandatory funding for REAP and Farm Bill programs that promote development of the bioeconomy in rural areas.

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## ***ENSURE FAIR AND DIVERSE MARKETS FOR FAMILY FARMERS.***

Over time, family farmers and ranchers have been increasingly disadvantaged in traditional commodity markets. However, access to new markets can open the door for producers to diversify their operations, improve their profitability and meet consumer demands. Unfortunately, the House Farm Bill represents a major step back from improving market access for family farmers.

### **Restore funding for programs that improve access to local, regional, and specialty markets.**

The bill eliminates mandatory funding for key programs that are critical in promoting access to local, regional, and specialty markets. The Farmers' Market and Local Foods Promotion Program (FMLFPP) and Value Added Producer Grants (VAPG) improve market opportunities and increase the farmer's share of the consumer dollar. At the same time, the

National Organic Certification Cost Share Program (NOCCSP) and the Agricultural Marketing Assistance (AMA) program make it easier for farmers to transition into organic agriculture. Congress must recognize the value of the programs referenced above and restore mandatory funding.

**Include a competition title to ensure fair treatment of family farmers and ranchers.**

Increased consolidation within both agricultural inputs and outputs has led to increased costs for farmers, less choice and innovation in the marketplace, and increased prices for consumers. The consolidated marketplace has left family farmers to operate on razor thin margins, forcing many out of business. Congress should establish a new Farm Bill title to promote competition in the marketplace, enhance antitrust enforcement, and establish protections from unfair and deceptive practices in the contract poultry and livestock sectors.

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