



Honorable Pat Roberts, Chair  
Honorable Debbie Stabenow, Ranking Member  
US Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry  
328A Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Michael Conaway, Chair  
Honorable Collin C. Peterson, Ranking Member  
US House of Representatives Committee on Agriculture  
1301 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

October 25, 2017

**Re: 2018 Farm Bill Priorities**

Dear Senators Roberts and Stabenow and Representatives Conaway and Peterson;

We write regarding the **2018 Farm Bill** on behalf of **Slow Food USA**, the national, not-for-profit organization **dedicated to a food chain that is Good, Clean, and Fair for All**. We believe that everyone has the right to enjoy ample, sustainably and humanely produced food that is good for human health and well-being, protects our planet and replenishes our resources, and provides a decent living for those who work to put food on our tables.

A top priority for Slow Food USA – and countless other food, farm, and nutrition advocates – is a **comprehensive Farm Bill including both agriculture and nutrition titles**. Nutrition has been a part of the Farm Bill since its earliest days; the common-sense pairing of nutrition and agriculture priorities has for nearly a century helped to unite urban and rural constituencies around our most basic commonality – the food we eat. Tearing nutrition and agriculture apart would endanger critical agriculture and nutrition programs. We must continue to advance a comprehensive Farm Bill that addresses the needs of all.

After years of budget cutting, there must be **no cut to overall Farm Bill funding, restoration of conservation funding**, and, of critical importance, **no cut to anti-hunger funding and programs**.

We are pleased to support these **marker bills**, pointing the way to the next Farm Bill.

- **S. 1767/H.R. 3687, Farm to School Act of 2017**, Sens. Leahy (VT) and Cochran (MS)/Rep. Fortenberry (NE), that would continue and expand the Farm to School Grant Program by: increasing annual mandatory funding; improving program participation by beginning, socially disadvantaged, and veteran farmers and ranchers; fully including early care and education sites, summer food service sites, and after school programs; and increasing access among tribal schools to farm-fresh and traditional foods, especially from tribal producers.
- **S. 1947/H.R. 3941, Local FARMS Act of 2017** (Local Food and Regional Market Supply Act of 2017), Sen. Brown (OH) and Reps. Pingree (ME), Fortenberry (NE), and Maloney (NY), that would help grow vibrant local and regional food economies by consolidating key programs into the Agricultural Market Development Program; extending Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program eligibility to low-income veterans; providing resources to farmers for food safety

certification and equipment upgrade; promoting local food procurement by schools; ensuring that grants and loans can be used to support local livestock, dairy, and poultry processing infrastructure; continuing the organic cost-share program; and implementing a pilot program providing produce prescriptions to low-income individuals.

- **H.R. 3699, Urban Agriculture Production Act of 2017**, Rep. Kaptur (OH), that would promote and enhance urban agriculture, focusing on historically undeserved neighborhoods, by: establishing an Urban Agriculture Outreach Program and Urban Agricultural Liaison to award grants supporting infrastructure development, land acquisition and conservation, education and training, and market logistics; supporting research focused on production effectiveness, efficiency, and profitability; establishing loans and loan guarantees to expand and promote direct marketing and assist the development of local food business enterprises; and enhancing the Farmers' Market Promotion Program, the Seniors Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP), and the Community Food Projects and Community Facilities Direct Loan and Grant Programs.

We call for the 2018 Farm Bill to support; **Better Nutrition and an End to Hunger, A Level "Plowing" Field, and Food for the Future**. In addition, cross-cutting these priorities, it is imperative that we **advance racial equity throughout the food chain**.

### **1. Better Nutrition and an End to Hunger**

Ensure that all, and most importantly our children, have knowledge about and access to ample, healthful food by preserving and enhancing the **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program** (SNAP, formerly food stamps) and **The Emergency Food Assistance Program** (TEFAP); enhancing the funding and effectiveness of **Farm to School programming**; enhancing **Hunger and Food Insecurity Programs**, and promoting **food waste reduction**.

### **2. A Level "Plowing" Field**

Ensure **vital support** of those who work to produce our food.

- **Small and Mid-scale, Family Farmers and Ranchers**  
Provide equitable access to effective technical assistance, grants, risk management tools, credit programs, fair markets, and guest farm labor, with focus on diversified and sustainable farms and beginning, socially disadvantaged, and veteran farmers.
- **Immigrant Farm Workers**  
Protect immigrant farm workers from unfair treatment and fear of harassment, detention, family separation, and deportation.
- **Urban Farmers**  
Address the unique needs of urban farmers by creating an urban agriculture office to coordinate policies and provide technical and financial assistance.

### **3. Food for the Future**

Meet the challenges of increasing population, imperiled agricultural resources, and climate change by; facilitating the **transition of farms to the next generation of ownership and operation**, focusing on opportunities for beginning, socially disadvantaged, and veteran farmers; supporting and expanding **conventional plant and animal breeding** research and development; scaling up **conservation and stewardship programs**; and focusing **rural renewable energy programs** on solar, wind, and perennial-based biofuels.

**Details expanding these Slow Food USA 2018 Farm Bill priorities are attached to this letter.**

Thank you for your attention to these important matters so critical to a more equitable, just, and sustainable food and farm future for our nation.

Sincerely,

Richard McCarthy



Executive Director

Northeast Governors

Laura Luciano, New York



Mara Welton, Vermont



Southeast Governors

Carole Addlestone, South Carolina



John Haddad, Virginia



Peter Morich, Georgia



Midwest Governors

Jennifer Casey, Wisconsin



Kim Bayer, Michigan



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Jennifer Breckner, Illinois



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Marilyn Noble, Colorado



Grit Ramushkat, New Mexico



Pacific Governors

Mark Caruso, Northern California



Dava Guthmiller, Bay Area, California



Laurie Carlson, Hawaii



Northwest Governors

Cheryl Brock, Oregon



Gerry Warren, Washington



## 2018 Farm Bill Priorities

These **Slow Food USA 2018 Farm Bill Priorities** are rooted in our belief in a Food Chain that is Good, Clean, and Fair for All and inspired by our supporters and the work of like-minded and allied organizations. \*

In the 2018 Farm Bill, we support **Better Nutrition and an End to Hunger, A Level “Plowing” Field, and Food for the Future**. Cross-cutting these priorities is the imperative of **advancing racial equity throughout the farm and food chain**.

**1. Better Nutrition and an End to Hunger**, ensuring that all, and most importantly our children, have knowledge about and access to ample, healthful food.

- Protect **SNAP** from policy proposals to alter its structure and cut its funding and enhance its effectiveness by
  - **1.1.1** basing benefits on the USDA **“low-cost” food plan**, rather than the present “thrifty” food plan thereby, for example, increasing the weekly per child food budget from \$21, under the thrifty plan, to \$28.80, under the low-cost plan.
- **1.2** Protect and enhance **TEFAP** (The Emergency Food Assistance Program) by
  - **1.2.1** providing additional **food purchase funding**,
  - **1.2.2** maintaining **storage and infrastructure funding**, and
  - **1.2.3** providing new infrastructure improvement grants to enable programs to develop capacity to procure and distribute fresh, **local and regional farm produce**.
- **1.3** Enhance and expand **Farm to School programming** reach and effectiveness by
  - **1.3.1** increasing the **program grant budget**, from \$5 million to \$15 million, to meet increasing school demand,
  - **1.3.2** including **early education and summer feeding programs** and increasing access to farm-fresh and traditional foods among **tribal communities**,
  - **1.3.3** improving program participation of **beginning, socially disadvantaged, and veteran farmers**,
  - **1.3.4** facilitating School Food Authorities’ ability to purchase **locally produced food** by using local food production as a product procurement specification, and
  - **1.3.5** facilitating **“scratch” cooking** of locally produced food in schools by loan guarantees and grants to finance infrastructure improvements in school lunch facilities and to train school cafeteria staff.
- **1.4** Enhance **Hunger and Food Insecurity Programs** by
  - **1.4.1** reauthorizing the **CFP** (Community Food Projects) **Grant Program**, that promotes community-based food self-sufficiency and security in low-income communities, and providing \$10 million annually in mandatory funding and
  - **1.4.2** reauthorizing the **FINI** (Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentives) **Program**, that provides competitive grants in support of fruit and vegetable purchase incentives to SNAP participants, focusing on local and regional production, with annual mandatory funding, gradually increasing to \$50 million over five years, and enhancing program effectiveness by providing for technical assistance and best practices sharing among grantees.
- **1.5** Support enhanced **food waste reduction** through incentives, grants, and education by
  - **1.5.1** increasing donation of excess, nutritious food, that would otherwise be wasted, by

- increasing tax benefits to donating farmers and ranchers, other producers, and distributors,
- clarifying and standardizing “sell, best, and use by” food labeling to help “destigmatize” donated, past-dated packaged food, and
- providing grants and technical assistance to non-profit food distribution programs for planning and program development and distribution infrastructure enhancement,
- **1.5.2** providing grant funding to support K-12 **school cafeteria food waste reduction** practices and the integration of food waste reduction into school curricula, and
- **1.5.3** supporting a **national food waste education and awareness campaign** to address and help correct wasteful practices.

## 2. A Level “Plowing” Field, providing vital support of those who work to produce our food.

- **2.1 Small and Mid-scale, Family Farmers and Ranchers**, providing equitable access to effective technical assistance, grants, risk management, credit, fair markets, and labor, with focus on diversified and sustainable farms and beginning, socially disadvantaged, and veteran farmers.
  - **2.1.1** Restore and increase funding and improve effectiveness of programs focusing on **beginning, socially disadvantaged, and veteran farmers and tribal communities** including
    - the Outreach and Assistance Program for Socially Disadvantaged and Veteran Farmers and Ranchers (the 2501 program), that addresses the challenges of African-American, American Indian, Asian-American, Latino, and veteran farmers,
    - the Federally Recognized Tribal Extension Program (FRTEP), that supports tribal communities with youth development, agricultural and natural resource management, business development, and food security education and technical assistance, and
    - the Food Distribution on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) program, by providing greater tribal control, and
 target funding to **counties with persistent poverty** by waiving matching fund requirements for non-profit and community-based organizations administering Rural Development grant projects serving low-income populations,
  - **2.1.2** Ensure equitable access to **farm credit**, focusing on beginning, socially disadvantaged, and veteran farmers, by
    - expanding access to affordable farmland by increasing the maximum loan amount and adjusting the loan cap annually to reflect rising farmland costs,
    - amending the microloan statute to authorize Farm Service Agency (FSA), cooperative agreements with Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs) providing business, financial, marketing, and credit management services and technical assistance to microloan borrowers, and
    - coordinating the FSA borrower training program with the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BFRDP) to ensure that financial management training programs prepare borrowers to meet FSA loan requirements.
  - **2.1.3** Reform the federal **Crop Insurance Program** to reduce taxpayer costs and use savings to ensure that the program is more efficient and effective by
    - ensuring equitable access to crop insurance, expanding program access to better serve all types of farmers on all types of farms of all sizes in all regions of our nation and improving delivery to make the program more transparent and efficient,
    - encouraging a heightened commitment to advanced conservation and stewardship and promoting conservation by eliminating insurance program barriers to

- sustainable farming practices and linking premium subsidies to stewardship practices that protect our land, water, and health, and
    - reforming the program’s structure to prevent it from unfairly influencing markets, land access, or planting decisions and from promoting farm consolidation and weakening rural communities.
- **2.1.4** Establish meaningful and effective per farm caps on **commodity and crop insurance subsidy program entitlements** and use savings to provide increased funding for innovative and effective programs supporting
  - beginning, socially disadvantaged, and veteran farmers,
  - local and regional food markets,
  - organic agriculture and biodiversity, and
  - rural economic and community development.
- **2.1.5** Empower **new farmers** with the **skills and resources** necessary to succeed in our changing agricultural economy by
  - clarifying and reinforcing the Value Added Producer Grants Program (VAPG) priority and funding set-aside for beginning and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers and
  - increasing Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program funding for grants and loans to Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs) and other Micro-Development Organizations (MDOs).
- **2.1.6** Reverse the trends of rapid **agricultural consolidation and vertical integration** and **foreign ownership of production, processing, and distribution resources** by
  - amending the Packers and Stockyards Act (PSA) to ensure that small and mid-scale producers do not face market place discrimination and do not have to prove market-wide anti-competitive injury to prove unfair or deceptive practices against them individually,
  - strengthening the Agricultural Fair Practices Act (AFPA) to ensure that processors do not engage in unlawful actions, including coercion and bargaining in bad faith, in dealings with individual producers or an association of producers,
  - implementing the Farmer Fair Practices Interim Final Rule on competitive injury,
  - implementing livestock market reforms to provide producers with pricing information and discourage packer price manipulation,
  - strengthening enforcement of anti-trust laws by the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) and the Department of Justice (DoJ), sharing jurisdiction over food industry mergers, and
  - adding the Secretary of Agriculture to the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States.
- **2.1.7** Establish **vibrant local and regional farm-to-fork food chains** by
  - helping farmers reach new markets through outreach, cost-share, and technical assistance programs, including farm to consumer, institution, retailer and restaurant distribution,
  - increasing access to fresh, healthy, local food among low-income and historically underserved communities,
  - developing new and strengthening existing infrastructure that connects producers to consumers,
  - amending the Federal Meat Inspection act to expand the exemption of state custom slaughtering to include meat that is slaughtered and prepared in the state in accordance with state law and distributed to customers in the state,
  - revising the present SNAP Retail Food Store definition to enable Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) operations to accept SNAP payments, and

- combining the WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) and Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP), adding low-income veterans coverage, and providing increased mandatory funding for the combined program totaling \$50 million.
    - **2.1.8** Reform the federal **H-2A** (Temporary Agricultural Worker) Program to better meet farmers' need for adequate farm labor by transferring the program, with necessary staff and financial resources, to the USDA, simplifying farmers' access to guest labor, and extending the program to dairy farmers.
- **2.2 Immigrant Farm Workers**, protecting immigrant farm workers from **unfair treatment** and fear of **harassment, detention, family separation, and deportation**.
  - **2.2.1** Provide H-2A guest farm workers, with good, established US agricultural work histories, with a **path to residency and citizenship**, for them, and their families.
  - **2.2.2** Retain present H-2A guest farm worker protections regarding **compensation, benefits, housing and meals, and transportation**.
  - **2.2.3** Ensure **equality of treatment**, including access to the courts and health care, eligibility for state minimum wages that exceed the H-2A wage, and state overtime wage provisions.
  - **2.2.4** Provide for guest farm worker **mobility**, enabling them to switch agricultural employers, and **flexible work stay duration**, up to three years.
  - **2.2.5** Extend the above provisions to **undocumented farm workers**, including dairy workers, with good, established US agricultural work histories.

**2.3. Urban Farmers**, addressing the unique **needs of urban farmers** through existing USDA programs by creating an urban agriculture office to coordinate policies and provide technical and financial assistance.

- **2.3.1** Provide **financial support** to help establish and support urban farms by
  - supporting rooftop and vertical farms with innovative conservation funding to help access urban production sites,
  - investing in research to develop markets and efficient energy and water consumption technologies,
  - expanding farm loan programs to finance food production, marketing, and value-added processing and including urban farm cooperatives in loan programs, and
  - investing in tools and equipment.
- **2.3.2** Provide **technical assistance** to enhance sustainable operation by
  - connecting urban farmers with mentoring rural farmers,
  - creating a pilot program providing sustainable growing practice assistance,
  - providing expanded technical and financial support for soil contamination testing and remediation, and
  - creating a pilot program providing composting assistance.
- **2.3.3** Develop **risk management tools**, considering unique risks, food prices, and contracts.

**3. Food for the Future**, meeting the challenges of increasing population, imperiled agricultural resources, and climate change.

- **3.1** Facilitate the **transition of farms** to the **next generation of ownership and operation**, focusing on opportunities for beginning, socially disadvantaged, and veteran farmers, through research, outreach, technical assistance, and financial support.
- **3.2** Support and expand **public conventional plant and animal breeding** research and development by
  - **3.2.1** expanding and accelerating seed options, giving farmers the **freedom to choose** what and how to grow,
  - **3.2.2** boosting investments in research to further **crop diversity** and enhance **food chain security**, and

- **3.3.3** affirming farmers' and breeders' **right to share** and improve cultivars and breeds developed with public funds.
- **3.3.** Scale up farm **conservation and environmental stewardship** programs by
  - **3.3.1** restoring **Conservation Title funding**,
  - **3.3.2** expanding **program access** to serve all types of farmers on all types of farms of all sizes in all regions of our nation,
  - **3.3.3** enhancing impact by **targeting funds** on the most effective conservation activities,
  - **3.3.4** improving support of **conservation outreach, planning, and implementation**, with focus on beginning, socially disadvantaged, and veteran farmers,
  - **3.3.5** prohibiting funding to new and expanding, large **CAFOs** (Consolidated Animal Feeding Operations), especially those new or expanding operations within impaired waterways or floodplains, and
  - **3.3.6** increasing effectiveness and efficiency through better **measurement, evaluation, and reporting**.
- **3.4** Focus **rural renewable energy programs** on solar, wind, and perennial-based biofuels by
  - **3.4.1** reinstating **Rural Energy for America Program** (REAP) grants to farmers and rural small businesses to conduct feasibility studies for energy efficiency projects,
  - **3.4.2** prohibiting REAP funding subsidizing **ethanol blender pumps** at gas stations, and
  - **3.4.3** reforming the **Biomass Crop Assistance Program** (BCAP) to
    - limit funding for harvest, collection, storage, and transportation of biomass for off-farm energy purposes to ensure adequate biomass for sustainable farm operation and
    - encourage the transition from annual-based, corn and stover, ethanol production to perennial-based, grass and willow, ethanol production.

\*Like-minded and allied organizations include

- National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC), <http://sustainableagriculture.net/>,
- Food Research and Action Center (FRAC), <http://frac.org/>,
- National Farm to School Network, <http://www.farmtoschool.org/>,
- National Association of Farmer's Market Nutrition Programs (NAFMNP), <http://www.nafmnp.org/>,
- Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), <https://www.nrdc.org/about>,
- Friends of the Earth, <https://foe.org/>,
- United Farm Workers (UFW), <http://ufw.org/>, and
- National Farm Worker Ministry, <http://ufw.org/>.