

# Principles for a Faithful Farm Bill

From God's initial command to care for creation to the prophets' call for justice among governments and nations, people of faith in every age are called together to work for the common good. Inspired by our faith traditions' commands to care for poor and vulnerable people, we join together to support policies that promote local food security, strengthen rural communities, support farmworkers, farmers and all who work in the food system, and care for the land as God's creation.

Our nation's food and farm policies as embodied in the Farm Bill impact people and communities from rural America to developing countries. In the current budget climate, the Farm Bill's resources must be effectively targeted where need is greatest. Sustainable programs and policies that curb hunger and malnutrition, support vibrant agricultural economies must be prioritized.

As disciples of a loving God, we are called upon – each of us – to urge Congress to take the opportunity presented by the reauthorization of the Farm Bill to reduce hunger and poverty in the U.S. and around the world and encourage sustainable stewardship of soil, land, water, and air. To this end, we support the following principles for the Farm Bill:

## Farm Bill Principles

- **Protect and strengthen programs that reduce hunger and improve nutrition in the United States.**
- **Promote investments, loan programs and policies that strengthen rural communities and combat rural poverty.**
- **Ensure that farmers in the U.S. and around the world receive fair prices so they can sustain their farms and their livelihoods.**
- **Ensure that crop insurance and other programs include payment limitations and rules giving equitable access to small- and medium-scale farmers.**
- **Strengthen policies and programs that promote conservation, reduce carbon emissions, and protect creation from environmental degradation.**
- **Protect the dignity, health, safety, and fair compensation of those responsible for working the land.**
- **Promote research and incentives related to clean, and renewable forms of energy that do not negatively impact food prices or the environment.**
- **Safeguard and improve international food aid in ways that encourage local food security and improve the nutritional quality of food aid.**
- **Advocate for policies that honor treaties and land claims by Indigenous Peoples, support farmers and food chain workers of color, and promote food sovereignty in the Global South.**

The Farm Bill comes up for revisions and reauthorization every five years. This Farm Bill arrives at a time of increased concern about income and wealth inequality, ongoing racism, environmental degradation, and climate change. This comprehensive bill has wide and deep influence into these and many other areas and can be a catalyst for positive change.

*\* Make sure you are signed up for the PC(USA) Office of [Public Witness Email Alerts](#) so you'll know when to contact Congress.*

# Five Critical Areas of Focus for Farm Bill Reform

Given this historic moment  
and based on the Social Witness Policies of the PC(USA),  
we call on Presbyterians to advocate especially in these five areas:

## A) Food Security, Rural Support and Sustainable Regional Food Economies

**Whereas:** Inequality has become extreme and many people are falling through the cracks of our weakened safety net, especially in rural areas of the United States.

**Therefore:**

1) We advocate for strong governmental involvement in guaranteeing the right to food for all people as well as a basic standard of living. Regarding SNAP, food access, and support for regional food economies, we support:

- Sustained funding for SNAP
- Broader and increased use of EBT (Electronic Benefits Transfer)
- Increased funding for [Farm to School](#), [Community Food Projects](#), and other programs to strengthen local food economies.
- Addition of a federal Farm to Food Bank policy to allow sales of surplus produce
- A well-funded [Value Added Producer Grants Program](#) (VAPG)
- Full funding for the [Farmers Market and Local Food Promotion Program](#) (FMLFPP) and adjustments to ensure direct benefits for family farmers and ranchers.

2) We call for the government to reinstate a strategic and farmer-owned grain reserve system to protect family farmers from unstable price fluctuations and ensure resilience in the event of weather-related disasters.

## B) Access to Resources and Land for people of color, immigrants and farmworkers, and beginner farmers.

**Whereas:** The dispossession of lands from Native Americans and our country's history of slavery along with ongoing suppression of immigrants compels us to confess our complicity and failure to fully learn and pass along this history, and to call for reparations for past harms:

**Therefore:**

1) We advocate for policies which provide affordable access to land and resources for Native American, Black and other people of color farmers and ranchers, with special attention to small- and medium-scale producers.

- 2) We call for reparations of past discrimination as exemplified in the Pigford class action suits and an end to ongoing discriminatory lending practices at all levels of USDA.
- 3) We call for ample support and funding for land-link programs, technical assistance for transition and succession planning, and access to credit, crop insurance and other risk management, cooperative development support, training, and technical assistance, with a priority on providing these to low-resource and people of color farmers, livestock producers, and ranchers through increased funding of the 2501 Program.
- 4) We call for an end to land grabs and other land speculation by individuals, corporations, pension funds and governments, which raise land prices out of the reach of farmers, and often cause deforestation and ecologically destruction.
- 5) We call for stricter rules in the [Environmental Quality Incentives Program \(EQIP\)](#), which would limit inappropriate use of EQIP funds by large, polluting operations, and support adjustments to discourage overproduction and pollution of water resources.
- 6) We call for policies that support the economic resiliency of coastal communities, particularly for independent small and medium scale fishermen.

### **C) Land, Environment, and Climate Stewardship**

**Whereas:** Changes in climate and weather patterns are already disrupting farming around the world, and these will only become intensified in coming years;

**Whereas** the dominant practices of chemical- and fossil fuel-intensive, single-cropping agriculture used around the world damage and erode the soil, often cause desertification, and poison land, water, air and people;

**Whereas** prior year disinvestment has drastically reduced public plant breeding programs which increase farm resiliency;

**Whereas** genetic engineering and seed ownership is not democratically controlled and research decisions are influenced by the corporations that profit in these areas:

**Therefore:**

1) We advocate for conservation incentives, in particular agroecological, regenerative approaches, that build up (sequester) carbon in the soil in the Comprehensive Conservation Title and in these critical programs, which deserve increased funding:

- A. [Conservation Stewardship Program \(CSP\)](#)
- B. [Conservation Reserve Program \(CRP\)](#)
- C. [Environmental Quality Incentives Program \(EQIP\)](#)

2) We call for increased funding for [public sector breeding and research programs](#) in land grant university system and USDA research facilities, which will reinvest in ecological public plant

breeding programs that address climate change and extreme weather patterns so farmers are prepared with diverse, adaptable seed stocks and agroecological approaches.

3) We call for stronger review of proposed genetically-engineered crops, seafood, and livestock prior to approval, and GE labeling laws at state, national and international levels, and for fair and open access to and ownership of heritage, hybrid and conventional (non-genetically modified) seeds; ecology-based biodiversity of seeds, crops, livestock and seafood.

## **D) Food Chain & Farm Workers, and At-Risk Farmers & Producers**

**Whereas:** Farmers, Farm Workers and other Food Chain Workers are threatened with detention and deportation, human trafficking, sub-poverty wages, wage theft, lacking and unenforced labor laws, and dangerous conditions, legislative and corporate advocacy in support of these workers is a priority;

**Whereas** small- and medium-scale farmers and producers and food chain workers are disadvantaged by current policies and corporate practices:

**Therefore:**

1) We advocate in support of Dairy Farmers, Contract Poultry & Livestock Producers, and Fisherfolk by supporting policies which:

1. Support dairy farmers and other producers by opposing corporate manipulation of prices and contract abuse.
2. Resist the monopolization of corporations in this sector and oppose abuse of contract producers. Specifically, by:
  - Opposing amendments to the Agricultural Fair Practices Act that would undermine the ability of farmers to negotiate fair contracts with processors.
  - Opposing amendments to the Packers and Stockyards Act that would undermine enforcement authority for GIPSA over all livestock operations.
  - Advocating for the economic, social and ecological sustainability of small and medium-sized fishermen and their communities.

2) We oppose increasing the loan cap limits for Farm Service Agency (FSA) Direct Operating Loans (DOL), Guaranteed Operating Loans (GOL), and Guaranteed Farm Ownership Loans; doing so is unnecessary and would primarily benefit large Confined Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs).

## **E) Responsive International Food Aid that Strengthens Food Sovereignty**

**Whereas:** The US is the world's biggest food donor and responds to food emergencies and humanitarian crises, but the program is wasteful and slow because of rules requiring that US commodities be purchased and sent on US ships;

**Whereas:** A flood of food aid, that often arrives after the crisis, may cause a food glut, price depression, and the bankrupting of local farmers:

**Therefore:**

- 1) Funding should be maintained or increased for international food aid, and reforms to improve responsiveness and effectiveness should be enacted.
  - A. Funding for local and regional procurement (LRP) should be dramatically increased in our foreign food aid programs.
  - B. The response times to famine, drought and natural disasters should be improved by opening additional overseas facilities to strategically pre-position food aid.
  - C. Rather than wasteful and market distorting monetization program, NGO partners implementing Food for Peace Title II programs should be allowed to use all Food for Peace funds on non-commodity expenses.

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