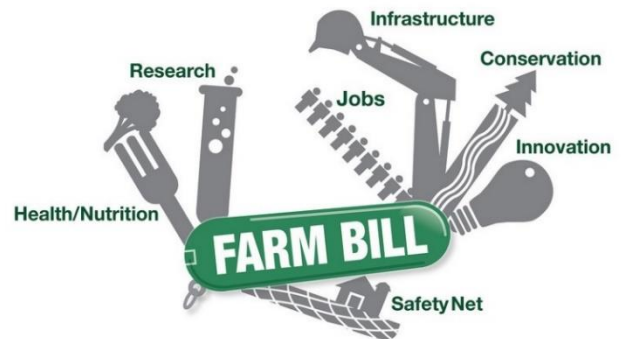


ELCA ADVOCACY FARM BILL INTRODUCTION

The farm bill is an omnibus multiyear law that funds agriculture and food programs and helps support U.S. farmers in their vocation to steward the land. The original farm bill was enacted in 1933 as part of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal. By 1978, the legislation expanded to encompass nutritional programs, including the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

The U.S. government must periodically renew the farm bill to continue funding these important programs. In 2014, Congress authorized the most current farm bill for five years. The Agriculture Act of 2014 (2014 Farm Bill) was projected to [cost \\$489 billion](#) between 2014-2018.

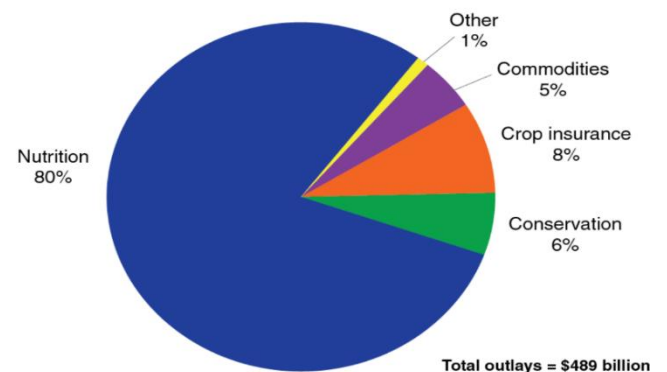
The farm bill is a complex piece of legislation, covering multiple areas. There are 12 titles in the 2014 Farm Bill: Commodities, Conservation, Trade, Nutrition, Credit, Rural Development, Research and Extension, Forestry, Energy, Horticulture, Crop Insurance and a titled reserved for miscellaneous items. In signing the 2014 Farm Bill, President Obama likened the legislation to a "Swiss Army knife" because it is a multi-tasking tool for addressing hunger and nutrition.



Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture

The creation of this bill involves a multitude of active agents, including members of Congress, national farm groups, commodity associations, state organizations, nutrition and public health officials, and advocacy groups representing conservation, recreation, rural development, as well as faith-based interests like the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA).

The farm bill is funded through the agricultural appropriations bill and can only address matters covered by or under the jurisdiction of both the House Committee on Agriculture and the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry. The 2014 Farm Bill funding split was: nutrition title (80 percent), crop insurance subsidies (8 percent), conservation programs (6 percent) and commodity subsidies (5 percent).



Source: USDA Economic Research Service using data from Congressional Budget Office, Cost Estimates for the Agricultural Act of 2014, Jan 2014.

The ELCA supports a farm bill that will promote a strong and resilient food-supply chain and provide needed nutrition through domestic and international programs.

Many of our nation's food and farm policies as embodied in the farm bill impact people and communities from rural America to developing countries. Programs and policies that curb hunger and malnutrition, support vibrant agricultural economies in rural communities, and promote the sustainable use of natural resources must be prioritized.

Together, we urge Congress to take the opportunity presented by the reauthorization of the farm bill to reduce hunger and poverty in the United States and around the world and encourage sustainable stewardship of our resources.

OUR FAITH LENS

“Give us this day our daily bread.” When you say and ask for “daily bread,” you ask for everything that is necessary in order to have and enjoy daily bread and, on the contrary, against everything that interferes with enjoying it. You must therefore expand and extend your thoughts to include not just the oven or the flour bin, but also the broad fields and the whole land that produce and provide our daily bread and all kinds of sustenance for us. (The Large Catechism)

As daily bread sustains our bodies, the food supply chain sustains our societies. The food-supply chain involves the production and consumption of food that reaches from planting seeds to selling food domestically and overseas, to caring for others in need. It is the process by which we grow, harvest, transport, cook, bake, package, sell and distribute what is produced.

We are called as Lutherans to “advocate an earthly peace that builds on freedom and responsibility, encourages compassion, and embraces justice and care of the earth” (ELCA social statement “For Peace in God’s World”). To contribute to this earthly peace, we must advocate together as a church to enact public policies that promote food security, strengthen communities, and care for the land as God’s creation both in the United States and around the world.

With the renewal of the farm bill every five years, we are offered an opportunity to safeguard the foundations of our food systems from the land on which seeds flourish, the methods that ensure the health of the land, and the people, flora and fauna locally and internationally that it supports.

NUTRITION

ADVOCACY PRIORITY: Protect the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and strengthen programs that reduce hunger and improve nutrition in the United States and oppose efforts to cut funding.

Nutrition is the most funded part of the farm bill, with four nutrition programs that help reduce poverty, strengthen communities and provide millions of families' access to healthy food. These four programs are the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) and the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP).

How do nutrition programs in the farm bill impact our communities?

- Nutrition programs provide essential support for families with young children at important development stages that, in the future, allows families to invest in skills that will reduce the likelihood of reliance on safety nets.
- Programs like SNAP help better the lives of many vulnerable communities, while also enhancing the nation's economy.
- A strong 2018 Farm Bill will ensure that SNAP funding is protected from block-grant structures, which are projected to cut SNAP funding by \$100 billion over the decade.
- Nutrition programs help reduce hunger and poverty, respond to changes in growth among aging populations and relieve the overwhelming pressure that is placed on food banks, pantries and religious congregations in providing food for their communities.

PROGRAM:	MAJOR OBJECTIVES:
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)	82 percent of SNAP benefits go to households that include children, elderly people and people with disabilities, ensuring communities most vulnerable are not left unattended.
Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)	TEFAP provides U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) collected surplus food and financial support to emergency feeding organizations including food banks and community pantries.
Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR)	FDPIR supports qualifying households and elderly American Indians living on reservations or federal designated areas with USDA food as an alternative to SNAP.
Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP)	CSFP improves the diets of poor seniors over the age of 60 with USDA surplus food usually delivered in boxes from feeding organizations in monthly deliveries.

Source: USDA

INTERNATIONAL FOOD AID

ADVOCACY PRIORITY: Protect the core focus and effective elements of existing international food assistance programs.

Emergency food aid keeps people alive through natural disasters, conflict and food-security crises. Non-emergency development programs address the underlying sources of chronic hunger through multi-year investments in nutrition, agricultural productivity, livelihoods and diversification of household incomes.

The United States provides over 40 percent of the food aid worldwide. Three important programs in the farm bill that make the United States a global leader in the fight to end hunger are: Food For Peace (Title II), Food for Progress and the McGovern-Dole International Food For Education program. All three of these programs to address hunger, build resilient and democratic communities, better sustainable agricultural practices and respond to emergencies that create a need for food.

PROGRAM:	HOW IT WORKS:	MAJOR OBJECTIVES:
Food for Peace Title II Administered by USAID	Ships commodities to recipient countries for direct use in food distribution programs or for monetization. Responds to emergencies when there is an identified need for food assistance and local authorities do not have the capacity to respond.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Combat world hunger and malnutrition • Promote sustainable agricultural development • Expand international trade • Foster private sector and market development • Prevent conflicts <p>Impacted: 3 billion people since inception 60 years ago</p>
McGovern-Dole International Food for	Provides school meals, teacher training and related support to help boost school enrollment and academic performance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce hunger

Education and Child Nutrition	Focuses on improving children's health and learning capacity before they enter school by offering nutrition programs for pregnant and nursing women, infants and preschoolers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve literacy and primary education, specifically aiming to address the needs of young girls. <p>Impacted: 40 million children and active in 26 countries</p>
Administered by USDA		

Food for Progress	Helps modernize and strengthen agricultural sectors in countries abroad and emerging economies. The program facilitates this through program activities that improve production practices, marketing systems, farmer training, agro-processing, and agribusiness development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve agricultural productivity • Expand trade of agricultural products <p>Impacted: Active in nine countries</p>
Administered by USDA		

Source: USAID and USDA

RURAL DEVELOPMENT

ADVOCACY PRIORITY: Protect and strengthen safety nets for farmers that promote investments, insurance and loan programs, assurance of fair compensation, and policies that help shield rural communities from poverty and the effect of natural disasters.

U.S. farmers are stewards in our food supply; they serve as producers of our land, the global economy and the food that people eat domestically and internationally. Farmers are also part of the financial fabric that supports farm families, as well as "employees, local equipment dealers, farm service suppliers and the rural communities where they live and do business" (Hafemiester, 2017).

PROGRAM: MAJOR OBJECTIVES:

Crop Insurance	Support the farm safety net by providing support for revenue or yield losses smaller than those covered by most traditional crop insurance policies.
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Source: USDA

ENVIRONMENTAL AND LAND CONSERVATION

ADVOCACY PRIORITY: Promote conservation programs through environmental and energy stewardship and improve land management.

The conservation programs included in the farm bill are critical to building the foundations of our food systems for a future that is grounded in strong and sustainable practices. These programs help protect the local and regional watersheds, forests and other ecosystems. A strong farm bill ensures that our farmers are supported in their call to steward the land.

PROGRAM: MAJOR OBJECTIVES:

The Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)	Protect agricultural land and limit nonagricultural uses of land. (ACEP works closely with American Indian communities.)
Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)	Support locally led conservation that encourages farmers to tackle “priority natural resource concerns” in states and specific regions to address watershed and other needs.
Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)	Provide farmers, ranchers and forests with financial and technical assistance in implementing farming systems that conserve resources and enhance environmental performance.
Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)	Support farmers to improve conservation systems and facilitate the adoption of additional improved practices.
Conservation Reserve program (CRP)	Emphasize conservation and improvement of soil, water and wildlife resources by removing highly erodible and environmentally sensitive lands in agriculture production. Landowners retire millions of acres for 10 to 15 years, which helps maintain wildlife habitats.
Rural Energy for America Program	Provide guaranteed loan financing and grant funding to agricultural producers and rural small businesses to make energy efficiency improvements.

Source: Center for Rural Affairs and Farm Bureau

HONORING LAND CLAIMS BY INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

ADVOCACY PRIORITY: Enact policies that honor treaties and land claims by indigenous peoples, support farmers and all food-chain workers.

American Indians and Alaska Natives represent a large percentage of non-white farmers (almost 35 percent). The farm bill affects their livelihood. A few key areas are listed below.

Conservation: American Indians and Alaska Natives hold their natural resources as sacred and depend heavily upon them for economic, cultural and spiritual sustenance. Indian lands are in significant need of intensified conservation. Tribal governments use funds for their natural resource programs. Surrounding economies also benefit from the leadership and commitment of tribes toward stewardship of natural resources. Conservation programs stabilize the agricultural economies of state and local governments, and inclusion of tribes in these programs leverages tribal expertise and develops rural economies both on and off tribal lands.

Trade: New food products developed by tribes can have tremendous early success by engaging in foreign markets first, particularly those in the Pacific Rim and European Union countries. This farm bill provides support for U.S. agricultural export programs and international food assistance programs, such as the Market Access Program (MAP). Financial support provided by MAP to tribal agriculture via the Intertribal Agriculture Council (a participant in MAP) supports the increasingly successful native export activities and ensures continued successes in exporting – and the related growth in jobs for American Indian and Alaska Native agriculture.

Nutrition: Many American Indian and Alaska Native families rely heavily on federal food-assistance programs. Due to high unemployment rates and rural economies, most tribes have limited access to grocery stores, farmers markets and community gardens. Historically, these programs have been readily accessible to state and local governments, but high participation rates indicate that tribes should have a larger role in the local procurement and distribution of foods.

Rural Development: The Rural Development agencies within the USDA are critical to the long-term rural economic and infrastructure needs in Indian Country. Rural Development has within its general and historic authorities' programs that are comprehensive to the needs of rural people and are critical to the needs of communities. Among these are: water and wastewater, broadband, electrification, housing, business development and more. Ensuring greater access to, utilization of and engagement with Rural Development programs is critical to the success of Indian Country.

Source: Seeds of Native Health

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

ADVOCACY PRIORITY: Strengthen funding for research, development and incentives programs to ensure innovation and creativity to provide for food safety, security and waste reduction; promote smart technology; forestry programs; ensure access to clean water and air; broadband access; and renewable forms of energy.

PROGRAM:	MAJOR OBJECTIVES:
Sustainable Agricultural Research and Education Program	Grants research program focused on farm-driven research. The structure of the program is set up regionally to ensure local needs are addressed and that all areas of the nation benefit equally. The Agricultural and Food Research Initiative is the largest federal research program and provides grants to public and private researchers to solve challenges faced by farmers.
Organic Agricultural Research and Extension Initiative	Support research projects aimed solving critical challenges that organic farmers may face.
Agricultural and Food Research Initiative	Provide competitive grants to public and private researchers to solve pressing challenges facing farmers and societies today.

Source: National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition

God calls us to care for the poor and vulnerable, and in this way, we live out our love for Christ. Let us together as a church and through our advocacy witness stand as a presence for peace, reconciliation and service:

For if you keep silence at such a time as this, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another quarter, but you and your father's family will perish. Who knows? Perhaps you have come to royal dignity for just such a time as this. (Esther 4:14)

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