
Why the Farm Bill matters - to MAZON and to you



Despite its name, the Farm Bill affects more than farmers. It is no understatement to say that the Farm Bill more or less controls what we eat. It helps regulate what crops are planted, prioritized and subsidized, which impacts the fate of agribusiness and family farmers alike. It establishes whether sustainable farming and conservation practices will be implemented. It influences whether our food is healthy and affordable, and governs the kinds and levels of assistance we provide to hungry people. Each and every one of us has a stake in the Farm Bill.

The bill is comprised of 15 “titles,” which represent a broad range of interests, and thus attracts the attention of diverse stakeholders, including agribusiness, conservationists, anti-hunger activists, public health advocates as well as groups concerned with sustainable agriculture and international trade. In years past, the task of getting the Farm Bill approved by both Congressional houses has required alliances between seemingly conflicting political allies. It has also inspired fierce competition for limited funds. Discussion about the next Farm Bill are underway as the House and Senate work out the differences in their recently-passed Farm Bills. However time is running out: The 2008 Farm Bill expired in Sept of 2012 and a short-term extension through Sept 2013 has also ended. The House and Senate conferees have begun to negotiate and draft a

reauthorization of the Farm Bill, though the prospects for passage by the Dec 13 deadline are uncertain. The House and Senate bills contain significant differences, and there are serious concerns about attempts to make major cuts to federal nutrition programs (primarily SNAP) as part of any final Farm bill deal.

Although the Farm Bill represents less than one percent of the federal budget, the tremendous pressure to reduce federal spending has made the Farm Bill a target for cuts. If the current partisan paralysis afflicting Washington continues, it seems unlikely that a compromise will be reached to get a five year reauthorization of the Farm Bill approved by Congress. In that case, another extension of the current Farm Bill may be necessary in September.

As in years past, MAZON will be using this critical piece of legislation as a key vehicle for advancing our anti-hunger advocacy agenda. We believe the next Farm Bill can – and should – reflect Jewish values, and in so doing, ensure equitable access to healthy nutritious food for all Americans.

For the next Farm Bill, MAZON has challenged our policymakers to:

- 1. Protect and increase funding for SNAP;**
- 2. Create incentives for family farmers, especially those growing fruits and vegetables, to help make their products more accessible for all Americans; and**
- 3. Improve the nutritional quality of the food distributed through The Emergency Food Assistance Program (often known as the “surplus” food program).**

We believe these three changes and safeguards will have a profound impact on the lives of countless people across the country. We urge you to join our effort to promote a Jewish response to the Farm Bill. Call our office at (800) 813-0557 or email us at mazonmail@mazon.org to find out how you can get involved in this important work.

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