



## **Proposed 2018 Farm Bill is Bad for Food Access and Family Farms**

The reauthorization of the Farm Bill in 2018 offers an opportunity to improve, innovate, and strengthen policies surrounding food production, nutrition education, food access, and food literacy. The House Agriculture Committee missed this opportunity in The Agriculture and Nutrition Act (H.R. 2) that will be presented to the full House of Representatives. In fact, this bill will make food insecurity more prevalent, reduce the number of family and small farms in the U.S., and increase poverty throughout rural and urban areas alike. The Orange County Congressional delegation should oppose this legislation as written and push for a bipartisan bill that supports those Americans that need it most.

Currently, 1 in 12 residents of Orange County (over 257,000 people) are enrolled in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP/CalFresh). According to the USDA, this program currently brings a total of \$720 million in economic activity and over 4,000 jobs to our county. It could bring more since an additional 164,750 residents are eligible. Instead of supporting these residents, **H.R.2 aims to cut the SNAP program by over \$20 billion in the next 10 years.** This will increase food insecurity, hunger, and reduce the health of hard working, low-income families and individuals. The cost will be a negative impact on our students' educational attainment and an increase in obesity and the many conditions related to it: diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, orthopedic problems, and depression. **Increased work requirements are unattainable** for individuals already having trouble finding employment and will push even more people off of SNAP. The proposed Farm Bill shifts some SNAP benefits funding to the SNAP employment and training (E&T) program - which is a risky move. While this gives the appearance of helping individuals toward self-sufficiency, there is little to no evidence that shows SNAP E&T has helped participants find jobs in the past. In fact, the last evaluation of SNAP E&T was back in 1994. The 2014 Farm Bill gave funding to 10 state E&T pilot programs to come up with new programs and report results. However, these results are not expected until 2021, so there is no up-to-date national data on what works and what doesn't.

Our county's food banks, food pantries, and soup kitchens are unable to meet their current need so how will they ever be able to handle the increase of people coming to them because of this bill? Federal Food programs such as, WIC, T/EFAP and CSFP are also vital in preventing hunger and some of the worst outcomes of poverty when income falls short for our residents. These programs should be expanded, not cut.

This reduction in assistance to the most vulnerable seems to be paying for the opportunity for **large agri-businesses to receive increased corporate welfare** in the form of reinstating a subsidy model that supports the wealthy over smaller fruit and vegetable (specialty crop) farms that are typically owned by families who often experience their own food insecurity. Additionally, this bill not only fails in helping farmers access the Farm to Fork movement and markets, but "actively undermines the very programs and systems

that have been the shining stars of the local and regional food renaissance.<sup>1</sup>” The exclusion of the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition’s Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act (or similar language) will reduce the number of younger people that want to enter the agricultural sector as farmers. **Current farmers are on average nearly 60 years old** and are beginning to retire. If we do not support these new farmers now, our agricultural sector will disappear and the U.S. food system will become dependent on foreign imports.

The two bright spots that should remain in a revamped bill are reinstatement of the Commodity Supplemental Food Program funding from President Trump’s 2018-2019 budget and the reauthorization and increased funding for the Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive Program. With that said, given the number of individuals that will no longer be able to access the SNAP program if this harmful version of the Farm Bill is passed, the increased funding for FINI will be difficult to utilize.

As deliberations on the 2018 Farm Bill continue, we urge Congress to oppose H.R.2 and work together to craft a unified Farm Bill that strengthens and protects federal nutrition programs and ensures the health and well-being of residents in Orange County, California, and throughout the United States. Orange County Food Access Coalition partners are committed to resisting the reduction of funding to farm and nutrition programming. As the backbone of our nation’s agricultural sector, it is imperative that the 2018 Farm Bill fund and develop programs to support local food systems, reduce poverty, ensure social safety nets, and improve public health.

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<sup>1</sup> National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition analysis of H.R.2

