

## FROM THE OFFICE: THE 2012 (FOOD AND) FARM BILL: WHY PEOPLE OF FAITH CARE



Someone is hungry. You know someone's who's hungry. Perhaps it's you. Maybe it's a friend. A neighbor. A co-worker. A parishioner. The pedestrian you walk past. A customer at your food pantry or a guest at your soup kitchen, people no longer anonymous but who now call by name because you've seen them so often.

No matter what you think about budget cuts, tax cuts, deficit reduction packages, we are acutely aware of Jesus' instruction to feed the hungry.

Feed the Hungry. Maybe you feed the hungry by volunteering at your food pantry. How many times did you ration the food you doled out because the shelves were half empty? Food banks, food pantries and soup kitchens receive much of their food from the Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), which is funded in the Farm Bill. The House proposes to cut funding to TEFAP.

Perhaps you take comfort knowing that at least the hungry can rely on food stamps, especially in Oregon where one out of every five persons uses SNAP. SNAP is the Farm Bill. SNAP (food stamps) accounts for two-thirds of the entire farm bill expenditures. Last week the House Agricultural Committee voted to cut \$33 billion from SNAP.

In a society where the instruction "women and children first" is well known and meaningful, that at least women, young children and infants won't go hungry with the WIC program. WIC — specifically the WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program — is the Farm Bill. Last year WIC served 46% of all pregnant women in Oregon with nutritious food and nutrition education. The House proposes to cut \$833 million from WIC.

At least many of the hungry elementary-school-aged children in your community — more than 50% — can eat fresh fruit and nutritious vegetables at schools that serve a high number of low-income children. That's the Farm Bill, which funds the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program.

We know that the low-income elderly will still be able to purchase their fresh and nutritious fruits and vegetables from Farmers' Markets and Roadside Stands. That's the Farm Bill, which funds the Seniors Farmers Market Nutrition Program. The House proposes to cut funding by 22%.

The U.S. Farm Bill is the primary food policy tool of the federal government. It funds food and nutrition assistance to the hungry, to pregnant women, infants, young children, the poor, the hungry school kids and hungry seniors, anyone who is down on their luck and visits a food pantry.

How can you feed the hungry? Support a fully-funded Farm Bill.



**Office of Life, Justice, and Peace**