

THE 2018 FARM BILL: WHY OREGON CARES

As Congress considers the 2018 Farm Bill, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Catholic Relief Services, Catholic Charities USA, Catholic Rural Life, and the Society of St. Vincent de Paul have highlighted [priorities](#) for U.S. food and agriculture policy.

In general, American policies should

- provide for poor and hungry people here and abroad,
- offer effective support for those who grow our food,
- ensure fairness to family farmers and ranchers while building up rural communities,
- promote good stewardship of the land

Specifically, the following should be prioritized:

Domestic Hunger and Nutrition: when faced with tens of millions still unsure about how they will put food on the table, robust funding of programs that feed hungry families must be prioritized.

650,000 Oregonians rely on SNAP. One in four Oregon children lives in poverty.

The **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program** (SNAP) not only helped feed more than 43 million people last year but also lifted over 4 million Americans above the poverty line. It is responsive to increased periods of need and continues to have one of the lowest fraud rates for federal programs.

ADVOCATE: Congress should oppose efforts to weaken efficiency or access to this important part of the social safety net, and instead strengthen SNAP by improving outreach, streamlining enrollment, and including case management in efforts to align state employment and training activities to improve access to living-wage jobs.

Food pantries are the first line of defense in the battle against hunger. They rely on The Emergency Food Assistance Program to provide food and financial assistance to help offset operation costs.

The Farm Bill should ensure support for the successful public-private partnership that **The Emergency Food Assistance Program** (TEFAP) provides by ensuring access to short-term food assistance through food banks, soup kitchens and emergency shelters.

ADVOCATE: Congress should strengthen the TEFAP program by authorizing mandatory funding for the program of \$350 million and maintaining storage and distribution funds at \$100 million per year.

ADVOCATE: Reauthorize the **Commodity Supplemental Food program** (CSFP) which provides food to almost 700,000 low-income seniors each year.

Conservation: The Catholic Church urges an integral ecology that recognizes a "certain reciprocity: as we care for creation, we realize that God, through creation, cares for us."

"God looked at everything he had made, and found it very good" (Gn 1:31). God's initial command to man was to care for his creation.

ADVOCATE: Programs that focus on good stewardship, such as the **Environmental Quality Incentives Program** (EQIP), the **Regional Conservation Partnership Program** (RCPP), the **Conservation Reserve Program** (CRP) and **Agriculture Conservation Easement Program** (ACEP), should receive special attention.

Subsidies: The Commodity Title was established to provide a safety net for farmers and it is important to continue a reasonable amount of support for our commodity and dairy farmers. Protecting against cuts to the USDA that would impact its ability to place staff in rural communities to help farmers diversify crops, get access to new markets, and receive assistance on technical issues is imperative.

Rural communities and small towns are the backbone of the social and economic life of America. Support our small and medium-sized farmers and ranchers who truly need assistance by reducing subsidies to larger growers and industrial agriculture.

ADVOCATE: Given federal budget constraints, agricultural subsidies and direct payments can be better targeted to small and moderate-sized farms, especially those that are minority owned.

ADVOCATE: Government resources should assist those who truly need assistance and support those who comply with environmentally sound and sustainable farming practices.

International Food Security and Development: The international food security programs authorized in the Farm Bill provide life-saving emergency assistance, as well as support vital development programs for vulnerable groups.

One in nine people worldwide do not have enough to eat.

ADVOCATE: Congress has shown strong bi-partisan support for these programs, and current authorized funding levels for them should be maintained, particularly the \$350M within **Food for Peace** that supports USAID's long-term Development Food Security Assistance projects that are essential in the fight against extreme poverty.

ADVOCATE: To boost efficiency, reach, and effectiveness of these programs, Congress should authorize the **Community Development Fund**, remove the requirement to monetize in **Food for Peace**, make permanent local and regional procurement in **McGovern-Dole**, boost funding for overseas transportation of commodities in **Food for Progress**, and address the burden of cargo preference in all food aid programs.

Rural Development: Rural communities and small towns are the backbone of the social and economic life of America. Yet, their viability is jeopardized by slow economic improvement, aging infrastructure, the opioid epidemic, under-employment, and the movement of younger generations to other communities.

Oregonians living in farming communities are 25% more unemployed than urban residents

Effective policies and programs are needed to encourage rural development and promote the culture and well-being of rural America.

Young farmers and their families should be supported and encouraged to fortify the profession and strengthen the national food supply.

ADVOCATE: Crucial rural infrastructure investments, as well as innovative programs not funded in the permanent Farm Bill baseline deserve to be emphasized. These programs include: the **Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program** (BFRDP), the Community Facilities Direct Loan and Grant Program, the **Rural Business Investment Program**, the **Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative** (OREI), and the **Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program**, among others.

Call or write your [Representative and Senators](#) on any or all of these components of the 2018 Farm Bill!