

Overview

The Farm Bill is a comprehensive, multiyear statute that oversees a diverse range of agricultural and food initiatives. The previous Farm Bill's sections covered a spectrum of areas, including backing for farm commodity revenue, agricultural preservation, international trade and food aid, farm financing, research, rural progress, forestry, bioenergy, horticulture, and domestic nutritional support. U.S. food and energy production, land conservation, nutrition and wellness programs are some of the many issues managed daily by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). USDA is one of the largest federal agencies and has expansive oversight and regulatory authority. Generally refreshed approximately every five years, the Farm Bill furnishes a consistent platform for policymakers to systematically and periodically tackle matters pertaining to agriculture and food. As Congress prepares for the task of refreshing, we review in our latest Basic what the Farm Bill is and how it impacts the lives of Americans.

What is the Farm Bill?

The Farm Bill wields substantial legal authority while also catering to a diverse range of interests. Covering aspects from agricultural subsidies and food regulations to environmental preservation and rural advancement, this legislation allocates both mandatory and discretionary funds to numerous routine programs. The effects and influence of these programs span across all societal groups and geographical areas.

The Farm Bill is scheduled to be reauthorized every five years, to provide consistency and stability as lawmakers make periodic, comprehensive changes to programs that affect millions. With a lifespan of five years, it affords lawmakers the chance to modernize programs to align with the prevailing market and economic conditions. Since the 1930s, eighteen iterations of the Farm Bill have come to pass. In the event of its expiration without a replacement or if programs are not extended by Congress, all initiatives would revert to the 1949 bill. However, as reauthorization is subject to congressional authorization, lapses have occurred. This was the case in 2012 when a two-year lapse in reauthorization occurred, and a bill was not signed until 2014.

The Farm Bill remains enmeshed in political discussions and ideological deliberations over policies. As the Farm Bills grew larger and more encompassing, funding for programs related to nutrition assistance, conservation, and bioenergy have all been added to address the market and economic challenges affecting agriculture within the United States and globally.

Center Forward Basics

Center Forward brings together members of Congress, not-for-profits, academic experts, trade associations, corporations and unions to find common ground. Our mission: to give centrist allies the information they need to craft common sense solutions, and provide those allies the support they need to turn those ideas into results.

In order to meet our challenges we need to put aside the partisan bickering that has gridlocked Washington and come together to find common sense solutions.

For more information, please visit www.center-forward.org

Key Statistics:

- Total Number of Farms in the United States:
2,002,700
- One **U.S. farm feeds 166 people** annually in the U.S. and abroad
- SNAP provides approximately 40 million people in the U.S. with monthly food benefits.
- There was a 2-year lapse in 2012 that resulted in the reauthorized Farm Bill not being signed until 2014.

Farm Bill Jurisdiction

The programs encompassed within the Farm Bill fall into distinct categories, with some being obligatory and others discretionary. Certain programs can undergo revisions through the Farm Bill process, while their funding stems from the regular appropriations process. Beyond conventional initiatives like commodity oversight, nutrition assistance programs, insurance provisions, and trade agreement financing, the Farm Bill also allocates resources and oversees programs that might catch many by surprise. Embedded within the Farm Bill are provisions and incentives to promote renewable energy generation across the nation which supports farmers and rural economies.

Each section of the Farm Bill is referred to as a “title.” The 2018 Farm Bill contained twelve titles and their jurisdictional overlays are outlined below. You can read more about each title [HERE](#).

- **Title 1:** Commodity Programs
- **Title 2:** Conservation
- **Title 3:** Trade
- **Title 4:** Nutrition
- **Title 5:** Credit
- **Title 6:** Rural Development
- **Title 7:** Research, Extension, and Related Matters
- **Title 8:** Forestry
- **Title 9:** Energy
- **Title 10:** Horticulture
- **Title 11:** Crop Insurance
- **Title 12:** Miscellaneous

Previous Farm Bill Discrepancies

The most recent Farm Bill, The Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018, expires in September of this year. The 2018 Farm Bill brought certainty to farm and ranch families through crop insurance, improved risk management programs, and support for beginning farmers and ranchers, while also providing much-needed funding for trade development and ag research. The entire package was budget-neutral and received strong bipartisan support.

Significantly, the 2018 Farm Bill achieved the removal of hemp from the roster of controlled substances, thereby granting legal status to its cultivation and enacting regulations for its production. This pivotal choice not only sparked heightened interest among farmers to engage in hemp cultivation but also introduced measures that governed its production. However, the Farm Bill exhibited certain deficiencies concerning vital aspects such as food accessibility, assistance to farmers, and conservation endeavors. Since the passage of the 2018 Farm Bill, farmers have been grappling with a host of challenges, including trade disputes, adverse weather events exacerbated by climate change, substantial rises in the costs of agricultural inputs, and disruptions in the supply chain. Along with those issues, the passing of hemp was not meant to be applied to finished products, however, many agencies are refusing to abide by this. This brings us to the current state of debate.

2023 Outlook

The 2023 Farm Bill presents a tangible opportunity for our country to address the predicament of nearly 34 million individuals grappling with food insecurity in the U.S. By countering escalating grocery costs and persistent disruptions in supply chains, it is imperative for legislators to unite in passing a bipartisan 2023 Farm Bill that offers support to both food banks and the individuals they serve. Feeding America has urged Congress to reaffirm our nation's dedication to eradicating hunger by bolstering vital nutrition programs within the 2023 Farm Bill, which cater to seniors, families, children, active military personnel, and others. This enhancement would involve building upon innovative program adjustments introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Congressional Budget Office's recently released May 2023 baselines for USDA Mandatory Farm Programs and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) confirm that the 2023 Farm Bill, upon enactment, could potentially be the first trillion-dollar Farm Bill in U.S. history. Total outlays across SNAP and mandatory farm programs for fiscal years 2024 to 2033 are projected at \$1.51 trillion, up \$31.5 billion, or 2%, from the February 2023 projections. This total includes Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) outlays. Compared to the cost of the 2018 Farm Bill at enactment of \$867 billion, the 2023 Farm Bill will represent a \$640 billion, or 74%, increase in spending – primarily driven by increases in SNAP outlays. If Congress would like to improve food insecurity, lower processing error rates, and clear the SNAP backlog, the Farm Bill would need to include some staffing flexibility to supplement the dwindling government workforce.

When individuals possess the necessary nourishment and resources for their well-being, they become empowered to contribute to the advancement of their communities and the overall prosperity of our nation. Regrettably, hunger remains a prevalent issue, touching every county and community across the United States. Other topics such as the underfunding of Black land-granted universities are subject to change by Congress in this upcoming bill, as well as the hope for a Congressional fix regarding the legalization of hemp. Many are hopeful the 2023 refresh of the Farm Bill will be more inclusive and in turn, lessen these deficits.

Links to Other Resources

- Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018: Highlights and Implications - <https://www.ers.usda.gov/agriculture-improvement-act-of-2018-highlights-and-implications/>
- Congressional Research Service — What Is the Farm Bill? - <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/RS22131.pdf>
- Food and Agriculture Climate Alliance - <https://agclimatealliance.com/wp-content/blogs.dir/98/files/2023/02/farm-bill-recommendations.pdf>
- Farm Bill 2023: What's at Stake? - <https://feedingamericaaction.org/learn/legislation-watch/farm-bill/>
- Food Research & Action Center — Farm Bill Primer <http://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/frac-farm-bill-primer.pdf>
- HBCU Land Grants - <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/government/science-research-policy/2023/08/11/farm-bill-hbcus-see-chance-fix-historic>
- Minority Analysis: The May 2023 Farm Bill Scoring Baseline - <https://www.agriculture.senate.gov/newsroom/majority-blog/minority-analysis-the-may-2023-farm-bill-scoring-baseline>

- National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition— What Is The Farm Bill? - <http://sustainableagriculture.net/our-work/campaigns/fbcampaign/what-is-the-farm-bill/>
- The Farm Bill Energy Title: An Overview and Funding History - <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/misc/R45943.pdf>
- Opportunities in the 2023 Farm Bill - <https://agclimatealliance.com/>
- U.S. Department of Agriculture — The Farm Bill - <https://www.usda.gov/farmbill>
- U.S. Department of Agriculture — 2018 Farm Bill & Legislative Principles <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2018-farm-bill-and-legislative-principles.pdf>
- What is the (Food and) Farm Bill and Why Does It Matter? - <https://www.fb.org/market-intel/what-is-the-food-and-farm-bill-and-why-does-it-matter>