

Hunger Action Network of NYS

FOOD and FARM BILL PRINCIPLES

MORE Sustainable, Diversified FARMS, MORE Healthy FOOD, MORE Economic OPPORTUNITY

The Farm Bill should be overhauled to help small farmers and rural development, make school lunches healthier, strengthen the food safety net for low income Americans, promote local sustainable and organic food systems, and tackle agriculture's daunting environmental and conservation problems.

The Farm Bill should end hunger by adequately funding food stamps. Benefits need to be increased to support a more nutritious diet. The US needs a broader, more equitable safety net that works better for small and moderate-sized farms.

1 A Health Focused Food System

Obesity and diet-related diseases have reached epidemic proportions. A food system that focuses on increasing the production and distribution of healthy foods, including fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, and the increased availability of these foods for consumption in our communities, homes, schools, and institutions, will support the health and well-being of us all.

2 Access to Healthy Food, End Hunger

While our agricultural system has contributed to a national obesity epidemic, incredibly, we have yet to end hunger in our nation. In accord with our core American values and our principles of social justice, we must provide for the food security of all, including our most vulnerable, the disadvantaged, the young, and the aged. Ending hunger by ensuring equitable access to food is of paramount importance. Also, of great importance are consumers' abilities to make informed, healthy, food choices and to access healthy food. More information about healthy food, innovative access methodologies, and healthy food purchase incentives will help more of us be food secure and healthy.

3 A Level "Plowing" Field

The face of farming in our nation is changing: the number of smaller, family farms is decreasing while the number of larger, corporate farms is increasing; large corporations hold patent on seeds and planting material; most farm animal production capacity is held by a few corporations operating highly concentrated production facilities; and extensive outbreaks of food-borne illnesses are familiar. While the productivity of large-scale, "production" agriculture is great, so are the potential negative collateral impacts on smaller agricultural enterprises, the environment, and our health. Conservation, risk management, credit, and food safety programs often are calibrated to the scales of

“production” agriculture. Scale appropriate programs will contribute to the future vitality of small and mid-sized, regional, farm and food enterprises.

4 Good Environmental Stewardship

Our present agricultural system, relying on vast amounts of chemical inputs, high levels of oil consumption, and attenuated food chains, is damaging our environment. Conservation priorities must align with our best interests. Preservation of our vital agricultural resources, reductions in our energy consumption, and sustainable agricultural practices that minimize air and water pollution and preserve our soil and water resources will ensure a secure food system well into the future.

5 Vibrant Regional Farm and Food Economies

As we fight our way back from the Great Recession, we must look to innovative methods to strengthen our regional food systems as means to regain economic vitality. Farm and food strategies must: support established, beginning, and disadvantaged urban and rural farmers; contribute to the development of rural and urban entrepreneurial, business growth, and job creation opportunities in production, processing, and distribution; and increase the amount of regionally produced, healthy, food that is available in our communities.