



FAMILY FARMING and the 2024 FARM BILL 2024 SPECIAL ORDER OF BUSINESS

The 2018 Farm Bill expired on September 30, 2023, and Congress reached an agreement to extend the current farm bill for one year. While an extension was necessary to ensure the continuation of essential farm policies and programs for the 2024 crop year, full reauthorization with important reforms to current farm and food policy is required to meet the needs of family farmers, ranchers, consumers, and our communities.

The farm economy is cyclical, and commodity price and input cost volatility are among the chief reasons that family farmers and ranchers are forced out of business. Farm bills should be written with tough times in mind so that programs serve as a safety net. Farm bills should also principally direct benefits toward family farmers and ranchers.

Farm bills are best when they are forward-looking. Lawmakers must ensure the next farm bill anticipates future needs, including by strengthening farm bill conservation and renewable energy programs, which help farmers implement practices that fight climate change, build soil health, and increase resilience.

The farm bill is also a food bill. The nutrition title is key to reducing hunger and poverty, and improving food and nutrition security.

The following policies and provisions should be included in the 2024 Farm Bill.

- Advance NFU's *Fairness for Farmers* campaign priorities by:
 - Including a dedicated competition title;
 - Bolstering cattle market price discovery and transparency;
 - Updating the Packers & Stockyards Act and creating the "Office of the Special Investigator" for competition at USDA to protect livestock producers from anticompetitive practices;
 - Reinstating mandatory country-of-origin labeling (COOL);
 - Reforming checkoff programs to be producer controlled and regularly reviewed; and
 - Spurring the development and expansion of diverse, local, and/or regional markets throughout all aspects of farm and food supply chains.
- Maintain and improve the farm safety net by:
 - Increasing loan rates and other price-based triggers to reflect higher commodity prices and input costs;
 - Establishing a dual enrollment option that allows farmers to receive the higher of the Agricultural Risk Coverage (ARC) or Price Loss Coverage (PLC) calculated payment;
 - Allowing for a voluntary base acres and yield update;

- Making risk management products more accessible for specialty crop producers and diverse cropping systems;
- Maintaining livestock risk protection (LRP) and authorizing a new program, similar to LRP, that allows for market risk protection for crops; and
- Increasing oversight of the delivery of the federal crop insurance program to ensure that family farmers and ranchers are the primary program beneficiaries.
- Strengthen conservation programs and expand renewable energy opportunities by:
 - Including strong funding that meets demand for voluntary, incentive-based conservation programs;
 - Providing crop insurance discounts to farmers for planting cover crops or for using other practices that increase resiliency or decrease risk;
 - Building on programs that support biofuels infrastructure development;
 - Supporting and improving the Rural Energy for America Program (REAP); and
 - Maintaining a strong Conservation Reserve Program (CRP).
- Expand and enhance permanent disaster assistance programs by:
 - Reducing implementation delays and equitably and appropriately targeting support to farmers and ranchers who have suffered losses; and
 - Establishing a permanent disaster assistance program that supplements crop insurance indemnities when widespread disasters occur.
- Strengthen the dairy safety net by:
 - Supporting dairy growth management principles to stem the loss of family dairy farms; and
 - Strengthening the Dairy Margin Coverage (DMC) program, which, with improvements, can serve as a useful risk management tool.

Other important policies, programs, and reforms include:

- Providing all necessary funding to sustain and improve programs;
- Rectifying county-level USDA staffing shortages, which impede program implementation, by increasing funding, hiring, training, and pay for staff;
- Maintaining a strong nutrition title which should include robust funding for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), increase opportunities for local and regional procurement, and that supports the food and nutrition security of our communities;
- Supporting programs that promote and expand farmers markets, farm-to-school, and other initiatives that strengthen local, regional, and diverse market opportunities;
- Addressing farm stress and mental health in our communities, including by expanding and funding the Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network (FRSAN);
- Addressing barriers faced by urban, peri-urban, and historically underserved farmers and ranchers in accessing scale-appropriate programs, credit, and other resources;
- Ensuring veteran farmer or rancher status has no expiration date for applications to USDA programs;
- Strengthening the farm bill research title, especially programs that help farmers mitigate and adapt to climate change; and
- Streamlining farm program applications and delivery processes whenever possible.