



THE FARM BILL

PURPOSE & ORIGINS

The Farm Bill is federal legislation designed to address agricultural policy issues, including farm income support, food assistance to individuals and families, commodities, conservation, nutrition, rural development, trade, and other matters related to agriculture, natural resources, and the food system. A new Farm Bill is passed roughly every five years, giving legislators the opportunity to routinely address issues and update policies in a comprehensive legislative package. Since 1933, the Farm Bill has been reauthorized 18 times. The most recent Farm Bill, the Agricultural Improvement Act ([P.L. 115-334](#)), was [signed into law in 2018](#) and is set to expire in 2023 unless it is extended or reauthorized.

The first Farm Bill, the Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1933, passed as part of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal to address the drop of crop prices after World War I, the Great Depression, and the Dust Bowl by offering farmers subsidies for limiting their production of certain crops. Since its first iteration was enacted 90 years ago, the Farm Bill has expanded to provide comprehensive policy changes for a wide range of issues within the agricultural and food sectors, including the federal nutrition programs that seniors rely on, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP), the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP) and the Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP). There are nutrition assistance programs under the Farm Bill that would expire without reauthorization, such as the Farmers Market and Local Food Promotion Program (FMLFPP) and the Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentives Program (FINI). Other programs, like SNAP and the Federal Crop Insurance Program, have permanent authorizations and will continue to operate regardless of Farm Bill reauthorization.

CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES & JURISDICTION

Within Congress, there are two congressional committees that hold the primary responsibility of writing, debating, and introducing the Farm Bill: The **House Committee on Agriculture** and the **Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry**. These committees and their multiple subcommittees, such as the **Senate Subcommittee on Food and Nutrition, Specialty Crops, Organics, and Research** and the **House Nutrition, Foreign Agriculture, and Horticulture Subcommittee**, have jurisdiction over federal laws and agencies that administer federal nutrition programs and set their authorized funding levels. Members of the **Senate and House Hunger Caucuses**, as well as the leaders and members of the **House and Senate Agriculture Appropriations Committees**, may also play a role in reauthorizing the Farm Bill.

ADMINISTRATION & TITLES

The Farm Bill has evolved and grown with prior reauthorizations and now consists of 12 titles. All titles are administered by the [U.S. Department of Agriculture \(USDA\)](#), the federal agency responsible for developing and executing federal laws related to farming, forestry, rural economic development and food. Title IV, the Nutrition Programs (primarily SNAP), accounts for 76% of mandatory spending in the current Farm Bill. SNAP benefits represent a vital resource for seniors, helping more than 5 million older Americans pay for food so that other household resources and income can be used to cover other necessities like medicine and heat.

The following table provides an overview of the 12 Farm Bill Titles and a summary description of the programs and policies that fall under the title.

TITLE	FARM BILL TITLE DESCRIPTION
I	Commodity Programs: Provides support for major commodity crops, including wheat, corn, soybeans, peanuts, rice, dairy, and sugar, as well as disaster assistance.

TITLE	FARM BILL TITLE DESCRIPTION
II	Conservation: Encourages environmental stewardship of farmlands and improved management through land retirement programs, working lands programs, or both.
III	Trade: Supports U.S. agricultural export programs and international food assistance programs.
IV	Nutrition Programs: Provides nutrition assistance for low-income households through programs, including the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).
V	Credit: Offers direct government loans and guarantees to producers to buy land and operate farms and ranches.
VI	Rural Development: Supports rural housing, community facilities, business, and utility programs through grants, loans, and guarantees.
VII	Research, Extension, and Related Matters: Supports agricultural research and extension programs to expand academic knowledge and help producers be more productive.
VIII	Forestry: Supports forestry management programs run by USDA's Forest Service
IX	Energy: Encourages the development of farm and community renewable energy systems through various programs, including grants and loan guarantees.
X	Horticulture: Supports the production of specialty crops, USDA-certified organic foods, and locally produced foods and authorizes a regulatory framework for industrial hemp.
XI	Crop Insurance: Enhances risk management through the permanently authorized Federal Crop Insurance Program.
XII	Miscellaneous: Includes programs and assistance for livestock and poultry production, support for beginning farmers and ranchers, and other miscellaneous and general provisions.

2023 FARM BILL REAUTHORIZATION RECOMMENDATIONS

Meals on Wheels America has long worked with community-based food assistance and nutrition programs to address the ongoing hunger crisis, relying on critical resources from the Farm Bill. Greater federal funding and support is needed to provide access to nutritious meals for more American seniors. The Farm Bill recommendations below would directly address the growing problems of senior hunger and isolation and make strides toward a healthier and more food secure nation. Our priorities include:

1. Enacting policies that strengthen and secure access to nutrition assistance programs for older adults, specifically the Senior Hunger Prevention Act of 2023 and authorization of a demonstration project to reach unserved and underserved homebound seniors.
2. Protecting SNAP from harmful cuts and increasing benefit levels for participating households, especially those with older adults.
3. Authorizing adequate funding for federal programs and community-based organizations that alleviate hunger, address nutrition security, and improve health and wellbeing for older adults.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Visit www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org/advocate to learn more or reach out directly to our Advocacy Team if you have questions or need more information.

- Erika Kelly, Chief Government and External Affairs Officer (erika@mealsonwheelsamerica.org)
- Shayla Britton, Public Policy and Legislation Manager (shayla.britton@mealsonwheelsamerica.org)