



# ***FARM BILL 101: AN INTRODUCTION***

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# About NSAC



A grassroots alliance of 130+ member organizations (and hundreds more partners and allies) from around the country working together to improve federal food & farm policy for over 30 years!

*The Wallace Center is an NSAC member – along with many organizations engaged in the Food Systems Leadership Network!*



# How We Work



## FARMERS & STAKEHOLDERS

Share their experiences, ideas, challenges related to federal policy, programs, rules with local groups



## MEMBER GROUPS

Collect input from farmers & stakeholders as well as their own experiences, bring asks to NSAC



## NSAC

Collectively we: identify top priority sustainable food & farm policy issues nationwide, set campaign strategies, campaign to win!



## CONGRESS & FED AGENCIES

NSAC brings – directly and thru members – priority asks to Congress and agencies like USDA to improve federal food & farm policy



**NATIONAL SUSTAINABLE  
AGRICULTURE COALITION**

## **Today's Farm Bill 101 Focus:**

- *A brief history*
- *Farm bill structure: what does the bill contain, how much does it cost, and how does it show up in the real world?*
- *Farm bill process: how is this bill passed?*
- *Farm bill advocacy: how can I shape this bill?*

# Farm Bill Basics - History

## Farm bill history

- Ensure the food supply
- Sustain natural resources

## The modern farm bill

- Commodity programs
- Nutrition programs
- Conservation programs
- ...Much more

## What has never been properly addressed

- Structural racism & racial equity



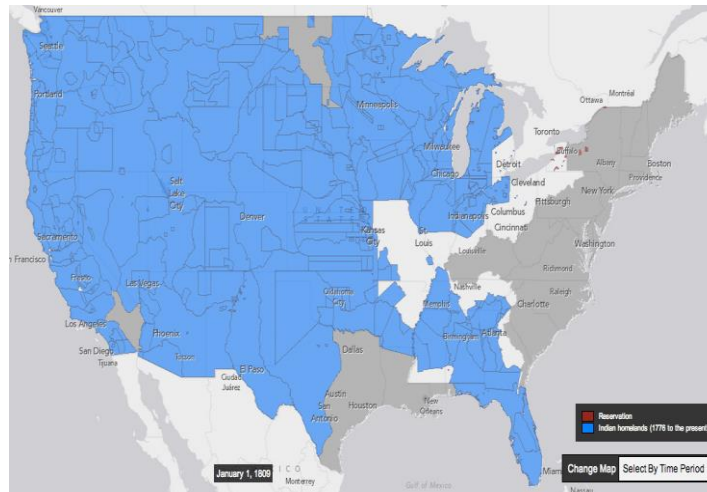
# Historical Context: Shaping American Agriculture

*Acknowledgement of historical exploitation*

## Land

More than 1.5 billion acres taken from Indigenous Communities:

- Treaties
- Homestead Act of 1862



## Exploitation of Labor

Enslavement of African people

Indentured Servitude

Tenant Farmers/Share Cropping

Farmworkers

## New Deal Era/Farm Bill

That history was carried over to farm policies both in and outside the Farm Bill: like farmworker wages

Local USDA offices used wide discretion to continue discrimination by restricting access for Black and Indigenous farmers to loans and other services.





## What is the Farm Bill?

About every five years, Congress develops a massive piece of legislation known as the “**farm bill**” which sets the ‘rules of the road’ for our nation’s food and farm system.

The farm bill contains policies, programs, and funding – everything from rules around who is eligible for a farm loan to funding for food assistance for low-income families.

# THE FARM BILL SHAPES:



- WHAT WE EAT
- OUR NATION'S FARMERS
- OUR ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL RESOURCES
- THE ECONOMY

**“It’s like a Swiss Army knife.”**

*- President Obama 2/7/14*



# Policy 101 Refresher

- **Elections:** Getting people who care about sustainable agriculture into office. (*Note: we do not work on elections and are nonpartisan*)

- **Authorization:** “How a bill becomes a law”

**Appropriations:** Ensuring funding goes where it's needed

- **Implementation:** Ensuring programs and policies work as intended at the agencies and in the field
- **Evaluation:** An ongoing process!

# HOW DOES FARM BILL SPENDING BREAK DOWN?

**TOTAL: \$428 BILLION**

**CONSERVATION, 7%**

Example: Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

**COMMODITIES, 7%**

Example: Whole Farm Revenue Protection Program (Whole Farm)

**CROP INSURANCE, 9%**

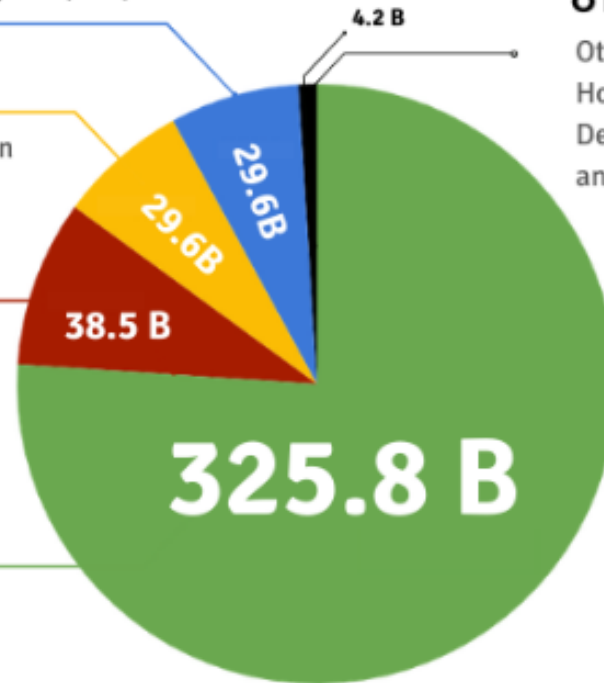
Example: Price Loss Coverage Program

**NUTRITION, 76%**

Example: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

**OTHER, 1%**

Other includes Miscellaneous, Horticulture, Forestry, Rural Development, Credit, Research, and everything else



# Farm Bill Basics - Contents

- Title I, Commodity Programs
- Title II, Conservation
- Title III, Trade
- Title IV, Nutrition
- Title V, Credit
- Title VI, Rural Development
- Title VII, Research, Extension, and Related Matters
- Title VIII, Forestry
- Title IX, Energy
- Title X, Horticulture
- Title XI, Crop Insurance
- Title XII, Miscellaneous



# What's In, What's Out?

## □ What's IN

- Commodity Programs
- Crop Insurance
- Conservation
- Agriculture Credit
- Forestry programs
- Anti-hunger/nutrition assistance
- Rural development
- Ag research
- Trade
- Farm to school?

## □ What's OUT

- Farm/food worker rights & protections
- Public land grazing rights
- Irrigation water rights
- FDA food safety
- Renewable fuels standard
- Tax issues
- School meals & WIC
- GMO labeling
- Farm to School?

# What's it Mean to be “IN” the Farm Bill?



- For included programs, the Farm Bill details things like:
  - ▣ Overall program ‘authorization’
  - ▣ Definitions
  - ▣ Eligibility
  - ▣ Priorities
  - ▣ And more...
  
- *The implementation process fleshes out specifics on what Congress outlines broadly.*

# What's it Mean to be "IN" the Farm Bill?



- What about funding?
  - Mandatory vs Discretionary
  - Authorized vs Appropriated vs Entitlements
  
- Example: Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program (SARE)





*Photo credit: USDA*



*Photo credit: USDA*





*Photo credit: USDA*





Photo credit: USDA



*Photo credit: USDA*



# Path to A New Farm Bill



EACH AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE DRAFTS, AMENDS, AND VOTES ON ITS OWN VERSION OF THE BILL

EACH FULL CHAMBER ("THE FLOOR") DEBATES, AMENDS, AND VOTES ON THE BILL FROM ITS RESPECTIVE COMMITTEE

LEADERS FROM THE HOUSE AND SENATE, INCLUDING COMMITTEE CHAIRS, FORM A CONFERENCE COMMITTEE TO COMBINE THE BILLS

THE FULL CHAMBERS ("THE FLOOR") VOTE ON THE COMBINED FINAL BILL



# How Does a Farm Bill Get Passed?





# Key Players in the Process



## Who Writes the Farm Bill?

- Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry
- House Agriculture Committee

## With Input From...

- Members of Congress
- Hearing Witnesses
- Farm, food, and rural advocacy organizations
- Voters

**Key Tool:** Marker Bills!

# Important Context for 2022-2023

## 2022 Congressional Calendar

January							February							March			
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W
						1			1	2	3	4	5			1	2
2	3	4	5	6	7	8	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	6	7	8	9
9	10	11	12	13	14	15	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	13	14	15	16
16	17	18	19	20	21	22	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	20	21	22	23
23	24	25	26	27	28	29	27	28						27	28	29	30
30	31																

April							May							June			
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17	18	19	20	21	22	23	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	19	20	21	22
24	25	26	27	28	29	30	29	30	31					26	27	28	29

July							August							September			
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24	25	26	27	28	29	30	28	29	30	31				25	26	27	28
31																	

October							November							December			
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9	10	11	12	13	14	15	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	11	12	13	14

- Current farm bill expires September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2023
- House and Senate Ag Committees hearings have begun
- Fall election—shift in power?
- The pandemic slowed the process
- Farm bills aren't always passed on time...

# Farm Bill Priorities: In Development

*Just a \*few\* examples of policy change opportunities  
within the 2023 Farm Bill:*

- Tackle the climate crisis, including through expanded working lands conservation programs and accelerating the adoption of practices that reduce GHG emissions
- Reinvest funding in and expand key local and regional food systems programs & infrastructure
- Advance stronger racial equity priorities across all USDA programs, including access to credit and land
- Address needed structural reforms around crop insurance, commodity subsidies, and more

# Why Does My Advocacy Matter?



- If you aren't speaking up for yourself, someone else is speaking for you.
- An issue or challenge we live daily and understand deeply may not have crossed a decision maker's mind.
- Want to see a more just, sustainable food & farm system? Policy helps us get there...



# It Starts with Listening

- **LEARN:** Who represents you?
  - 2 Senators, 1 Representative, each sits on multiple cmtes
  - <https://www.govtrack.us>
  
- **LISTEN:** What are your MoCs supporting /opposing?
  - Sign up for their email newsletter
  - Follow on Facebook and/or Twitter!
  - See recently sponsored bills (by issue area), voting record, committee lists, much more: <https://www.govtrack.us>

# Educating your MoCs

- **SHAKE hands:** introduce yourself to office staff (no matter their position), not just MoCs
- **SEND invites:** invite MoCs (and their staff!) to your field day, farmers market, workshop, or celebration
- **SHARE news:** win a grant? An award? Share the news with your MoCs' field team!
- **SHOW up:** attend Town Halls (including via telephone), listening sessions, coffee chats. Join advisory groups. *Plus in-district and in-DC meetings!*

# Some Context for Your Congressperson's Life



# Some Context for Your Congressperson's Life





# Making the ASK!

First – **anything you can do is helpful.** Informed and engaged PEOPLE are critical to making change and this stuff takes time and repeated effort!

*There's no silver bullet or quick fix in policy advocacy!*



# So... I've got about 90 seconds.

## What's worth your 90 seconds?

- Anything with a clear ask and a clear target
- Anything that will amplify an issue in your community (and a solution)
- Example: calling your legislator!
  - Calls take 90 seconds
  - You can call the DC office
  - Write a simple script
  - Offices tally and monitor #s!
  - Calls > petitions or social media





**PERSISTENCE PRESSURE PARTNERSHIPS**  
**PATIENCE**

# What it Takes

- **Persistence:** Keep at the “S” actions consistently – SHAKE, SEND, SHARE, SHOW UP – and include an ASK.
- **Pressure:** Amplify your asks and effort via social media, traditional media, different channels of influence
- **Partnerships:** Link with groups working on the issues you care about - join their call-in days, sign-on letters, and local actions. Allyship and accompliceship matters!
- **Patience:** We act with urgency while recognizing that this work takes time.



# What Can I Do Right Now?

## Three Steps To Take Today

- ▣ LEARN: Start your groundwork
- ▣ EDUCATE: Reach out to your Congressional delegation to introduce yourself
- ▣ ASK: Start asking your community – your team, colleagues, farmer networks, partners – what are your priorities for the farm bill? How can we help?

*NSAC and Wallace Center are partners in this work with you!*

*This process will likely take 2 years – there will be many opportunities to shape the work and have your voice heard.*

# Want to Learn More?

- **NSAC's website:** more than you ever wanted to know about farm bill programs and news:  
<https://sustainableagriculture.net>
- **Native Farm Bill Coalition:** conducting a title by title farm bill deep dive webinar series:  
<https://www.nativefarmbill.com/>
- **Wallace FSLN:** Don't forget the other great webinars in this series!
- Other suggestions? Share them in the chat box!

# Stay In Touch

**Website:** [sustainableagriculture.net](http://sustainableagriculture.net)

**Twitter:** [@sustainableag](https://twitter.com/sustainableag)

**Facebook:** [on.fb.me/sustainableag](https://on.fb.me/sustainableag)

**Emails:** [sustainableagriculture.net/subscribe/](http://sustainableagriculture.net/subscribe/)



# Questions?

