



Slow Food USA

## **The Farm Bill: Context and Position Statement**

**Context:** The Farm Bill is the nation's most important food and farming policy, which is considered by Congress only periodically (4-6 years). The last two Farm Bills marked the beginning of a paradigm shift in the function of this Bill as it shapes food and farming. Four important trends emerged.

The first is that there are now programs that reward farmers and ranchers that practice good stewardship. This paves the way for eventual replacement of commodity price support payments that reward producers for maximizing yield, often at the expense of the larger society's ecological and social goals and the gastronome's pursuit of quality and pleasure in food.

The second important trend is the expansion and increased flexibility in the nutritional programs that are used to feed the nation's low-income citizens. These new and reformed programs are creating new partnerships between sustainable agriculture and food security advocates that are weaving local food system structures throughout the nation that will provide low income citizens more access to good, clean and fair food, thus ensuring a more socially just food system, a goal SFUSA must amplify in its activities to support the broadening of our membership.

The third trend is support for innovative marketing programs that allow development of local and regional marketing systems that benefit small and medium sized producers and provide co-producers with more information about the foods they are purchasing, including traceability and emerging criteria covering biologically integrated production systems (other than organic) and fair trade.

The fourth is support for ethnic minority farmers and farm workers, many of whom are rapidly becoming the nation's next generation of food producers. Historically, the Farm Bill has overlooked nonwhite farmers meaning minorities have not benefited from loan and investment programs and farm workers have been completely underserved.

These trends are far from fulfilling their potential. Slow Food USA (Board and convivia) and its allies can be instrumental in continuing the positive evolution of the Bill by taking clear positions in support of the programs that reflect the desired trends in this year's national debate.

The positions, proposed below, could, if adopted, be leveraged with local organizing, letter writing, and public education in order to build the political will of the nation's citizens in favor of further Farm Bill improvements.



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## **Slow Food USA's Position Statement**

**Recognizing that Slow Food USA seeks to offer the nation an antidote to industrialization's destruction of diversity in ecology, culture, and cuisine and that its members are guided by the vision of an ecologically healthy, culturally and gastronomically rich, and humane world, and desire a food system that is Good, Clean, and Fair, Slow Food USA seeks to join other organizations and communities in the nation who seek a Farm Bill that provides a healthier balance of interests and wider distribution of the benefits that accrue as a result of our nation's defining farm and food policy.**

**The Board and regional leadership of Slow Food USA, therefore, call upon Congress to enact a Farm Bill that will better ensure:**

### **Prosperous farms and ranches by:**

- Creating fair and cost effective farm programs that serve the needs of all farmers and ranchers, support diversified cropping and livestock systems, reward conservation, and minimize adverse impacts on producers in developing nations
- Meaningfully limit commodity payments and enhance compliance requirements for commodity and crop insurance
- Ensuring that farm policies are implemented fairly and increase outreach to minority and disadvantaged producers
- Creating a balanced marketing support structure that also addresses local and regional markets
- Encouraging certification, inspection, and labeling initiatives that spur market-based efforts to increase farm income, environmental and farmworker protection, and meeting consumer demand for high quality and traceable products
- Providing specialty crop growers with public investment that supports their efforts to increase consumer demand for foods recommended in federal dietary guidelines
- Establishing organic transition assistance and certification cost-share for farmers seeking to develop more sustainable systems in order to meet consumer demand
- Reorienting investments in research and extension to better support new farmers, rural entrepreneurship, and ecosystem services
- Creating comprehensive initiatives to assist new and beginning farmers and ranchers including farm workers who are transitioning to become farm owners and operators
- Making major investments in grants to spur farmers markets and other direct farmer-to-consumer market innovations
- Providing increased support for development of regional supply chain innovations that link farmers and ranchers with new innovative regional distribution systems



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- Reducing regulatory barriers and provide support for regional processing and distribution infrastructure to meet increasing demand for regional and local products produced using sustainable farming and ranching systems.

### **Healthy people by:**

- Strengthening the Food Stamp Program
- Expanding and improve nutrition education to support community-based solutions to obesity and food insecurity
- Encouraging greater consumption of fruits and vegetables by enabling nutrition program beneficiaries to purchase at local farmers markets and other retails food outlets, including CSA systems
- Expanding innovative, community-based food programs to increase the scale and scope of institutional and emergency food purchasing programs, using changes in procurement policy and new infrastructure development
- Creating new and expanded food systems programs to help communities develop retail food markets, urban agriculture projects and marketing networks to address the needs of underserved neighborhoods
- Providing enhanced funding to school nutrition programs to provide more fruits and vegetables in schools, implement wellness policies, and expand nutrition education.

### **Sustainable lands by**

- Significantly increasing funds for working lands conservation programs
- Maintaining and reforming land retirement programs by placing greater emphasis on long-term protection of environmentally sensitive and critical wildlife habitat and by expanding the enrollment in conservation buffers
- Strengthening and improving enforcement of conservation standards linked to commodity conservation programs and reestablishing conservation standards for crop revenue insurance programs
- Building technical assistance infrastructure needed to assist farmers and ranchers to become better stewards
- Rewarding stewardship by making the Conservation Security Program annually available to all farmers and ranchers who meet heightened environmental criteria and by streamlining the program's payment structure
- Developing incentives to reward organic farming systems and establish an initiative to promote wider use of ecologically-based integrated pest management
- Creating incentives designed to reward innovation and performance by states and localities
- Encouraging locally-led collaborations to solve environmental problems and meet community needs by establishing a Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative
- Advancing rural community and economic development through local leadership, wealth creation, entrepreneurship, and youth involvement



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- Investing in farm-based renewable energy systems that result in measurable, net environmental gains and build rural community assets.

### **Diversity and equity by:**

- Ensuring that policies and programs are developed and implemented fairly and that current disparities in services are eliminated
- Increasing transparency and accountability in all USDA agencies and provide them with full authority to gather and report data on socially disadvantaged producers
- Creating effective means of redress for producers denied access to USDA programs due to discrimination
- Expanding opportunities for socially disadvantaged producers and communities of color to share the future of the food system
- Fully funding USDA offices and extension on Indian Reservations
- Instituting a Farm Viability program for socially disadvantaged producers
- Increasing and expanding the 2501 Outreach and Assistance Program for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers
- Establishing an Office of Farm Workers at USDA
- Recognizing farm worker experience as a qualification to enter USDA agriculture credit programs
- Expanding Emergency Grants to Farm Workers Program to support organizations aiding farm workers in times of disaster
- Increasing pesticide health and safety training for farm workers, including better labeling and reporting
- Establishing independent review process and direct USDA to stop foreclosures and waive interest on loans to producers in unresolved discrimination cases.

*Adapted from "A Declaration: Seeking Balance in U.S. Farm and Food Policy".  
<http://www.farmandfoodproject.org/>  
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