



## 2023 Farm Bill Priorities

The 2023 Farm Bill presents an incredible opportunity to protect agricultural land, expand SNAP access, promote sustainable agriculture, and strengthen the local food system, while improving equity. In alignment with its long term policy priorities for Rhode Island's food system, the RIFPC supports the following recommendations for the 2023 Farm Bill.

### Preserve & Protect Agricultural Land

Unfortunately, the last two Farm Bills have severely cut funding for conservation easements, limiting the impressive impact the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) can have, especially in Rhode Island. The 2023 Farm Bill should:

- Increase mandatory baseline funding for the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) from \$450 million to \$700 million per year
- Require the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to prioritize ACEP-Agricultural Land Easement projects that support farm viability and include farmland affordability protections
- Mandate NRCS to prioritize ACEP projects that support beginning and socially disadvantaged farmers

### Ensure Access to Affordable, Culturally Relevant Food for All People

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), funded through the Farm Bill, is the strongest anti-hunger program in our nation. Congress should protect and reauthorize SNAP in the 2023 Farm Bill without restricting eligibility. Additionally, the 2023 Farm Bill should:

- Require that SNAP benefits are calculated using the Low Cost Meal Plan
- Permanently eliminate time limits for able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWDs)
- Permanently eliminate barriers to SNAP for college students
- End the five-year waiting period for most immigrants
- Eliminate the cap on shelter expense deductions
- Expand and improve SNAP Online by providing funding to pay for delivery fees and modernizing EBT payment methods
- Amend the statutory definition of "food" for the purposes of SNAP to include hot and prepared foods.
- Increase funding for GusNIP to expand its reach and impact
- Permanently reduce matching requirements of GusNIP nutrition incentive grants to 10% as temporarily established in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021

### Promote Climate-Smart, Environmentally Sustainable Practices

Farm Bill conservation and rural development programs are capable of driving dramatic improvements in the environmental sustainability of our agricultural systems. The 2023 Farm Bill should:

- Increase mandatory Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) funding to \$4 billion annually
- Increase CSP payment rates for conservation practices to align with EQIP payment rates
- Raise Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) funding to \$2 billion annually

## Promote Climate-Smart, Environmentally Sustainable Practices (cont.)

- Increase EQIP cost-share rates to 90 percent for designated high impact projects
- Set aside 30 percent of CSP and EQIP funding for beginning and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers
- Fund the Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) at \$400 million annually
- Provide additional funding for REAP that is set aside for beginning and socially disadvantaged farmers
- Maintain existing cost-share support for NRCS's High Tunnel Initiative

## Support a Vibrant & Just Local Food Economy

Learning from recent successful programs such as the Farmers to Families Food Box program and Local Food Purchasing Assistance (LFPA) program, Congress should use this Farm Bill to support local food purchasing and local economies. Building on these learnings, the 2023 Farm Bill should:

- Create a permanent fresh produce procurement partnership to bring local food to food banks that prioritizes entities that are led by or have historically served socially disadvantaged communities and entities that source from beginning farmers, small and mid-sized farms, or socially disadvantaged farmers. The Fresh Produce Procurement Reform Act introduced by Rep. DeLauro (CT-03) should serve as model text for the program.
- Require the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to develop and apply a values-based approach to procuring school food
- Ensure program efficacy by setting aside 5% of funds for evaluation services

## Increase Land Access for Urban and BIPOC Farmers

The 2018 Farm Bill began to address some of the long-standing inequities in USDA policies affecting socially disadvantaged farmers, however, there remains much more work to be done. In order to increase land access for urban and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) farmers, the 2023 Farm Bill should:

- Permanently fund the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BFRDP) and Section 2501 Program
- Increase the use of waivers for matching requirements
- Require USDA to develop a strategic plan for BFRDP that leverages the expertise in the USDA Equity Commission with input from BIPOC, veteran, and other socially disadvantaged farmers
- Make permanent and continue funding for the American Rescue Plan Technical Assistance Investment Program (ARPTAI) to continue creating a network of new partnerships with community based organizations to assist non-English speaking, immigrant, and other hard-to-reach farmers
- Create a microgrant program to provide scale-appropriate financial assistance for BIPOC, veterans, and other socially disadvantaged farmers
- Reform current Farm Service Agency loan programs to better meet the needs of small producers