

# THE 2018

# FARM BILL



OCTOBER 8, 2018 UPDATE

The Farm Bill is a piece of legislation that has the ability to affect the plate and wellbeing of every single American. Its name is misleading, often persuading anyone who isn't in the agriculture business to glaze over its importance. What the name of this bill fails to depict is just how much it impacts everything from health care and climate change to jobs and economic development. The current version of the Farm Bill, which expired on September 30th, took two years to finalize and costed nearly \$1 trillion once it was complete. While the bill is renewed every five years, it sets food policy for the following decade.

The Farm Bill got its start in the 1930's under President Franklin Delano Roosevelt with the goal to do three things: ensure an adequate food supply for the American people, keep food prices reasonable, and protect natural resources. Everything from honeybees to humans are affected by whatever the House and Senate decide to include in the Farm Bill, and it is imperative that the final piece of legislation has our collective best interests at heart. While congressional leaders continue to adjust what will be included in the updated Farm Bill, and how nearly \$870 billion will be spent on trade, food, environmental and commodities programs, those whose depend on a strong bill for their livelihood and to meet their basic needs wait eagerly to see what new legislation will set forth.

## WHAT'S INCLUDED IN THE PROPOSED 2018 FARM BILL

**Food Stamp Work Requirements:** President Trump hopes to see additional work requirements included in the bill. New requirements will increase the work/volunteer obligation for those receiving SNAP and place new limitation on state's abilities to opt out of those requirements.

**Re-evaluation of School Lunches:** According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, roughly 20 percent of American school children are obese. To combat these statistics, the Obama administration revamped school nutrition standards by regulating the amount of vegetables, sugar, salt and whole grains included on student's plates. Efforts like these have a positive impact on the overall health of children in America, especially for those in districts where at least 40 percent of students qualify for free school meals. In these districts schools can participate in the Community Eligibility Provision, a federal program that allows all students within that district to eat for free.

Because the Provision is directly linked to the number of district families with school-age children enrolled in SNAP, some districts may no longer qualify for the Eligibility Provision if new SNAP requirements set forth by the House bill affect the eligibility of households. When districts lose their ability to participate in the program, it's ultimately the students that suffer. Academic success is linked to proper nutrition and school meal programs are often the first defense against hunger for many children.

**Crumbling Federal Safety Net:** The Senate version of the Farm Bill maintains existing work requirements for SNAP eligibility while proposing the creation of additional training programs. Currently, adults ages 18-49 without children must work 20 hours per week or participate in state-run training programs. The House version of the bill is projected to increase the minimum work hours to 25 per week while expanding the age requirement to include able-bodied adults without children age 18-59.

Federal Safety Net programs provided monthly grocery funds to 42.3 million SNAP participants in 2017. Nearly seven million adults are in need of training programs, but are unable to access them because there simply isn't enough room. If the House version of the bill passes, the reform of work requirements could affect as many as two million low-income Americans.

**The Clean Water Rule:** Currently, federal water, including wetlands and small streams, are protected from pollution thanks to the Clean Water Rule guidelines. The Clean Water Act was put into place over 40 years ago, but what was considered Federal Water was always a topic of debate. In 2015, the Obama administration tasked the EPA with creating firm guidelines - the rule - on what was considered Water of the United State. The EPA, utilizing a study they conducted, deemed all water is connected and, thus, Federal Water. Earlier this year, with support of the House bill, the EPA began the process of writing a more narrow definition of which waters are protected under the Clean Water Act. The Clean Water Rule is safe for now, but the new Farm Bill will likely play an important role in keeping water clean for future generations.

You have the opportunity to influence the content, and repercussions, of the 2018 Farm Bill. Reach out to your representatives. Thank them for the important work they're doing, and urge them to craft a bill that takes care of Americans, our farmers, and our land.

**TO SEE MORE OF WHAT THE 2018 FARM BILL PROPOSES, CLICK HERE.**

KALAMAZOO LOAVES & FISHES

KZ0OLF.ORG

269.488.2617