

September 5th, 2023,

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
Chairwoman
Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Glenn "G.T." Thompson
Chairman
House Committee on Agriculture
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable John Boozman
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable David Scott
Ranking Member
House Committee on Agriculture
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Stabenow, Chairman Thompson, Ranking Member Boozman, and Ranking Member Scott,

As embodied in the Farm Bill, our nation's food and farm policies directly impact people and communities throughout the U.S. and worldwide. Inspired by our faith traditions' sacred texts and values that call on us to care for poor and vulnerable people, we support policies that promote food security in the U.S. and worldwide, strengthen rural communities, and care for the land and our planet.

Together, the undersigned **127 national and local faith-based organizations** urge Congress to prioritize reauthorizing a Faithful Farm Bill that promotes the well-being of people and the planet. Many of our organizations, congregations, and leaders work to feed and serve our struggling friends and neighbors, but we know we cannot do this alone. The Farm Bill's resources must be effectively targeted for the greatest need. Programs and policies that curb hunger and malnutrition, support vibrant agricultural economies in rural communities, and promote the sustainable use of natural resources must be prioritized as part of a comprehensive Farm Bill, with adequate funding to meet these diverse needs fully.

To this end, we support the following principles for a Faithful Farm Bill:

Protect, expand, and strengthen programs that reduce hunger, address food insecurity, and improve nutrition in the United States.

Taking care of our neighbors is central to all of our faiths. More than 40 million Americans, including over 14 million children, utilize the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and other anti-hunger programs to help regularly put food on the table. While charitable organizations play a vital role in addressing hunger, we know that this country's overwhelming majority of food assistance has historically come from—and must continue to come from—federal programs. We urge Congress to

- A. Protect and improve SNAP's structure and funding - implementing more flexible approaches to ensure those in need can access quality nutrition assistance.
- B. Eliminate arbitrary time limits and so-called work requirements that would restrict eligibility for SNAP for those who need help putting food on the table.
- C. Eliminate the five-year ban on SNAP benefits for lawfully present immigrants and expand access to all who need them.
- D. Eliminate additional requirements for low-income college students.
- E. Strengthen SNAP to promote food security among low-income military families and veterans.
- F. Repeal the ban on people convicted of drug felonies from receiving SNAP which disproportionately affects BIPOC communities.

- G. Strengthen and expand other anti-hunger nutrition assistance programs like the Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program (GusNIP), the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR), The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP).
- H. Establish a process for transition to SNAP for Puerto Rico and other territories that desire to transition.
- I. Support Tribal Food Sovereignty by granting 638 authority to tribes who wish to administer SNAP and other federal nutrition programs.

Strengthen policies and programs that address climate change, such as food waste reduction, cutting the agriculture industry's greenhouse gas emissions, and conservation & protection of natural resources from environmental degradation.

Our faith teaches us that caring for Earth, our common home, means protecting the entire web of life. Emissions caused by farming practices are worsening the climate crisis. Our food and agriculture system is vulnerable, but they can also be a solution. Policies to end hunger and regulate agriculture in the U.S. must align with our goals to address climate change. Millions of Americans suffer from food insecurity, yet our country generates about 50 million tons of food waste yearly. Food in landfills contributes to global warming and affects our food and agriculture system. We urge you to support policies in the Farm Bill that will fulfill our moral obligation to leave a habitable world for future generations. We urge Congress to:

- A. Protect the integrity of conservation funding allocated to the Farm Bill included in the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022, ensuring that no funding goes to practices that increase greenhouse gas emissions or cause environmental degradation.
- B. Increase funding for programs encouraging proven, sustainable climate-friendly agricultural practices that reduce greenhouse gasses and protect our soil, water, animals, people, and pollinators.
- C. Strengthen policies and programs that promote conservation and protect our natural resources from environmental degradation, like the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP), and Resource Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP).
- D. Promote research related to alternative, clean, and renewable forms of energy that do not negatively impact communities or the environment.
- E. Honor creation through land and water protection and conservation. Reduce the use of pesticides and nitrate-based fertilizers on farms to protect streams, watersheds, and surrounding communities.
- F. Reject false solutions that seek to expand the industrialization of agriculture and are ineffective at mitigating the climate crisis, such as carbon trading, offsets, and other corporate-backed schemes that give the fossil fuel industry a license to continue emitting greenhouse gasses.
- G. Divest from and oppose funding schemes that benefit harmful animal-rearing practices like large Confined Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs).
- H. Reinvest in ecological public plant breeding programs that address climate change and extreme weather patterns so farmers are prepared with diverse, adaptable seed stocks and agroecological approaches.
- I. Expand grant funding and tax incentives to promote food recovery and donation. Support education and awareness programs for farmers on the benefits and protections of gleaning.
- J. Establish regional supply chain coordinators within the U.S. Department of Agriculture to partner with food producers, distributors, and food recovery organizations; act as regional points of contact to facilitate food recovery; and understand and develop the capacity needed for ongoing food recovery.

Ensure equitable program implementation to remedy historically underserved communities.

We continue to respond to faith-filled calls to honor and protect all people's inherent sacred worth and dignity and seek justice when that worth and dignity are violated. Decades of proven discrimination by the U.S. Department of Agriculture against Black, Indigenous, and other farmers of color have led to historical exclusions from government programs that offer vital financial resources, technical support, and access to comprehensive safety nets available to white farmers in the face of crisis. The 2023 Farm Bill must strengthen efforts to remedy these inequities with a lens of equity and inclusion, such as those outlined in the Justice for Black Farmers Act. We urge Congress to

- A. Ensure that BIPOC farmers have improved access to credit, capital, crop insurance, and other financial assistance programs that increase their chances of survival and longevity in the agriculture industry.
- B. Strengthen the Socially Disadvantaged Farmer and Rancher Development Program (2501) through increased funding, prioritizing program investments for BIPOC farmers, and increasing program transparency and reporting.
- C. Increase funding for 1890 land-grant universities, Tribal Colleges and Universities (1994 Land-Grant Colleges), and Hispanic-serving Institutions (HSIs).
- D. Allow dual participation in SNAP and the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) and expand the Traditional Foods pilot program under FDPIR. Respect, recognize, and integrate Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Indigenous knowledge in federal programs while recognizing the sovereign rights of Indigenous communities as they continue to protect and restore biodiversity.
- E. Support historically marginalized farmers to gain land and grow their farm businesses to increase parity with their counterparts.
- F. Ensure that resources allocated towards addressing climate change reach BIPOC farmers, producers, and other historically underserved stewards of our food system equitably.
- G. Address discrimination that many BIPOC farmers experience at USDA offices, strengthening transparency, accountability, and oversight measure being implemented.
- H. Improve accessibility to USDA programs by streamlining application processes improving access to culturally sensitive and sound technical support, and collaborating with community-based organizations that support BIPOC farmers, ranchers, and producers.
- I. Earmark 40 percent of Farm Bill resources for socially disadvantaged communities, including farmers and producers, as uplifted in the Justice 40 recommendations.
- J. Advance policies that apply a disability lens to the Farm Bill by boosting SNAP adequacy, rejecting time limits/ work requirements, abolishing the ban on hot & prepared foods, and increasing access to online food ordering.

Provide a fair and effective farm safety net that allows farmers, farmworkers, and producers in the U.S. and around the world to earn economically sustainable livelihoods.

Around the world and in the U.S., small-scale farmers and producers struggle to make ends meet as they compete with the aggressive monopolistic tactics employed by corporate agriculture industries. As people of faith, we believe that labor has a sacred bond with the dignity of all people. Small-scale farmers, farmworkers, and producers are the stewards of the land and are instrumental in building resilient local and regional food systems. The Farm Bill should seek to give them a fair shot. We urge Congress to

- A. Strengthen protections against corporate power abuse and establish fair market rules for all involved, advance other necessary market fairness reforms, and pass reforms to antitrust laws that reverse the trend of corporate consolidation in our food system.
- B. Invest in the food supply chain to make it safer for workers, address bottlenecks and monopolistic markets, and provide easier market access for small- and medium-sized farmers and ranchers.
- C. Invest in USDA programs that lift and support community infrastructure for local and regional food production systems.
- D. Assist farmers who lose their livelihoods due to climate-related causes, such as extreme heat, hurricanes, flooding, etc., by expanding crop insurance to support more farmers beyond those who mass-produce commodity crops and capped for the ultra-wealthy so that small-scale farmers are prioritized.
- E. Speed up the transition to sustainable and regenerative agriculture to build a food system that supports small- and medium-holder farmers and local food economies.
- F. Ban imports of agricultural products sourced through illegal deforestation as reflected in the Forest Act.
- G. Reform the crop subsidies programs in the Farm Bill to prioritize producers who grow food that our communities can eat, uphold workers' labor rights, and meet conservation requirements.

Safeguard and improve international food aid in ways that encourage local food security and improve the nutritional quality of food aid.

Globally, as many as [828 million people are food insecure](#), and malnutrition causes approximately half of all deaths of children under age 5 (more than 2 million) yearly. Hunger and malnutrition prevent millions of people in developing countries from living healthy, productive lives and stunt future generations' mental and physical development. Despite this crisis, decades of work through international food aid programs such as Food for Peace have substantially reduced hunger and malnutrition. We urge Congress to

- A. Reauthorize Food for Peace at its current authorization level of \$2.5 billion and strengthen flexibilities in the program. This allows program implementers to efficiently use the best tools in each local context efficiently, including spending funds on non-commodity expenses and food grown by smallholder farmers.
- B. Reauthorize other hunger-reducing international programs like the McGovern-Dole Food for Education, Farmer-to-Farmer, and Food for Progress.
- C. Increase local and regional procurement funding within the McGovern-Dole Food for Education program and other international food aid efforts.

Our diverse values and holy scriptures instruct us to ensure that everyone may live with dignity and the opportunity to recognize their full potential. As stakeholders from across the US., we ask you to work quickly with your colleagues across the aisle to ensure that struggling communities receive the much-needed assistance they desperately need and deserve. We also use this opportunity to highlight the need to protect the dignity, health, and safety of those working on the land and all aspects of the food production systems. The 21.5 million people who work in our food and farm systems are essential to its functioning and serve as its foundation. Every day, the health and safety of these hard-working people are in jeopardy- worsened by the increasing occurrence of extreme weather events like heat waves. We stand in solidarity with like-minded stakeholders working hard to represent the diverse interests of communities across America and the world who the Farm Bill will impact.

We appreciate your commitment to producing a Farm Bill that invests in and improves food programs that address hunger in the US and overseas.

Signed,

Al-Maa'uun	Indianapolis Muslim Community Association (IMCA Food Pantry)
Alabama Interfaith Power & Light	Integral Ecology Office, Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration
ALEPH: Alliance for Jewish Renewal	Interfaith Hunger Coalition
Alliance of Baptists	Interfaith Power & Light
American Council Of Minority Women Inc.	Interreligious Eco-Justice Network, CT IPL
American Friends Service Committee	Iowa UU Witness/Advocacy Network
American Muslim Community Services	Islamic Center of Charlotte
American Muslim Social Services	Islamic Relief USA
APNA Brooklyn Community Center	Islamic Social Services of Oregon State (ISOS)
Arkansas Interfaith Power and Light	Jewish Community Action
As-Siddiq Muslim Organization of New York, Inc	Jewish Council on Urban Affairs
Asian American Christian Collaborative	Jews for a Secular Democracy
Atlanta Masjid of Al Islam	Keshet
Avodah	Laudato Si Movement
Bait-ul Jamaat House of Community Inc.	Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
Beth El Synagogue Social Justice Committee	Masjid Al-Ansar Food Pantry
Beth Israel Sinai-New Jewish Outreach	Masjid Bab Salam USA Inc.
Bread for the World	MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger
Carolina Jews for Justice	Mennonite Central Committee U.S
Church World Service	Minaret Foundation
Coastal Roots Farm	Missionary Oblate/OIP TRUST
Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, U.S.Provinces	Mitsui Collective
Creation Justice Ministries	Montana Interfaith Power & Light
Dar Al -Hijrah Islamic Center	Mosque foundation food pantry
Deignan Institute for Earth and Spirit at Iona University	Muslim Community Network
Disciples Center for Public Witness (Disciples of Christ)	Muslim Family Services of Ohio
Dominican Sisters of Sinsinawa Peace and Justice Office	Muslim Housing Services
Earth Ministry/Washington Interfaith Power and Light	Muslim Sisters of Staten Island, Inc
Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon	Muslim Women's Institute for Research and Development (MWIRD)
Faith Justice Commission - St. Joseph Parish, Seattle	MYCC-RDU Muslim Youth Community Center
Farm to Table - New Mexico	National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
FJV Foundation	National Council of Churches
Franciscan Action Network	National Council of Jewish Women
Franciscan Peace Center, Clinton, Iowa	National Farm Worker Ministry
Franciscan Sisters of Our Lady of Perpetual Help	Nebraska Interfaith Power & Light
Freedom Road	NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
Friends Committee on National Legislation	Nia Masjid & Community Center
Georgia Interfaith Power and Light	New Mexico Interfaith Power and Light
Grassroots Leadership	North Carolina Council of Churches
Hanan Refugees Relief Group	Ocean Futures Society
Humble Beginnings Inc	Office of Peacebuilding and Policy
IKAR	Oregon Interfaith Power and Light

Oregon UU Voices for Justice
Palestinian American Community Center
Pax Christi USA
Peace Catalyst International Inc
Presbyterian Church USA Office of Public Witness
Provinice of St. Mary of the Capuchin Order
Purple Hearts Inc.
Quaker Earthcare Witness
Rabbinical Assembly
Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association
Rohingya Culture Center
RVA Franciscan Justice Circle
Sadaqah 4 You Inc.
Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference, Inc.
SANAD social services
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas Justice Team
Sisters of Mercy Solidarity Committee
Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God
Sisters of St. Francis, Clinton, Iowa
Society of St. Andrew
Sojourners
Swedenborgian Church of North America
Temple Israel of Greater Miami
Texas Impact/Texas Interfaith Power and Light
The Building Blocks of NJ
The People's Justice Council
The Shalom Center
The United Methodist Church - General Board of Church and Society
U.S. Federation of the Sisters of St. Joseph
Union for Reform Judaism
Unitarian Universalist Advocacy Network of Illinois
Unitarian Universalist FaithAction New Jersey
Unitarian Universalist Justice Ministry of North Carolina
Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry Of Virginia
Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC)
Unitarian Universalists for a Just Economic Community
Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice
Unitarian Universalist, Action of New Hampshire
United Church of Christ, Justice and Local Church Ministries
United Somali Bantu of Greater Pittsburgh
Unity Temple Family Church, Inc.
Vermont Interfaith Power & Light
Zeina Lorraine Inc