

# What You Should Know About the FARM BILL

The **Farm Bill** is legislation authorized every five years by Congress that shapes national agricultural and food policy. Within the Farm Bill are programs critical to agricultural interests, such as crop insurance, commodities, conservation, and farm subsidies. There are also programs important to the hunger community, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as “food stamps;” The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP); the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP); and a few other smaller programs.

## What’s the history of the Farm Bill?

The first Farm Bill was the Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA) of 1933, a bill that was part of President Roosevelt’s New Deal programs. Farmers during the Depression were growing more crops than the market would bear, and suffering financially. Therefore, the AAA was created to help deal with poverty in the farming industry, essentially paying farmers to not plow a certain part of their land to help control the glut of crops on the market. Since that time, the methods in the Farm Bill to help support the U.S. agricultural industry have varied. In the 1970’s the food stamp program, which had been a stand-alone program, was tied into the Farm Bill.

## Why are these nutrition programs in a bill called the “Farm Bill?”

Politics. For several decades, it has been recognized that tying agricultural interests and nutrition program interests together are beneficial to both. Agricultural programs have historically been seen as rural issues, while SNAP, or food stamps, have been seen as urban issues. To garner enough votes from both rural and urban interests to see programs continued, it makes sense to keep them all together. Alternatively, efforts have been made in the past to separate out the nutrition programs into a separate bill, making them more vulnerable to harmful changes. Hunger advocates have fought these efforts.

## Why does the Food Bank care about the Farm Bill?

The nutrition programs authorized by the Farm Bill are critical to Food Bank clients and Food Bank operations. SNAP helps many of our clients purchase food that supplements what they can receive at Food Bank Partner Agencies or purchase with their own income. TEFAP provides critical federal commodities, comprising approximately 28 percent of our inventory. Additionally, TEFAP provides money to assist with storage and distribution of the commodities. CSFP provides nutritious food boxes to our senior population.

Efforts are often made during Farm Bill deliberations to make structural changes to these programs. Many of these proposed changes are harmful to the programs, and decrease the ability of people to access them.

