

A Strong Farm Bill Feeds Us All



THE BASICS

The Farm Bill is a huge piece of federal legislation that touches nearly every part of our food system.

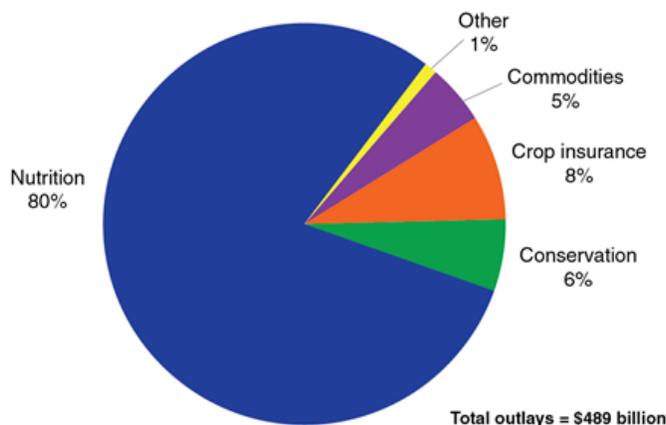
The Farm Bill is authorized by congress every few years. The 2014 Farm Bill will expire on September 30, 2018. If a new Farm Bill isn't passed by this date the programs with discretionary funding will become unfunded. This includes many programs important to our region, such as those impacting sustainable research grants to farmers and ranchers.

The 2014 Farm Bill is divided into 12 "titles," similar to chapters. Funding is not divided evenly among these titles, as shown in this pie chart from Food Research Action Council. As you can see, the Farm Bill is about much more than just farms.

Whether you're a grocer concerned with food affordability, an angler who needs clean water for trout and bass, or an eater who wants food they can trust, everyone has a stake in the Farm Bill.

Kansas and Missouri legislators include key Farm Bill decision makers. Now more than ever, it's important they hear from you about what matters to our community. This handout highlights some of the programs important to our regional food system and how they should be treated in the 2018 Farm Bill.

Projected outlays under the 2014 Farm Act, 2014-2018



Source: USDA Economic Research Service using data from Congressional Budget Office, Cost Estimates for the Agricultural Act of 2014, Jan 2014.

OUR PRIORITIES

Food connects us. So should food policy. A Farm Bill that's good for local farmers also helps local consumers and businesses. Likewise, nutrition programs increase farm and grocery sales. The Greater Kansas City Food Policy Coalition believes the 2018 Farm Bill should support thriving communities by:

- putting healthy food within reach
- helping farmers defend our resources
- investing in local food, strengthening local economies
- funding research and programming for resilient, diverse farming

LOCAL IMPACTS

The Farm Bill shapes your plate and our regional economy. Here are just a few examples of how:

\$1.6 billion of SNAP (food stamps) benefits flow through Kansas & Missouri each year

\$2.9 billion true impact
Every \$1 of SNAP (food stamps) benefits generates \$1.79 in economic activity, for an even larger annual impact

\$7.8 million in grants have helped hundreds of Kansas and Missouri bi-state farmers and ranchers study and adopt sustainable techniques (SARE grants 1988-2016, www.SARE.org)

\$3.6 million in annual conservation funding helps farmers and ranchers in Kansas (18,205) & Missouri (17,136) protect soil, water, air and habitat (USDA, 2012 Ag Census, does not include farmable wetlands or conservation reserve enhancement)

We invite you to join us in advocating for a Farm Bill that feeds us all.



DETAILED PRIORITIES

Help Farmers Defend Our Resources

The Farm Bill is the largest source of federal conservation funding. Deep cuts to these programs in the last decade must be reversed so that conservation programs can meet demand from farmers and ranchers. For example, 74% of eligible *Environmental Quality Incentives Program* applications were unfunded in fiscal year 2016, including 575 from Kansas.

EQIP helps farmers and ranchers build sustainable, resilient operations. A Wellsville, Missouri rancher implemented rotational grazing on paddocks separated by solar powered electric fencing, supporting healthier cattle and soil. Other area producers have used *EQIP* funds to install high tunnels, helping them supply nearby consumers and reduce carbon emissions.

The conservation title includes important incentives to beginning farmers and ranchers and to socially disadvantaged farmers. Sustainable practices are easiest to implement and most successful when used from the start. These programs must be protected, and outreach funding must be increased in order to manage the transfer of agriculture land underway as baby boomers retire.

Food Pantries Can't Do It All

Nutrition programs put healthy food within reach for millions, stabilize demand and create jobs, making them highly effective economic development. This is intensified when nutrition programs are paired with local food, which generates greater economic activity than conventional foods. A *Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive* grant has allowed Double Up Food Bucks to help area *Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program* (food stamps) recipients buy more fresh local food, injecting hundreds of thousands of dollars into bi-state farmers markets and grocery stores since 2015.

Funding cuts or structural changes to *SNAP* that put more people in line at food pantries instead of grocery stores would harm local communities. Pantries struggle to meet current demand; Feeding America pantries provide just one meal for every 12 *SNAP* can provide. Grocers also struggle. Kansas Rural Grocery Initiative reports that about 24 stores have closed in the last decade. *SNAP* infuses vital funds into local economies, supporting healthy communities.

Ensure Resilient, Diverse Farms & Food Systems

Research and extension programs need more funding to help new and established farmers build resilient, thriving farms that will feed us all.

Farmers need easy access to cutting-edge research to meet future productivity challenges. The *Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education* grant program supports farmer-driven research, helping farmers to identify innovative, sustainable farming methods. Nationally, 79% of producers report improving their soil through *SARE* grants. In Missouri and Kansas, 248 producers have received *SARE* grants since 1988. Linda Hezel, steward of Prairie Birthday Farm in Clay County, was able to compare strategies for extending the growing season when growing in raised beds. *SARE* needs reliable funding.

The current funding formula for extension programs isn't serving Kansas and Missouri farmers. Funding should be based on needs rather than population so state programs can reverse the declining number of county agents who help farmers where they are and build diverse, resilient regional food systems.

CONSERVATION

- Expand funding for helping small farms and ranches in Environmental Quality Incentives Program.
- Protect funding for other conservation programs, and ensure access to them for small farms and ranches as well as beginning, socially disadvantaged farmers by increasing funding, special incentives and Farm Service Agency outreach, and by expanding *Conservation Reserve Program* eligibility.

NUTRITION

- Continue funding programs that strengthen food security and local economies, including *FINI*, *SNAP*, *Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program* and *Women, Infants & Children Farmers Market Nutrition Program*.
- Defend *SNAP* against irresponsible funding cuts or structural changes that result in less food for hungry people.

RESEARCH & EXTENSION

- Support soil health and market diversity by establishing permanent baseline funding for relevant programs, including: *SARE*, *Organic Research & Extension Initiative* and *Beginning Farmer & Rancher Development Program*.
- Ensure extension programs can meet current farmer and community needs by resolving funding formula problems.