



# FAIR FARM BILL

## Farm Action's 2023 Farm Bill Priorities

Farm Action is a farmer-led organization committed to fighting monopoly power in our food system and revitalizing rural communities.

The below policy recommendations are organized into the four pillars of our [Fair Farm Bill campaign](#). We believe that these essential changes will begin the transition towards a fair food system that works for all Americans — rather than a handful of powerful corporations.

These recommendations were developed from Farm Action's [Fair Farm Bill Policy Handbook](#), which includes additional policy suggestions to deliver a just food system.

### Food, Not Feed

The majority of government funding and taxpayer-backed programs in agriculture support corporate-controlled livestock and poultry operations and the production of grains (like corn and soybeans) to feed their animals. If we shifted resources to the production of food that feeds people, farmers could escape the treadmill of industrial agriculture and profitably grow food for their communities.

1. Include S.557, the Opportunities for Fairness in Farming Act, which would ensure checkoff programs are transparent and accountable by requiring that their budgets and disbursements to be published and periodically audited, and by restricting their engagement with lobbying organizations that have conflicts of interest or that conduct anti-competitive activities.
2. Massively scale up funding for the Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program (GusNIP) to at least \$350 million and implement procurement rules that ensure these dollars go towards local and regional producers.
3. Increase and improve access to risk management tools for diverse, organic, specialty crop, limited-resource, and non-conventional producers by improving the Whole Farm Revenue Protection (WFRP) and Micro Farm programs. We must further incentivize the advantage in WFRP for producers to diversify; incentivize agents to sell more WFRP and Micro Farm policies by altering the payment structure to reward more complex policies; and prohibit the practice of including indemnity payments, previously removed from WFRP historic baseline determining calculations, when calculating a farmer's payment during a claims process. We must also codify the recent changes USDA's Risk

Management Agency (RMA) has made to WFRP and Micro Farm program, which include increasing the maximum insurable revenue under WFRP to \$34 million; raising the Micro Farm revenue cap to \$350,000; and reducing the application and operational paperwork burden for WFRP.

4. Set payment limits for risk management and commodity programs at \$125,000, or \$250,000 for married filers, and eliminate loopholes that allow non-farmers to qualify for these payments by strengthening the definition of “actively engaged in farming.”
5. Increase funding to grant programs, like the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) and the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program, with a focus on assisting farmers transitioning to organic and/or regenerative food production models. Specifically, we recommend the approach taken in the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act.

## **Justice for All**

Everyone deserves a fair chance to succeed, but the USDA has admitted to discriminatory practices that stack the deck against marginalized farmers. We will all benefit in a fair and inclusive society, so we need to make credit accessible to all, ensure robust representation on government boards and commissions, and direct funding to organizations led by members of disadvantaged communities that provide technical assistance.

1. Increase funding for technical assistance and grants directed towards farmers of color, specifically to universities and organizations with relationships in these communities.
2. Create more equitable funding. Funding to land-grant universities and community-based organizations should be equitably distributed to all the research programs. The farm bill should include set-asides for research funding and increased funding to HBCUs and Tribal Colleges. We recommend the approach taken in the Justice for Black Farmers Act.
3. Invest in socially disadvantaged farmers by improving credit access, credit assistance, and succession planning. One way to achieve this would be to authorize and fund USDA’s Heirs Property Relending Program. USDA’s Increasing Land, Capital, and Market Access Program funded through the Inflation Reduction Act, marked another important step toward reaching this objective.

## **Build Local, Eat Local**

A food system controlled by corporate behemoths poses a food security and a national security threat. By breaking up agrifood corporations and investing in local and regional food systems, we can enhance market transparency and competition. It's time to empower people, not corporations, and create a resilient food and agriculture system that will feed us even if calamity strikes. If we build local, we can eat local!

1. Establish the Office of the Special Investigator for Competition Matters.
2. Increase funding for Local Agricultural Marketing Program.
3. Include S.52, the American Beef Labeling Act, which will institute mandatory country of origin labeling requirements.
4. Authorize and fund recent USDA programs that lift up and support local and regional food production systems. These programs include the Local Food Purchase Assistance Cooperative Agreement Program (LFPA); the Local Foods for Schools Cooperative Agreement Program (LFS); and the Food Supply Chain Guaranteed Loan Program.
5. Fully fund the newly established Farmer Seed Liaison so they can accomplish their stated goals of promoting competition across our food system.
6. Enact robust Right to Repair and agriculture data protections to give farmers and owners of farm equipment control over their businesses.

## **Conservation and Regeneration**

Subsidized insurance programs offer protection in the case of crop failure, but they primarily benefit farms that grow corn, soybeans, cotton, sugar, and wheat. These same farms also receive the lion's share of disaster payments — without any requirement that they work to mitigate the extreme weather patterns that contribute to the rising costs of these taxpayer-funded programs. In order to benefit from these programs, recipients should be required to commit to conservation and regenerative practices.

1. Fully fund voluntary programs that incentivize farmers to meet basic conservation practice requirements, specifically via the Conservation Opportunity and Voluntary Environment Resilience Program (COVER) Act, and explore the effect of requiring any farmer, rancher, or producer to meet those requirements in order to receive any federal subsidies.
2. Include S.658, the EQIP Improvement Act of 2023, which will allow more producers to receive critical conservation funding through this heavily oversubscribed program and remove the 50% livestock set-aside.