

Talking Points for the 2013 EAD “Ask” on the Farm Bill

These talking Points are for YOU, the advocate, never to be left behind with the staff. There are three major sections, in addition to the General Background piece; your group should feel free to cover the points you are comfortable with, which will depend in part on the size of our group.

OVERVIEW

- **Congress should pass a farm bill *this year* that alleviates hunger and malnutrition, supports vibrant farms and healthy communities, and protects God’s creation. (see *Backgrounder, pg. 1*)**
 - The farm bill is the single largest piece of federal policy impacting our food system. Funding for the current Farm Bill was extended until September 30, 2013.
 - A good farm bill can strengthen nutrition programs, help struggling communities, support new and socially disadvantaged farmers, enhance global food aid to the world’s most impoverished, and encourage farming and ranching practices that protect God’s creation.
 - Congress needs to pass a multi-year farm bill in 2013 to continue programs that promote a just and healthy food system. A number of these are currently without funding and several others will be without funding soon.

HUNGER AND MALNUTRITION

- **We urge Congress to alleviate hunger and malnutrition in the United States and around the world. IN THE UNITED STATES (See *Backgrounder, pg. 1-2*)**
Congress should protect funding for the *Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP (formerly known as food stamps)*, from cuts and harmful structural changes.
 - Despite the wealth of resources in the United States, 48.8 million Americans are at risk of hunger: one in six adults and one in five children.
 - **The majority of those who receive this assistance are children, the elderly, or people living with a disability.** Recipients include individuals with low-wage, full-time jobs, and military families.
 - Federal nutrition programs help create long-term self-sufficiency and reduce poverty.
 - The U.S. Department of Agriculture highlights the program’s importance as an economic driver in local communities. Every dollar of SNAP benefits distributed results in \$1.84 in gains for local economies.

INTERNATIONAL (See *Backgrounder, pg. 2*)

Congress should support robust international food aid and improve its nutritional quality.

- The United Nations estimates that nearly 1 billion people are experiencing hunger worldwide. High food prices, natural disasters and humanitarian crises, are among the factors that contribute to global hunger and the continuing need for emergency food aid.
- Since 1954, more than three billion people in 150 countries have benefited directly from U.S. food aid.
- Improving maternal and child nutrition is a priority of U.S. global food security and health initiatives.
- In areas of high malnutrition, increased procurement and distribution of lipid-based, fortified, and other nutrition-dense products are imperative.
- Whether food aid remains under the Farm Bill or is moved to other accounts (as is under consideration) it is vital that full funding is maintained.

VIBRANT FARMS AND STRONG COMMUNITIES

- **We urge Congress to support vibrant farms and strong communities**

IN THE UNITED STATES (See *Backgrounder pg. 2-4*)

Congress should fund programs that help beginning farmers and farmers from socially disadvantaged groups start in the business of agriculture.

- Due to high land costs and the increasing complexity of the agricultural economy, it is often difficult for beginning farmers to enter the business unless they inherit an existing farm.

- Small farms, operated by younger and more diverse farmers, including women and minorities, are increasing in all parts of the country due, in part, to U.S. Department of Agriculture programs.
- Programs like the *Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program* and the *Outreach and Technical Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers program* fund education, extension, outreach, and technical assistance aimed at helping new farmers successfully acquire, own, operate, and retain farms and ranches.

Congress should support programs that help small farmers grow their businesses and help underserved communities get better access to healthy foods.

- Many programs—including those listed below—**have no funding due to the expiration of the 2008 Farm Bill**. They support the growth of local and regional markets, help small farmers find markets for their products, and help underserved communities gain access to healthier foods.
- The *Farmers Market Promotion Program* helps to establish and expand direct to consumer markets by providing new markets for small and mid-sized farmers, offering consumers the opportunity to support local producers and giving people in vulnerable communities greater access to fresh food. Since 2008, the USDA has focused on developing new farmers markets in underserved communities, so-called “food deserts,” where fresh food is often difficult to obtain and where obesity rates, particularly among children, are high.
- The *Farmers Market Electronic Benefit Transfer Program* and the *Senior Farmers Market Program* makes farmers markets more accessible for SNAP recipients and low-income seniors, allowing these customers to use electronic benefit cards and coupons, respectively, at local farmers markets. The *National Organic Certification Cost Share program* helps *small farmers to offset the substantial costs of moving from conventional farming methods to high value organic agriculture.*

INTERNATIONAL(See *Backgrounder, pg. 4*)

Congress should reform international food aid policy to better support long-term solutions to global hunger by expanding the Local and Regional Procurement Program for international food aid, allowing more food to be purchased in the areas where it is consumed.

- Currently, the majority of U.S. food aid is grown and processed in the U.S. and shipped to areas in need of aid.
- Shipping food from the United States to countries in crisis costs much more and takes longer to arrive than food grown and purchased locally or regionally. For people facing a famine or other crisis, additional waiting time for a food delivery can be a matter of life or death. A more flexible approach to food aid that includes local and regional purchase uses taxpayer dollars more efficiently and helps local and regional farmers grow their production capacity— which supports the U.S. long-term agricultural development goals.

PROTECT CREATION

➤ **We urge Congress to protect God’s creation**(see *Backgrounder, pg. 4-5*)

Congress should prioritize funding for farm support programs that promote conservation of soil and water and protect creation from environmental degradation.

- Each year since 2010 Congress has voted to cut conservation funding to fund other programs and priorities in the federal budget. These are important programs and should not serve as a piggy bank.
- The *Conservation Stewardship Program* incentivizes conservation activities for farmers and ranchers. This is a very popular, successful program with a long waiting list.
- In September 2012, Congress passed a continuing resolution preventing the *Conservation Stewardship Program* from enrolling any new farmers in the program this year. If funding to the Conservation Stewardship Program is not restored, *more than 9,000 producers will lose the opportunity to work with U.S. Department of Agriculture to conserve and improve soil, water, and wildlife on their land.*