

Farm Bill and Child Nutrition Reauthorization Priorities For New Mexico

In New Mexico, farming and ranching comprise our fourth largest economic sector. However, much of this economy is supported by community-based farms and ranches, many of which are owned by Indigenous peoples and other peoples who have historically been marginalized in the USDA model.



As we struggle to find ways to support farmers and ranchers, and feed our communities, we realize that supporting equity in all policies is central to this work. We appreciate the opportunity to share our recommendations for how the Farm Bill and Child Nutrition Reauthorization can better reflect these needs.

Ensure Equity in All Policies

End Hunger In Our Communities

Increase Access to Farm Programs

Meet the Climate Crisis Head On

Ensure Safety and Dignity for Workers

Protect Farmers and Consumers

HEALTHY FOOD, HEALTHY ECONOMY, HEALTHY FUTURE

The New Mexico Food & Agriculture Policy Council is a statewide body representing farmers and ranchers, food service providers, hunger relief organizations and others who are invested in creating effective and integrated food systems. Working at the local, state and federal levels, we look for solutions to complex problems which allow communities to work together to provide nutritious, local and culturally-appropriate foods and to support our food and farming economies. Equity is at the heart of our approach to this work.

Ensure Equity in All Policies

The 2023 Farm Bill must confront the hard reality of past discrimination in communities that have historically been marginalized. We advocate for **ensuring equity in all policies** as a way to offset this marginalization. Farmers in communities of color, Tribal Nations, and immigrants add immeasurable knowledge and value to our food and farm systems, and are essential to their economic and environmental viability. Equity and justice must be at the center of every facet of the next Farm Bill if we hope to repair historical and ongoing discrimination against these communities and eliminate inequities throughout the food system.

What we can do:

1. Provide **equitable access** to Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) who may have been historically discriminated against or marginalized, to all USDA programs and resources.
2. Provide a **sliding scale approach** to USDA programs such as decreasing required matches depending on applicants' budgets and provide "turnkey" grants (no match required) for program requests less than \$50,000 for one-year requests.
3. Urge **set asides for specific programs** especially in Tribal and underserved communities.
4. Make **funding available within the year** of an approved loan or grant contract.
5. Increase **USDA staff and technical assistance** to meet the needs of all people and communities.
6. Strengthen protocols used in the **determination of minority preferences**.

End Hunger In Our Communities

In New Mexico **one in four families and individuals do not know where their next meal may come from**. To create greater food security, the Farm Bill must protect and strengthen food assistance programs to ensure sufficient resources and access to nutritious food for all people who struggle against hunger and food insecurity, particularly among elder populations. This measure will increase resilience and will give students a greater chance to succeed.

The Farm Bill must **improve nutrition security** through consistent and equitable access to healthy, safe, affordable foods essential to optimal health and well-being for all.

What we can do:

1. Double the **Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program** and make it equitable for all states to apply based on low-income senior eligibility.
2. Increase the **GusNIP "Double Up Food Bucks" Program**, one of the best ways to address food security and provide economic opportunities for farmers. New Mexico has one of the most effective programs in the country.
3. Double funding for the **Healthy Food Financing Initiative** and prioritize underserved, rural and Tribal communities.
4. Double funding for the **Community Food Project Grant Program**.

For the Child Nutrition Reauthorization legislation:

School Nutrition Programs can be a lifeline to food security and nutritious meals.

What we can do:

1. Support **Universal School Meals**. We need higher reimbursement rates to cover all food, staff, and supplies while reducing administrative burdens.
2. **Prioritize culturally significant foods**, for example, alternatives to grains, such as starchy vegetables, corn, potatoes and tubers.
3. Allow **protein alternatives**, with increased funding.
4. Make it easier to have **milk/dairy alternatives**.
5. Increase funding for **equipment**.
6. Prioritize **locally grown preferences**.
7. Fund **nutrition and garden education** in the classroom and on the school grounds.

Increase Access to Farm Programs

What we can do:

1. Increase funding for the **Local Agriculture Marketing Program** including the **Farmers' Market Promotion Program**, **Local Food Promotion Program**, **Value Added Producer Grants** and **Regional Food Systems Program**.
2. Increase funding for **Socially Disadvantaged Farmers, Ranchers, and Veterans Program**.
3. Increase funding for **Farming Opportunities and Technical Outreach**.



Meet the Climate Crisis Head On

The Farm Bill needs to **support solutions to climate change** by investing in research, technical assistance, and financial incentives to enable farmers and ranchers to implement farming and practices that give them the ability to better steward the land, grow food for their communities, and make a living. The goal is to reward farmers and ranchers who implement healthy soil and conservation practices, while also enabling others to make these shifts, and discouraging farming practices that are harmful to the environment and public health.

What we can do:

1. **Double funding for conservation program** such as EQIP, Grasslands Conservation Program, Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), and the Rural Energy Assistance Program (REAP).
2. **Minimize barriers** to these programs while providing more technical assistance.

Ensure Safety and Dignity for Food and Farm Workers

The pandemic revealed the vulnerability of the 20 million food and farm workers who are declared essential to feeding our nation. The Farm Bill must invest substantially in the people who plant, harvest, process, transport, sell, and serve our food, ensuring safety and a living wage, along with access to health care, clean housing, and the right to organize, while providing safe working conditions. New avenues are needed to support the aspirations of farmworkers and people who wish to become farmers, and access to citizenship for workers which does not tie them to exploitative labor practices and systems.

Protect Farmers and Consumers

The Farm Bill can and must build on our efforts to **promote competition** in the food and agriculture sectors. Anti-competitive practices harm small-scale farmers, workers, and consumers, and result in hollowing out rural communities and damaging our environment. The Farm Bill should commit to an anti-competitive food and agriculture marketplace, while increasing long term investments in local and regional food processing and distribution. In this way, the Farm Bill can level the playing field for farmers and offer more and better choices to consumers.

The New Mexico Food & Agriculture Policy Council supports these priorities through our mission and values.

The mission of the New Mexico Food & Agriculture Policy Council is to advocate for food systems that strengthen the food and farm economies in New Mexico, and encourage and advance keeping food grown, raised, and processed in New Mexico, through support, education, and policy. Through our work we strive to enhance the health and wellness of people and communities, and to sustain natural resources.

A just, equitable, and sustainable food system is one that provides physical, economic and community health; regenerates, protects, and respects natural resources and animals; and ensures that all people live with dignity and freedom from oppression and exploitation.

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