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# GROWING HEALTHY FOOD AND FARM POLICY:

The Impact of Farm Bill Policies on Public Health

A Special Report from the Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future



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# Executive Summary

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This report provides an examination and analysis of eighteen selected policies in the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (the 2008 U.S. Farm Bill). For each policy, we provide background information and summaries of lessons learned in coalition building, advocacy, and policy implementation. Our goal is to provide critical information to assist in navigating the 2012/2013 Farm Bill process, both for food system and public health advocates working to preserve and promote Farm Bill policy progress, and for those interested in health and food system policy more generally. The descriptions of program implementation may be particularly useful for Congressional members and staff. While the report offers an analysis of the overall lessons from the policies examined, each policy section is also designed to be able to serve as a standalone document.

A growing number of policymakers and public health professionals have come to recognize and understand the relationships among agricultural policy, our food system and the public's health; and yet, severe federal budget constraints and a contentious political climate now threaten to undermine the progress of policies that reflect these relationships. In recent years, several advocacy organizations have successfully engaged in the complex, and often contentious, conversations surrounding the U.S. Farm Bill, and their work has helped bring about initial reforms that can help protect the public's health and move us toward a more resilient and sustainable food system for the nation.

The 2008 U.S. Farm Bill included the successful enactment and expansion of a number of policies and programs that support both the public's health *and* farmers. Under less limiting federal budget constraints, it would be reasonable to expect the 2012/2013 Farm Bill to continue in this direction. However, today's budget challenges now threaten the funding levels and continuance of several of the 2008 Farm Bill's more positive achievements. Because these achievements now appear to be vulnerable in the face of likely budget cuts, the public health community must play an even stronger role in championing and advocating for the protection of Farm Bill policy progress made to date.

The specific Farm Bill policies included in this report were selected because they were either part of a package of provisions supported by an ad hoc public health coalition for the 2008 Farm Bill, or are illustrative of policies (and types of policies) determined to be important for the public health community in upcoming debates and negotiations surrounding the next Farm Bill. The selected policies are not intended to be comprehensive and do not include all policies that may have important public health impacts; for example, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), and commodity subsidies were excluded. While such policies are important and of interest to many, the scope of the report required focusing on illustrative/representative policies rather than an examination all policies that fit the criteria above.

The 18 Farm Bill policies addressed in this report are presented below:

## *Provision of Healthy Foods*

- Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program
- Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program
- Farmers' Market Electronic Benefits Transfer Program

## *Local and Regional Food Systems*

- Local Preference for School Food Purchases
- Healthy Urban Food Enterprise Development
- Local Foods Set-aside in the Rural Business and Industries Loan and Loan Guarantee Program
- Community Food Projects

## *Production Practices*

- Environmental Quality Incentives Program
- EQIP Organic Initiative
- Specialty Crop Block Grants
- Environmental Services Markets

## *Research*

- Pilot Projects to Evaluate Health and Nutrition Promotion in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
- Agriculture and Food Research Initiative
- The Food Desert Study
- Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education
- Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative
- Organic Production and Market Data Initiatives

## *Education*

- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Nutrition Education

For each policy, a team of researchers conducted background research to identify relevant language in the 2008 Farm Bill, U.S. Code references, policy descriptions and funding information, and then interviewed at least one advocate who worked directly on the policy in the 2008 Farm Bill and the lead staff person responsible for implementation of the policy at the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

While each policy examined in the report offers its own unique lessons for advocates to consider as the deliberations for next Farm Bill approach, a number of overarching lessons for policy advocacy and implementation were clear:

## *Advocacy*

### *1. Look for No-Cost and Low-Cost Policy Solutions*

With federal budget constraints increasingly limiting the feasibility of establishing new programs and expenditures, no-cost and low-cost policies are appealing options for accomplishing reforms. Already facing a tight budget, the 2008 Farm Bill saw a number of these policies established. In certain instances it can also be possible to establish set-asides for desired activities within pre-existing programs. In short, looking to achieve public health objectives through amending current policies may be a promising alternative given current budget constraints.

### *2. Consider Pilot Programs*

Pilot programs were notable in the 2008 Farm Bill; both in the further expansion of programs that once began as pilots, and in the creation of new pilot programs. While clearly less comprehensive than full-scale programs, pilot programs require less financial and political capital for passage and implementation. Pilot projects may be a realistic goal for many new program ideas on their way to full implementation in future Farm Bills.

### *3. Consider Other Pieces of Legislation*

An important element to the successful passage of a policy is knowing which piece of legislation it is best attached to. While the Farm Bill is the right setting for many policies, it can be valuable to consider other pieces of legislation. Advocates should consider the nature of the Farm Bill, as well as other large pieces of federal legislation, in determining their policy goals.

### *4. Be Mindful of Urban-Rural Dynamics*

Understanding the complex and changing urban-rural dynamics of the Farm Bill proved critical to the creation of several 2008 Farm Bill policies. Issues of jurisdiction, as well as views among some in the rural development community that food systems are primarily the concern of those in urban areas, can serve as barriers to successful policy enactment. Advocates should be mindful of urban-rural dynamics as they engage with the next Farm Bill, seeking to balance efforts to bridge the rural-urban divide with the practical reality that doing so may be challenging in the short term, but has the potential to benefit both constituencies into the future.

### *5. Evidence and Data can be Critical*

High quality research documenting the need for a policy, as well as potential policy impacts, was critical to several legislative successes in, and after, the 2008 Farm Bill. The next and future Farm Bills represent an opportunity to both build further on current research to justify new policy needs, and to commission new research on public health priorities, either as standalone research and pilot programs or by pushing for a greater focus on the public health aspects of agriculture and food systems in larger Farm Bill research programs.

### *6. Identify Congressional Champions*

In the 2008 Farm Bill, champions from the Senate and House Agriculture Committees, as well as Congressional leadership, played a key role in the passage of public health focused policies. The tighter the funding for the Farm Bill, the fewer issues each committee member will be able to win for their constituents and the more important it becomes to have champions engaged early in the legislative

process. Champions are most likely to be found among members who are vested in a particular issue or those who have constituents engaged with the issue in question.

#### 7. *Establish Clear Parameters for Coalitions*

Several of the policies addressed here are supported by a broad range of interests, from public health and anti-hunger advocates to producer groups and corporate interests. While cross-sector coalitions are important to legislative success, the 2008 Farm Bill highlighted a number of instances where advocates and lobbyists supporting the same policy had clearly different visions of the specific details of the policy. Establishing in advance the extent to which compromises are willing to be made, and which policy elements are non-negotiable, can help advocates navigate the important coalition building process.

### *Implementation*

#### 1. *Work with Lead USDA and State Implementers*

Many of the 2008 Farm Bill policies addressed here left a great deal of discretion to the USDA and state and local implementing agencies. These instances represent opportunities for advocates to continue their efforts and relationships with the USDA and state and local agencies to ensure implementation choices that are desirable from a public health perspective.

#### 2. *Be Prepared for Implementation Challenges*

There were a number of challenges faced in the implementation of the 18 policies addressed here. Both the “siloed” nature of traditional USDA operations and the USDA’s continued prioritization of conventional agriculture over more sustainable practices have posed challenges. These types of challenges suggest that advocates need to be prepared to actively encourage full implementation of policies.

#### 3. *Contractors Can Help the Implementation Process*

A number of 2008 Farm Bill programs made successful use of an external contractor to administer grants and provide technical assistance. Given the USDA’s relative lack of experience with some of the newer programs authorized by the Farm Bill, contractors who are already familiar with a particular field can be valuable partners for the USDA as it transitions into work on these issues. While several USDA divisions are stepping up to these new challenges, advocates may wish to encourage the use of external contractors where implementation appears to be posing more of a challenge.

While budget constraints and the current political climate all point towards a highly challenging 2012/2013 Farm Bill process, there is still great opportunity, and great need, for the full range of public health communities and its allies to fight for a greater focus on food systems and health outcomes in the Farm Bill. All of the 18 policies mentioned in this report are likely to be challenged on the basis of pressure to cut budgets in both the Senate and the House. As a result, there will need to be agreement on which policies are critical to protect, in addition to expanded coalitions with partners in other sectors. It is hoped that the policies and lessons highlighted in this report will assist advocates in defending, streamlining, and perhaps expanding efforts that strive for a healthier and more sustainable food system.



# Introduction

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For most Americans, food production is something that happens elsewhere, off the radar—out of sight, out of mind. And yet our health is closely tied to food production and all elements of the greater food system.

At the federal level, food and agricultural policies have tremendous influence on *what* food is produced, *how* our food is produced, *who* produces it, *where* it's produced, and the ways in which we access and are encouraged to consume it. Unfortunately, many in the public health community have traditionally not fully recognized the impact of these policies on our health. This is changing, however; the public health community, policymakers, and advocacy groups are increasingly recognizing the connections among health, agricultural policy and the food system. The “food system” is defined as the processes involved in food's journey from farm to table, and, ultimately, to disposal. This definition includes producing, processing, distributing, preparing, marketing, accessing, consuming and disposing of food. Food systems weave a huge tapestry: people, farms, communities, businesses, interventions, policies and politics.

This report examines and analyzes 18 selected policies in the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (the 2008 U.S. Farm Bill). It can serve as a guide for those who have an interest in food systems policies with public health impacts, specifically those policies enacted through U.S. “Farm Bills.” The report is designed to offer readers relevant background information and context, and to illustrate some key lessons learned in coalition building, advocacy and policy implementation from the 2008 Farm Bill. It is hoped that it can be used to help inform strategies for the upcoming Farm Bill, which is slated for 2012 or 2013.

We selected the 18 policies either because they were part of a package of provisions supported by an ad hoc public health coalition for the 2008 Farm Bill or because they represent areas considered to be of particular importance for the public health community going forward. Several of the selected policies examined are part of a newer generation of health-related initiatives that emerged in recent Farm Bills. Other policies reflect aspects of the Farm Bill that traditionally may not have been associated with health, but are associated with important public health implications, such as the creation of environmental services markets. In narrowing the list of policies included in this report, some were selected because they represent a broad domain of effort; in others, a policy was included as a representative of a potentially useful advocacy strategy.

Overall, our goal is to provide critical information to assist in navigating the 2012/2013 Farm Bill process, both for food system and public health advocates working to preserve and promote Farm Bill policy progress, and for those interested in health and food system policy more generally. The report can also help further educate the public health community, which is comprised of a diverse set of professionals, organizations and government agencies seeking to prevent disease, promote good health and address disparities at the community and population levels, on these pressing issues. Further, the report's descriptions of program implementation may be particularly useful for Congressional members and staff. While the report offers an analysis of the overall lessons from the policies examined, each policy section is also designed to be able to serve as a standalone document.

The report does not include all policies that can be considered important to the public health community, such as farm commodity support programs, the main Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), or the Conservation Stewardship Program. Additionally, with the exception of one policy with mixed implications for public health, the report does not address Farm Bill policies that could have negative effects on the public's nutritional or environmental health, such as policies that contribute to high production of commodity grains. While there are lessons to be learned from all of these policies, the scope of the report required a focus on illustrative/representative policies rather than an examination of all policies that fit the criteria above.

For a more comprehensive list of 2008 Farm Bill policies that hold relevance to health, visit the Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future's Farm Bill Budget Visualizer (<http://www.jhsph.edu/clf/programs/visualizer/>), which offers a comprehensive and interactive view of health-related elements of the 2008 Farm Bill.

## Report Structure

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Each of the 18 policies is presented separately and includes the following sections: 1) a description, 2) funding amounts, 3) a summary of advocacy work undertaken to promote the policy, 4) an overview of implementation efforts, and 5) a brief analysis. The overviews of these policies are formatted for quick accessibility and basic understanding. This report is neither intended to provide a comprehensive policy analysis nor an extensive literature review. The report concludes with a summary of lessons learned during the development of the 2008 Farm Bill that can inform work on the next Farm Bill.

The policies presented here, along with others of which they are representative, set the potential groundwork for a package of public health-related provisions and reforms that begin to reframe food and farm policy in a way that supports both the public's health *and* farmers. The following policies are presented and reviewed in the report as illustrative examples of such provisions:

### *Provision of Healthy Foods*

- Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program \*
- Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program \*
- Farmers' Market Electronic Benefits Transfer Program \*

### *Local and Regional Food Systems*

- Local Preference for School Food Purchases \*
- Healthy Urban Food Enterprise Development \*
- Local Foods Set-aside in the Rural Business and Industries Loan and Loan Guarantee Program \*
- Community Food Projects \*

### *Production Practices*

- Environmental Quality Incentives Program
- EQIP Organic Initiative
- Specialty Crop Block Grants
- Environmental Services Markets

### *Research*

- Pilot Projects to Evaluate Health and Nutrition Promotion in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
- Agriculture and Food Research Initiative
- The Food Desert Study \*
- Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education
- Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative
- Organic Production and Market Data Initiatives

### *Education*

- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Nutrition Education

\*Policies from the *Healthy Food Provisions* package.

Eight policies reviewed for this report were part of a package of provisions that an ad hoc Working Group successfully supported for the 2008 Farm Bill. These policies are identified with asterisks above. This package of public health policies, called the *Healthy Foods Provisions*, became the basis for common messaging and advocacy by a number of public health organizations and partners from agriculture, anti-hunger, agriculture, and food system sectors. All of the policies from this package were included in the 2008 Farm Bill and all have been partially or completely implemented.

The ad hoc coalition of groups that collaborated around these policies was managed by the Community Food Security Coalition (CFSC) with key support from the Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future (CLF) and important contributions from colleagues at other organizations (see Appendix B for a list of the organizations involved). More than 60 Congressional visits were conducted by a group representing health, sustainable farming, specialty crop, and nutrition communities.

## Report Methodology

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The research team was comprised of Susan Roberts, Esq., MS, RD and Thomas Forster, both food systems experts and participants in the 2008 Farm Bill process; Linnea Laestadius, MPP, doctoral candidate and research assistant at the Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future (CLF); and Becca Klein, MS, Public Health & Agriculture Policy Project Director the CLF, Roni Neff, PhD, Research and Policy Director. After initial identification of the 18 policies to be included in the report (as described above), the team conducted background research on each of the selected policies by identifying relevant language in the 2008 Farm Bill and U.S. Code references. Further information on policy descriptions and funding was drawn from USDA budget documents, program reports, and websites, as well as advocacy group reports and websites. The template used for information gathering for each policy is provided in Appendix C.

To gather additional information, the team interviewed at least one non-governmental advocate who worked directly on promoting each of the selected policies in the 2008 Farm Bill. Advocates selected for interviews were still actively involved in advocacy work and planned to continue to be so in the future. The lead staff person responsible for implementation of the policy at the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) was also interviewed. A few advocates were active in supporting more than one policy, but no advocate was interviewed for more than two policies. USDA staff members were each interviewed for only one policy. During the data gathering stage, 20 policy advocates, 18 lead USDA staff members and five additional Congressional and USDA staff members were interviewed by phone or in person. The questions asked in these interviews are provided in Appendix D. To facilitate open communication, interviewees were assured of the confidentiality of their comments and are therefore not identified in this report.

Information gathered for each policy was synthesized into individual policy sections, which were then subject to an extensive review and editing process to ensure factual accuracy and conciseness. Upon completion of the individual policy sections, the policies were reviewed collectively to determine overarching lessons present across all 18 policies for both advocacy and implementation.

## Budgetary Environment

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It is important to consider the current budgetary context when reviewing the policy summaries of this report and to note that some programs are in danger of being eliminated both because of these budgetary pressures and the way in which their funding was implemented in the previous Farm Bill. There are two types of funding for legislation: mandatory and discretionary. Mandatory funding means that the legislation—in this case the Farm Bill—mandated that a particular program get a certain amount of money each year of the legislation without needing to have funds allocated year by year via the House and/or Senate Appropriations Committee. Programs that do not have funding allocated by the legislation are called discretionary programs and require an annual process in which the Appropriations Committee decides how much money each of these programs will receive<sup>1</sup>.

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) determines how much money will be available to write each Farm Bill by making budget projections based on programs that had mandatory funding during the last year of the current legislation. These prior spending levels, when combined, establish the total “baseline” amount of money available for the next Farm Bill. Any funds that are needed beyond the identified baseline must be identified from other sources (i.e. cutting funds from another program, adding fees or raising taxes).

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<sup>1</sup> Programs with discretionary funding also require significant advocacy, but this is always the case with such programs, as such, they are not highlighted separately here.



In general, mandatory programs are expected to continue at least at that level when the legislation is reauthorized, unless one of three things happens—either 1) there is no mandatory funding allocated for the last year of the program’s authorization; 2) the baseline in the last year of the program is less than fifty million dollars; or 3) the program does not have a baseline beyond the last year of the current Farm Bill because when the Farm Bill was written the Congressional Budget Committees wanted to keep the ten year cost of the legislation down.<sup>2</sup> Congress sometimes takes this third action to reduce the overall cost of the Farm Bill, because the CBO estimates the legislation’s cost over time based on its projected ten-year cost. Whether for reason one, two, or three, the baseline for a total of 37 of the 2008 Farm Bill programs will not continue after FY2012. This means that policymakers need to identify other funds (offsets) to pay for the zero-baseline programs they want to continue. Without significant advocacy efforts, these 37 programs will likely be eliminated from the next Farm Bill. Five of the 18 policies in this report fall into this category and are noted as such in the following section.

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<sup>2</sup> Congressional Research Service, “Previewing the Next Farm Bill: Unfunded and Early-Expiring Provisions.” December 2010. Accessed August 24, 2011. <http://www.nationalaglawcenter.org/assets/crs/R41433.pdf>

# Provision of Healthy Foods

## Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program<sup>3</sup>

### *Policy Description<sup>4</sup>*

First established as part of the 2002 Farm Bill, the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP) awards grants to states, U.S. territories, and federally recognized Indian tribal governments to provide low-income seniors with coupons that can be exchanged for eligible foods (fruits, vegetables, honey, and fresh-cut herbs) at farmers' markets, roadside stands, and community supported agriculture programs. The majority of the grant funds must be used to support the costs of the foods that are provided under the SFMNP. State agencies may use up to 10 percent of their grants to support administrative costs for the program.

### *Funding – Mandatory*

2009	2010	2011	2012
\$21 Million	\$21 Million	\$21 Million	\$21 Million

Because this program is under \$50 million it will not be included in the baseline for the next Farm Bill.

### *Policy Advocacy*

The SFMNP was initially created as a pilot program in 2001, and subsequently became a permanent program in the 2002 Farm Bill. The National Association of Farmers' Markets Nutrition Programs (NAFMNP) was the lead advocate for this policy in the 2008 Farm Bill debate. They conducted a survey of states regarding demand for program expansion and based their request for funding on that need. Informed by the survey results, the Senate developed its version of the Farm Bill to include \$20 million per year, rising to \$60 million a year. This represented an increase in funding from the 2002 Farm Bill and was accomplished in part due to support from the Agricultural Committee chair, Senator Harkin (D-IA), whose state has a large senior population and who has shown great interest in SFMNP. The final version of the 2008 Farm Bill, however, included \$21 million per year in mandatory funding for the program, given limited resources and competing needs.

### *Policy Implementation<sup>5</sup>*

State agencies receive federal funding to operate the SFMNP within their state. On the whole, these programs have been successfully implemented, according to the advocate interviewed for this report. The coupons are provided by agencies that provide congregate meals for seniors, and as such, the agencies also have direct communication outlets to inform seniors about the programs. Programs are administered by state agencies such as Departments of Agriculture or Aging. Accordingly, the relationships and coordination between the state level departments and distribution sites are key to the program's success. The federal government decides how much money each state receives and the states decide how much money is allotted to each senior depending on the number they choose to serve. Benefit dollar amounts vary by state. Nationwide, seniors receive \$15-\$50 each, with an average allotment of \$31. It is estimated that in 2010, 844,999 seniors used the program and 20,106 farmers had sales due to SFMNP.<sup>6</sup> In FY2011, a total of \$22,226,755 was actually allocated to states for the program.<sup>7</sup> Seniors who are at least 60 years of age and who have household incomes of not more than 185% of the federal poverty income guidelines are eligible for the SFMNP. Due to funding limitations, coupons are generally issued on a first come, first serve basis or based on a random selection of applicants.

<sup>3</sup> 7 USC Sec. 3007; P.L. 110-246 Sec. 4231.

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture. Food and Nutrition Service. "Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program." June 2011. Accessed August 9, 2011. <http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/SeniorFMNP/SFMNPmenu.htm>.

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture. Food and Nutrition Service. "SFMNP Grant Levels 2006-2011." July 2011. Accessed August 9, 2011. <http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/seniorfmnp/SFMNPgrantlevels.htm>.

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture. Food and Nutrition Service. SFMNP Profile - FY2010. June 2011. Accessed August 9, 2011. <http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/seniorfmnp/SFMNPFY2010Profile.htm>.

<sup>7</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture. Food and Nutrition Service. "SFMNP Grant Levels 2006-2011." July 2011. Accessed August 9, 2011. <http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/seniorfmnp/SFMNPgrantlevels.htm>.

### *Analysis*

The SFMNP, as well as a similar Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) targeted to WIC recipients, is an example of a program that directly benefits both low-income consumers in underserved markets and underserved farmers (including small-scale and specialty crop growers). These programs have helped fuel the growth of farmers' markets, especially in low-income areas and in food deserts. The vibrant success of the FMNPs in some states helped secure the inclusion of farmers' markets as approved WIC vendors when the new WIC standards were adopted in 2009. The pressure to simplify and streamline programs may result in some amalgamation in future Farm Bills of the FMNP, SNAP, and WIC electronic benefit transfer (EBT) programs. The question will be whether the smaller farms and low-income consumers will continue to benefit if elements of the programs are combined, as the FMNPs have been especially beneficial to small scale producers. The success of FMNPs is the basis for arguing for the expansion of similar incentives to use SNAP and other nutrition dollars for the purchase of fruits, vegetables and minimally processed foods. These programs have a direct impact on the health of many consumers at nutritional risk by giving them greater access to sources of fresh foods. However, it is clear that the SFMNP could serve substantially more needy seniors should additional funding become available.

# Provision of Healthy Foods

## Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program<sup>8</sup>

### *Policy Description<sup>9</sup>*

The Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP) makes fruit and vegetable snacks available at no cost to all children in participating elementary schools. An early evaluation of the program indicated that participating students both expressed a greater willingness to try new fruits and vegetables and consumed more of the fruits and vegetables offered with school meals.<sup>10</sup> The 2008 Farm Bill made the FFVP a permanent program and expanded it to cover select schools in all 50 states plus U.S territories. Funds are targeted to schools in which at least 50 percent of students are eligible to receive free or reduced-price school meals. The funding formula gives each state 1% of the total funding. The remaining funds are then divided between states based on population size.

### *Funding - Mandatory<sup>11</sup>*

2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
\$40 MILLION (FARM BILL) +  \$9.9 MILLION (APPROPRIATIONS BILL)	\$65 MILLION (+ \$8 MILLION)	\$101 MILLION (+ \$9.8 MILLION)	\$150 MILLION (+\$8.5 MILLION)	\$150 MILLION, ADJUSTED FOR CPI

Note: Amount listed each year represents the funds made available to the program, the amount in parentheses indicates additional funding that was not spent from the previous school year and was reallocated by the USDA.

### *Policy Advocacy*

The FFVP was introduced as a pilot project in 2002 Farm Bill by Senator Harkin (D-IA), a champion of many nutrition programs. Lobbyists representing fruit and vegetable producer interests and advocates from the public health community immediately became involved in supporting the legislation and in assisting the USDA with implementation, including setting up conference calls for schools and hosting an initial national conference. At the national conference, school representatives shared emotional stories of the program's impacts in their schools, which helped increase support from the USDA for the program. In 2007, Representative DeLauro (D-CT), as chair of the House Agricultural Appropriations Sub-committee and another champion for feeding children well, helped appropriate dollars so that every state received funding. The next year, the 2008 Farm Bill legislated structured funding so that each state could have at least 25 schools funded and could grow the number of schools participating incrementally in order to ensure more success. There was strong—and successful—lobbying from fresh produce groups to keep the program focused on only fresh fruits and vegetables despite pressure from canned-produce and tree nut producer groups to be included in the program. Many public health advocates preferred keeping the FFVP limited to fresh produce, and the alliance that the public health community had built with the fresh produce group, United Fresh, further encouraged public health advocates to support this position. Initially, there was also resistance to the program from some members of the anti-hunger community because of concerns it would negatively impact essential programs like SNAP.

<sup>8</sup> 42 USC Sec. 1769a; P.L. 110-246 Sec. 4304

<sup>9</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture. Economic Research Service. "Child Nutrition Programs: USDA Fruit and Vegetable Program." June 2010. Accessed August 9, 2011. <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Briefing/childnutrition/fruitandvegetablepilot.htm>.

<sup>10</sup> Buzby, J., J. Guthrie, and L. Kantor. Evaluation of the USDA Fruit and Vegetable Pilot Program: Report to Congress. U.S. Department of Agriculture. Economic Research Service. May 2003. Accessed August 9, 2011. <http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/efan03006/efan03006.pdf>.

<sup>11</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture. Food and Nutrition Service. "Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program – Program Policy." April 2011. Accessed August 9, 2011. <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/ffvp/policy.htm>.

### Policy Implementation

The USDA has implemented this program primarily through memos sent to the states. The Farm Bill legislation contains the funding formula that the USDA uses to determine the dollar allotment to each state. Each state then determines which specific schools receive support for the program, based on whether the school meets the specified percentage of low-income students and the merits of the school's application. States can interpret the definition of "low-income," resulting in differences in program eligibility by state (a guidance memo from the USDA would address these inconsistencies). Participating schools are required to provide each student with \$50 to \$75 worth of fresh produce each school year. Currently, states are prohibited from requiring that schools purchase local produce, although schools may choose to do so.<sup>12</sup> The USDA has developed a tool kit for providers and encourages schools to share information. An initial qualitative evaluation of the 2002 Farm Bill FFVP pilot was positive.<sup>13</sup> A detailed evaluation contracted to Abt Associates was published in September of 2011 and found that the program statistically significantly increased average fruit and vegetable consumption by students in participating schools. The increase was about one-quarter of a cup per day—14.6 percent more than students at schools without the program. The evaluation also found that the total calorie intake did not increase, thus alleviating any concerns that the program could contribute to weight gain.<sup>14</sup>

### Analysis

Expanding the funding to all states through the appropriations process prior to the 2008 Farm Bill paved the way for additional increases in funding for the program in the 2008 Farm Bill. The scale of the expansion was great and larger than that of other public health measures in the Farm Bill, with 2011 funding having grown to \$150 million from less than \$10 million in 2007.<sup>15</sup> Some advocates would like to see improvement in how states promote local or regional procurement and in how determinations are made regarding which schools are allowed to participate in the program. Additional funding would increase the number of schools that are able to participate in the program. It has been valuable to have public health advocates working to educate Congress and the USDA on the health benefits of this policy. The USDA became interested in expanding the program when it was reported that students in the program were buying less snack food and fewer sodas from vending machines and were asking parents to buy more fruits and vegetables at home. Even before the recent evaluation by Abt Associates, the program was generally considered to be quite successful and the recent findings serve to bolster that understanding. However, it will take a focused effort to ensure it remains in the Farm Bill, especially because Senator Harkin, who championed the program, is no longer Chairman of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry. It should also be noted that the coalition of fresh produce producers and public health advocates who joined in support of this program has a structural tension, which held together in the 2008 Farm Bill debates because each group had its own reasons for wanting to see a dollar increase in the FFVP. Producers have an interest in selling product, whereas the public health community has an interest in protecting health. This alliance between producers and public health interests needs continued development and nurturing to ensure the continued success of the FFVP in future Farm Bills.

<sup>12</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture. Food and Nutrition Service. *Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program: Handbook for Schools*. December 2010. Accessed August 9, 2011. <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/ffvp/handbook.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> Buzby, J., J. Guthrie, and L. Kantor. *Evaluation of the USDA Fruit and Vegetable Pilot Program: Report to Congress*. U.S. Department of Agriculture. Economic Research Service. May 2003. Accessed August 9, 2011. <http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/efan03006/efan03006.pdf>.

<sup>14</sup> Olsho, L., J. Klerman, and S. Bartlett. *Food and Nutrition Service Evaluation of the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP): Interim Evaluation Report*. September 2011. Accessed November 18, 2011. <http://www.fns.usda.gov/ora/MENU/Published/CNP/FILES/FFVPInterim.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture. Food and Nutrition Service. *Interim Report on the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program Fiscal Year 2007*. n.d. Accessed October 26, 2011. [http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/ffvp/FFVP\\_07Report.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/ffvp/FFVP_07Report.pdf).



# Provision of Healthy Foods

## Farmers' Market Electronic Benefits Transfer Program<sup>16</sup>

### Policy Description<sup>17</sup>

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is an essential part of the country's social safety net that mitigates food insecurity for millions of Americans. Over the past decade, all states have converted from paper "food stamps" to Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT), an electronic debit card system, for SNAP purchases in food stores. Unfortunately, the EBT system can exclude farmers' markets from the SNAP program if market vendors do not have EBT terminals. SNAP recipients are then unable to use their benefits to purchase fresh foods at farmers' markets. Such purchases could increase consumption of health-promoting fruits and vegetables. Farmers' markets can be authorized by the USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) to be SNAP agents. Markets that have the potential to conduct \$100 or more in SNAP business per month are eligible for free Point of Sale (POS) devices from the USDA for SNAP EBT transactions. However, these devices require electricity and a telephone line, neither of which are readily available at most farmers' markets. A market can also choose to purchase or lease a commercial wireless EBT device that is more suited to an outdoor market. Finding the funds to pay for these devices has proven challenging for many markets.

The 2008 Farm Bill instructed the USDA to provide grants to farmers' markets for wireless EBT devices when it became apparent that markets needed help obtaining these devices. Language in the 2008 Farm Bill states that a minimum of 10% of total funds appropriated for the Farmers' Market Promotion Program (FMPP) are to be used for grants to support EBT for federal nutrition programs at farmers' markets. Pilot tests have shown that wireless EBT technology is effective in capturing SNAP sales that would otherwise not have been possible at farmers' markets. Additionally, the devices can be useful for research and marketing purposes, as well as enabling the use of credit cards, which may increase overall revenue for farmers' markets.

**Funding - Mandatory<sup>18</sup>** The chart below indicates the funding levels for the FMPP as a whole, of which not less than 10% must be to support EBT. Because this is less than \$50 Million, the FMPP does not have a baseline for the next Farm Bill.

2009	2010	2011	2012
\$5 MILLION	\$5 MILLION	\$10 MILLION	\$10 MILLION

### Advocacy

The Farmers' Market Coalition was a key advocate in working to support specific funding for EBT at farmers' markets. Senator Harkin (D-IA), as the chair of the Senate Agriculture Committee, and Senate Agriculture Committee staff were also champions and included the language in the Senate bill. Additionally, State Departments of Agriculture weighed in on this issue from Northeastern and Midwestern states.

### Implementation

The FNS (which administers SNAP) and the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) (which administers the FMPP) have worked together to implement this program. Implementation of grant-making falls in the hands of AMS because funding flows through the FMPP. FNS has worked to streamline the rules for farmers' markets while collaborating with AMS. In 2010, the USDA used 30% of the Farmers' Market Promotion Program (FMPP)

<sup>16</sup> 7 USC Sec. 3005; P.L. 110-246 Sec 10106.

<sup>17</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture. Food and Nutrition Service. "Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – Get EBT Equipment." August, 2011. Accessed August 14, 2011. [http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/ebt/fm-scrip-EBT\\_Equipment.htm](http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/ebt/fm-scrip-EBT_Equipment.htm); U.S. Department of Agriculture. Agricultural Marketing Service. "Farmers Market Promotion Program (FMPP)." June, 2011. Accessed August 14, 2011. <http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/FMPP>.

<sup>18</sup> P.L. 110-246 Sec 10106.

funds to fund new EBT projects at farmers' markets, when only a minimum of 10% was required.<sup>19</sup> However, few farmers' markets have been able to benefit given the relatively small amount of funds available for the program overall. Out of 81 FMPP grants administered in 2010, 27 went to equip new farmers' markets with EBT technology and 9 went to existing projects. Since 2006, only about 15% of total FMPP applications have been able to be funded.<sup>20</sup> The Secretary of Agriculture has noted, "FMPP funds alone are insufficient to equip all farmers' markets [with EBT]."<sup>21</sup> Despite funding barriers, the program is generally considered a success.

### *Analysis*

This program is operating largely as intended. However, the majority of the implementation is carried out by AMS, while the policy, in actuality, assists an FNS program. This is a burden for AMS given that the entire FMPP is administered by only six individuals, and this program is designed to benefit nutrition while AMS' mission is marketing.<sup>22</sup> Consideration should be given to language in the 2012 Farm Bill that would put the responsibility for implementation on FNS and the states, rather than AMS. Segregating the EBT-machine-purchasing program from the larger FMPP program in this way would mean that 100% of AMS FMPP efforts could be used for building capacity of farmers' markets. Advocates generally support this idea as many markets could benefit from capacity-building assistance. Additionally, funding represents a continued constraint. Advocates continue to work to increase the program's coverage to all farmers' markets. One potential solution would be to amend the requirement that states provide EBT POS machines to eligible stores to also require wireless EBT devices for farmers' markets, although it should be noted that this would pose a significant financial challenge for many states. The Obama administration has requested \$4 million for FY2012 to provide additional EBT devices for farmers' markets;<sup>23</sup> however, these funds are seen as unlikely to be appropriated given current budget constraints.

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<sup>19</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture. Agricultural Marketing Service. "USDA Announces Grants for Farmers Market Promotion Program to Expand Consumer Access to Food, Promote New Income Opportunities for Producers." News Release. October 14, 2010. Accessed August 14, 2011. <http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?contentidonly=true&contentid=2010/10/0525.xml>.

<sup>20</sup> Briggs, S., et al. "Real Food, Real Choices. Connecting SNAP Recipients with Farmers Markets." Community Food Security Coalition. Farmers Market Coalition. June 2010. Accessed August 14, 2011. [http://www.foodsecurity.org/pub/RealFoodRealChoice\\_SNAP\\_FarmersMarkets.pdf](http://www.foodsecurity.org/pub/RealFoodRealChoice_SNAP_FarmersMarkets.pdf).

<sup>21</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture. Food and Nutrition Service. "Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. Feasibility of Implementing Electronic Benefit Transfer System in Farmers' Markets." June 2010. Accessed August 14, 2011. <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/ebt/pdfs/Kohl--Feasibility.pdf>.

<sup>22</sup> Briggs, S., et al. "Real Food, Real Choices. Connecting SNAP Recipients with Farmers Markets." Community Food Security Coalition. Farmers Market Coalition. June 2010. Accessed August 14, 2011. [http://www.foodsecurity.org/pub/RealFoodRealChoice\\_SNAP\\_FarmersMarkets.pdf](http://www.foodsecurity.org/pub/RealFoodRealChoice_SNAP_FarmersMarkets.pdf).

<sup>23</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture. Food and Nutrition Service. "Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. Feasibility of Implementing Electronic Benefit Transfer System in Farmers' Markets." June 2010. Accessed August 14, 2011. <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/ebt/pdfs/Kohl--Feasibility.pdf>.

# Local and Regional Food Systems

## Local Preference for School Food Purchases<sup>24</sup>

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### *Policy Description*

This policy allows institutions funded through Federal Child Nutrition Programs, such as school food authorities, state agencies, child care institutions, and Summer Food Service Program sponsors, to establish purchasing preferences so they can procure locally produced dairy, fruits, vegetables, and meats for children's meals. The criteria regarding which foods can receive geographic preferences is determined by USDA. The definition of what is "local" is left to the institution's discretion. While the area in which a food is produced bears no direct relationship to public health, this provision may advance public health goals, in that more flexible procurement of minimally processed and whole foods can support nutritional health, reduce emissions and other pollutants that come from processing and transporting food long-distances, and also support the economic health of the region, which can indirectly benefit human health.

### *Funding – No-Cost Policy Change*

### *Policy Advocacy*

Members on and off the Agriculture Committees in both the House and Senate championed "geographic preference". It appealed to both urban and rural constituencies as both a step in the direction of better nutrition for children, and as an avenue to provide increased market opportunities for farmers. The policy was included in the 2002 Farm Bill Manager's Amendment, but addressed only the National School Lunch Program. In 2008 the program received broad bipartisan support because it was seen as a win-win for both farmers and children, and because it was a no-cost provision. A legal review was conducted during the advocacy process and helped eliminate opposition based on legal grounds. Accordingly, the provisions were expanded to all of the Child Nutrition Programs. Geographic preference was included in both House and Senate versions of the 2008 Farm Bill. USDA initially opposed the change on the basis that the program would result in excessive administrative and trade barriers, but advocates working with Congress successfully countered these claims.

### *Policy Implementation*

USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) implemented this policy with issuance of administrative guidance and a draft rule.<sup>25</sup> This guidance comes much closer to meeting the demand by schools and communities for flexibility and local decision-making around how and when to procure whole and minimally processed foods from local or regional producers. USDA officials in the Obama administration have interpreted this statutory change from the past two Farm Bills more liberally than past administrations, paving the way for a substantial increase in the volume of local/regional food products in the school food supply chain. Due in part to pressure from advocates, the USDA established a Farm to School (F2S) Tactical Team in 2010, jointly led by the FNS and the AMS, to aid schools in accessing local markets, enable food producers to effectively service their local schools, and facilitate stakeholder communication.<sup>26</sup> It is still too early for a comprehensive evaluation of the new USDA approach and the work of the F2S Tactical Team, though it is promising that they have made an effort to understand the farm-to-school experience, including visits to school districts around the U.S. There is an independent evaluation underway by School Food FOCUS and the National Farm to School Network. The USDA's F2S Tactical Team will be an important component in the success of the program, since coordination and clarity "on the ground" for implementing the program have been lacking in some cases.

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<sup>24</sup> 7 U.S.C. Sec. 1758; P.L. 110-246 Sec 4302.

<sup>25</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture. Food and Nutrition Service. "Procurement Geographic Preference Q&As." Memo. February 1, 2011. Accessed August 14, 2011. [http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Governance/Policy-Memos/2011/SP18-2011\\_os.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Governance/Policy-Memos/2011/SP18-2011_os.pdf).

<sup>26</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture. Food and Nutrition Service. "Farm to School Team." July 2011. Accessed August 14, 2011. <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/f2s/f2stacticalteam.htm>.

### *Analysis*

In advance of the 2002 Farm Bill, the strict USDA prohibition on placing geographic preferences in bids, contracts, and solicitations was considered the largest obstacle to the growth of the farm-to-school or farm-to-cafeteria movement in the U.S. As a relatively easy policy change in Congress, geographic preference has been more challenging to implement than it might appear because of complicated state-federal legal rights on procurement policy. However, this no-cost policy change could, over time, lead to increased fresh and minimally processed foods available in these programs and to market shifts in the school food supply chain. The success of the geographic preference change, coupled with the support of the USDA, may lead to procurement innovations at USDA Foods (formerly the USDA Commodity Foods Program) and other USDA nutrition programs. Furthermore, as support grows, the application of geographic preferences could be expanded in future Farm Bills to include preferences related to environmental health or human health indicators (such as those used in environmental services markets, [see page 29]), combining access to healthy foods with environmental services of farmers.

# Local and Regional Food Systems

## Healthy Urban Food Enterprise Development<sup>27</sup>

### *Policy Description<sup>28</sup>*

The Healthy Urban Food Enterprise Development (HUFED) Center, created in the 2008 Farm Bill, is focused on food marketing and distribution systems to address barriers to healthy food access. The rural version of the program takes the form of a local-foods set-aside in the Rural Business and Industries Loan and Loan Guarantee Program (see page 19). The HUFED Center provides sub-grants to eligible entities to: 1) carry out feasibility studies to establish businesses that increase access to healthy, affordable foods, including locally produced agricultural products, for underserved communities; and 2) establish and otherwise assist enterprises that process, distribute, aggregate, store, and market healthy and affordable foods to underserved communities. While the dollar amount for HUFED is small compared to other Farm Bill programs, the grants made through the program provide significant support for recipient organizations. These small-scale programs are important for increasing access to a more diverse diet and for creating jobs. The grants help foster innovation that can be scaled up, and are key for leveraging private funds.

### *Funding – Mandatory through 2011<sup>29</sup>*

2009	2010	2011	2012
\$1 MILLION	\$1 MILLION	\$1 MILLION (ESTIMATE)	\$0 MILLION (BUDGET)

This program is not in the baseline for the next Farm Bill.

### *Policy Advocacy*

This program was introduced first in marker bills in the House by Representative Blumenauer (D-OR) and in the Senate by Senator Brown (D-OH). It was later included in both Agriculture Committee bills as a result of direct advocacy. A conflict around the jurisdiction of USDA Rural Development funding led to the introduction of separate Farm Bill provisions targeted to urban and rural areas. After the House Agriculture Committee passed its bill, advocates encouraged Representative Rush (D-IL) and the Congressional Black Caucus, of which Representative Rush was a leader, to support HUFED. The Northeast Midwest Institute (NMI) led the advocacy on this effort with key partners: PolicyLink, CFSC, and others. Public health organizations supported the HUFED program, with a focus on provision of healthy foods in underserved markets and/or “food deserts” via grants to food enterprises.

### *Policy Implementation*

The policy has been implemented by USDA’s National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) through a Request for Proposals (RFP) process to locate a re-granting contractor. The chosen contractor (Wallace Center) completed the first two cycles of grants in 2010 and 2011, supporting 13 and 17 grantees respectively.<sup>30</sup> Recipients include new food hubs (defined by the USDA as centrally located facilities with a business management structure facilitating the aggregation, storage, processing, distribution, and/or marketing of locally/regionally produced food products) and retail and cooperative outlets. There has been tremendous demand for the grants according to the contract manager for HUFED. While there were delays and some obstacles to overcome, USDA and the contractor concur that it is easier to have an external agency manage smaller grants and provide the accompanying technical assistance, given the contractor’s knowledge of the field and the players. Wallace Center

<sup>27</sup> 7 U.S.C. Sec. 2034(h). P.L. 110-246 Sec. 4402.

<sup>28</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture. National Institute of Food and Agriculture. “Healthy Urban Food Enterprise Development Center Program.” July 2009. Accessed August 14, 2011. <http://www.csrees.usda.gov/fo/healthyurbanfoodenterprisedevelopmentcenter.cfm>,

<sup>29</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture. “FY 2012 Budget Summary and Annual Performance Plan.” 2011. Accessed August 14, 2011. <http://www.obpa.usda.gov/budsum/FY12budsum.pdf>.

<sup>30</sup> Winrock International. Wallace Center. “2010 and 2011 HUFED Grantees.” 2011. Accessed August 14, 2011. <http://www.hufed.org/grantees/>.



uses a practitioner peer-review system, modeled after the Community Food Projects (CFP) Competitive Grants Program (see CFP policy on page 21) to award grants. There were far more applications than expected; with additional funds, managers report that the program could have funded at least ten times as many projects.

### *Analysis*

While there was little preparation and research to support this policy when it was proposed, political support ensured that it moved forward rather quickly. Advocates believe the program could have grown further and been more useful in support of their priorities if there had been more time and more groups had organized. For example, the question of if a single national HUFED center or a national system of HUFED centers would be preferable went unresolved due to limited time, and ultimately the current national center was created. After the rural portion of the program was separated and placed with the Business and Industry Loan Program, the need was clear to also have a program for addressing food disparity in urban areas. The desired breadth of the policy did not materialize, such as a “one stop shop” for food business development and financing in underserved markets, or addressing the issue of race in food access disparities. However, there has been a great deal of demand for HUFED grants and the program serves as an example of how an outside contactor with prior food systems experience can effectively administer new USDA efforts of this type.

# Local and Regional Food Systems

## Local Foods Set-aside in Rural Business and Industries Loan Guarantee Program<sup>31</sup>

### Policy Description<sup>32</sup>

The goal of the Rural Development Business and Industry (B&I) Loan Program is to improve, develop, or finance business, industry, and employment and to improve the economic and environmental climate in rural communities. This goal is achieved by bolstering the existing private credit structure through the guarantee of quality loans. The B&I Program is directed to set aside at least 5 percent of funds for food businesses seeking to develop local and regional markets for healthy foods. Projects with components that benefit underserved communities must be prioritized in the loan-making process. This set aside is the rural version of the Healthy Urban Food Enterprise Development Program (see page 17).

**FUNDING – MANDATORY<sup>33</sup>** for the B&I Loan Program of which not less than 5% must be to support the Local Foods Set-Aside.

2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
\$43 MILLION	\$43 MILLION	\$53 MILLION	\$53 MILLION (ESTIMATE)	\$53 MILLION (BUDGET)

### Policy Advocacy

Primarily driven by advocacy efforts, this program was first introduced in 2007 as Healthy Food Enterprise Development (HFED) in bills introduced in the House by Representative Blumenauer (D-OR) and in the Senate by Senator Brown (D-OH). A conflict around the jurisdiction of USDA Rural Development (RD) funding led to the introduction of HUFED for urban jurisdictions and a commitment of a set-aside of B&I funding for food enterprise development for local food systems in rural areas. The identification of unexpended B&I mandatory funds led to the inclusion of this policy in the Rural Development Title. This policy was part of the platform of the ad hoc public health group who worked together on 2008 Farm Bill advocacy.

### Policy Implementation<sup>34</sup>

This policy was not implemented in the first year after the 2008 Farm Bill passed and has faced some initial challenges regarding implementation. As with other Rural Development (RD) programs, the B&I Program is administered at the state level. The culture of state level management of RD grants and loans presents an obstacle to multi-state or regional approaches by current USDA leadership. Additionally, cuts in staff at the state and local level made it difficult to give authority for this program to offices that had limited capacity. With pressure from the Office of the Secretary in 2009, the USDA office of Rural Development began to respond to requests for set-aside funds. The emphasis on multi-state regional initiatives led by the Office of the Secretary may help speed implementation. As of 2011, there is still little information on implementation and the types of projects funded. However, one publicized example of a funded project is a guaranteed loan made to a locally owned dairy processing facility in Nebraska. The loan allowed for the facility to expand to meet growing demand for sustainable products and to create additional jobs.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>31</sup> 7 USC Sec. 1932(g); P.L. 110-246 Sec. 6015.

<sup>32</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture. Rural Development. "Business and Industry Guaranteed Loans." n.d. Accessed August 14, 2011. [http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/busp/b&i\\_gar.htm](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/busp/b&i_gar.htm).

<sup>33</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture. "FY 2012 Budget Summary and Annual Performance Plan." 2011. Accessed August 14, 2011. <http://www.obpa.usda.gov/budsum/FY12budsum.pdf>.

<sup>34</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture. Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food. "Business and Industry Guaranteed Loan Program (B&I)." n.d. Accessed August 14, 2011. [http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/knownyourfarmer?contentid=kyf\\_grants\\_rd3\\_content.html&navtype=KYF&edeploymentaction=changenav](http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/knownyourfarmer?contentid=kyf_grants_rd3_content.html&navtype=KYF&edeploymentaction=changenav).

<sup>35</sup> National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition. "Local and Regional Food Enterprise Guaranteed Loans." n.d. Accessed September 19, 2011. <http://sustainableagriculture.net/publications/grassrootsguide/local-food-systems-rural-development/local-food-enterprise-loans/>.

### *Analysis*

More work is needed by advocates collaborating with the USDA to put into place a supply-chain finance program that benefits farmers and rural communities, from on-farm value-added to off-farm processing, distribution, wholesale, and retail development. New authority may be needed from Congress to overcome the resistance from the USDA and rural development interests who consider this provision to be poaching rural development funds for growing interest in local foods. Like HUFED, it may take an external contractor to work with the USDA and deliver the kinds of services demanded from the field, because the local-level agencies that administer B&I funds do not have the expertise necessary to review grants and provide technical assistance for these types of projects. Statutory guidance may be necessary on how urban/rural food finance is different than traditional business financing.

There is also a need to work with state rural development councils and farmers' groups to encourage them to see the value in combined urban and rural approaches and leverage the modest investments of USDA Rural Development. The urban–rural jurisdiction issue, characterized by divided committees of Congress, federal executive agencies, and agencies within the USDA, will be an important area for healthy community advocacy in the next Farm Bill. This includes, and goes beyond, reauthorization of HUFED (described on page 17) or increased Rural Development funding for local and regional food systems. Combining rural and urban policies can hold benefits for all parties. For example, increased procurement of local and regional foods from rural areas by urban institutions could benefit both rural producers and urban consumers.

# Local and Regional Food Systems

## Community Food Projects<sup>36</sup>

### *Policy Description<sup>37</sup>*

The Community Food Projects (CFP) Competitive Grant Program has existed since 1996 as a program to address food insecurity through developing community food projects that help promote the self-sufficiency of low-income communities. Community Food Projects are designed to increase food security in communities by bringing the whole food system together to assess strengths, establish linkages and create systems that improve the self-reliance of community members in meeting their food needs. Preferred projects also develop linkages between two or more sectors of the food system, support the development of entrepreneurial projects, develop innovative linkages between the for-profit and nonprofit food sectors, and encourage long-term planning activities. Many projects funded by CFP have public health significance through innovative approaches to nutrition education, support for farm-to-school programs, and recovery of indigenous food systems, among others.

### *Funding – Mandatory<sup>38</sup>*

2009	2010	2011	2012
\$5 MILLION	\$5 MILLION	\$5 MILLION	\$5 MILLION

### *Policy Advocacy*

Initially funded in the 1996 Farm Bill at a mandatory \$2.5 million per year, the program was doubled in the 2002 Farm Bill to \$5 million per year. Senator Leahy (D-VT) took the lead for this policy in the Senate Agriculture Committee, and it had widespread bipartisan support because it promotes entrepreneurial innovation. Being a small program, CFP was in danger of falling out of the baseline budget of the 2008 Farm Bill, because of the rule which drops programs under \$50 million from the baseline budget. Language was introduced to address this problem during markup of the 2008 Farm Bill, so the program remained in the baseline budget, though it remained flat-funded at \$5 million per year. Advocates, such as at the Community Food Security Coalition (CFSC), were instrumental in the fight for this small but very important program.

### *Policy Implementation*

This policy is implemented by USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) through a national RFP process.<sup>39</sup> CFP grants can be made for up to \$300,000 for three years. Since the first year of the grant program there have been 400 grants made, totaling around \$75 million. The USDA manages annual peer review of applications. The program is highly competitive, with only about 18 percent of applicants receiving funding over the life of the program. Currently, about 15 to 20 grants are awarded from a pool of over 400 applicants. Technical assistance grants to national and regional nonprofit organizations are used to help train potential grantees and provide outreach and evaluation services. The CFP program is a model of collaboration between the USDA and external partners, exemplified by its inclusion as a model program via the 2009 USDA Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food Task Force. Examples of CFP grants include a wide variety of local food projects, from farm-to-school projects to new market development to value-added processing and much more. CFP grants have also served as valuable starting points for smaller groups, which are then able to leverage the initial funds to expand their capacity even further. For example, Nuestras Raices, a small Massachusetts-based grassroots group focusing on community gardens built on 2002 CFP funding with a 2004 Ford Foundation grant, and now manages

<sup>36</sup> 7 U.S.C. 2034; P.L. 110-246 Sec 4402.

<sup>37</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture. National Institute of Food and Agriculture. "Community Food Projects Competitive Grants." March 2009. Accessed August 14, 2011. [http://www.csrees.usda.gov/nea/food/in\\_focus/hunger\\_if\\_competitive.html](http://www.csrees.usda.gov/nea/food/in_focus/hunger_if_competitive.html).

<sup>38</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture. "FY 2012 Budget Summary and Annual Performance Plan." 2011. Accessed August 14, 2011. <http://www.obpa.usda.gov/budsum/FY12budsum.pdf>.

<sup>39</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture. National Institute of Food and Agriculture. "Community Food Projects." March 2009. Accessed August 14, 2011. [http://www.csrees.usda.gov/nea/food/sri/hunger\\_sri\\_awards.html](http://www.csrees.usda.gov/nea/food/sri/hunger_sri_awards.html).

eight community gardens and two youth gardens.<sup>40</sup> Overall, it is estimated that CFP programs provided food to almost 164,000 people in 2010, including over 9,000 schoolchildren attending summer programs.<sup>41</sup>

### *Analysis*

Small Farm Bill programs require strong champions and advocacy, which, in the case of CFP, were successful. Despite the success, one advocate mentioned that it would have been beneficial to get buy-in from Senior Agriculture Committee members sooner. While this program is small, it is important because of its systems approach. Starting in 1996, CFP was one of the first policies in the Farm Bill to frame a grant program in a whole food environment context, and to address healthy food access through development of local food systems. It is one of only a handful of policies enacted before the 2008 Farm Bill to target both farmers and consumers concurrently, and to take a systems approach to improving food access and quality. Aspects of this program have influenced other USDA programs, for example, the mechanism of peer review collaboration has been “exported” to new programs, including the Farmers’ Market Promotion Program and Farm-to-School Grant Program. With increased funding, the program could fund regional projects in addition to local ones. Strengthening America’s regional food systems is an important part of creating an overall food system that supports public health.

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<sup>40</sup> Partners for Livable Communities. “Nuestras Raíces.” n.d, Accessed August 14, 2011. <http://livable.org/livability-resources/best-practices/103-nuestras-raices->

<sup>41</sup> Community Food Security Coalition. “Community Food Projects. Indicators of Success.” 2010. Accessed August 14, 2011. [http://www.foodsecurity.org/evaluation/CFP\\_IOS\\_Exec\\_Sum-22Apr2011.pdf](http://www.foodsecurity.org/evaluation/CFP_IOS_Exec_Sum-22Apr2011.pdf).



# Production Practices

## Environmental Quality Incentives Program<sup>42</sup>

### Policy Description<sup>43</sup>

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is the largest voluntary conservation program for farmers, ranchers, and owners of private, non-industrial forestland. It promotes agricultural production, forest management, and environmental quality as compatible national goals. EQIP offers cost-sharing and technical help to assist eligible producers in installing or implementing conservation practices. Eligibility criteria for producers and/or eligible agricultural land are defined by Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and determined through an application process. EQIP was approved in the 1996 Farm Bill, and was reauthorized in the 2002 and 2008 Farm Bills with significant increases in funding in each subsequent Farm Bill. The 2008 Farm Bill included set-asides for organic practices as detailed on page 25. The general EQIP program is included in this analysis because, as it is currently implemented, it demonstrates that a policy intended to address conservation can indirectly support production practices that may negatively impact human health and the environment. In this particular case the concern is that EQIP has been used to subsidize confined animal feeding operations (CAFOs), known for numerous negative environmental impacts, although this can be altered or mitigated in future reauthorizations. The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) mentioned below is not discussed in detail in this report, but should be a priority for the public health community as it protects vital resources necessary to sustain human health.<sup>44</sup>

### Funding – Mandatory<sup>45</sup>

2009	2010	2011	2012
\$1,067 MILLION	\$1,174 MILLION	\$1,180 MILLION (ESTIMATE)	\$1,408 (BUDGET)

### Policy Advocacy

EQIP is one of the two largest conservation programs in the Farm Bill; the other is the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). Large conservation groups (such as the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF)) and the livestock industry joined in the 2008 Farm Bill to defend and grow EQIP. This coalition also won a controversial increase in EQIP maximum grant amounts. Given that federal, and many state, EQIP provisions (such as those relating to manure disposal) favor CAFOs

over pasture-based operations, the increase in the grant level benefited CAFO owners in particular.<sup>46</sup> Champions for EQIP included both Democratic and Republican senior committee members in both House and Senate Agriculture Committees. Progressive farm groups such as National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC) and National Family Farm Coalition (NFFC) argued instead to focus funding on the CSP, which rewards farmers with payments based on their actual performance in conserving and improving resources, such as soil, water, air and energy, on their whole farm. Programs like EQIP on the other hand, pay for specific conservation practices, so the operation as a whole may still damage natural resources in other ways.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>42</sup> 16 USC Sec. 3839aa to 3839aa-9; P.L. 110-246 Sec 2501—2510.

<sup>43</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture. National Resource Conservation Service. "NRCS Conservation Programs." August 2011. Accessed August 14, 2011. <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/eqip/>.

<sup>44</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture. National Resource Conservation Service. "Conservation Stewardship Program. Payment for Performance." August 2011. Accessed August 14, 2011. <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main?ss=16&navid=1001203000000000&pnavid=1001200000000000&position=SUBNAVIGATION&ttype=main&navtype=SUBNAVIGATION&pname=Conservation%20Stewardship%20Program%20|%20NRCS>.

<sup>45</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture. "FY 2012 Budget Summary and Annual Performance Plan." 2011. Accessed August 14, 2011. <http://www.obpa.usda.gov/budsum/FY12budsum.pdf>.

<sup>46</sup> Gurian-Sherman, D. "CAFOs Uncovered. The Untold Costs of Confined Animal Feeding Operations. Union of Concerned Scientists. April 2008. Accessed August 14, 2011. [http://www.ucsusa.org/assets/documents/food\\_and\\_agriculture/cafos-uncovered-executive-summary.pdf](http://www.ucsusa.org/assets/documents/food_and_agriculture/cafos-uncovered-executive-summary.pdf).

<sup>47</sup> Land Stewardship Council. "CSP: The New & Improved Conservation Stewardship Program." October 2008. Accessed August 14, 2011. <http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/pdf/CSP09.pdf>.

### *Policy Implementation*

The policy is implemented by the USDA's Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS). Farmers apply for federal cost-share support to receive cost-reimbursement based on contracts to implement measures from a list of approved practices. There is currently more demand than supply for the funds, which are administered on a first-come-first-serve basis. Approved conservation practices include building composting facilities, planting vegetation along streams, and installing water conserving irrigation systems. CAFOs can use funds for the storage, treatment, and utilization of animal waste. Higher cost-sharing levels are awarded to beginning, limited resource, and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers. Nonetheless, the majority of EQIP funds still go to larger animal livestock operations according to advocates. The program is administered at county NRCS offices together with other conservation programs. The big change by the Obama administration is the growth of 16 separate special initiatives within EQIP, including funding for the Organic Initiative, which helps farmers to transition to organics (see policy on page 25). These initiatives are generating a push-back from the House Agriculture Committee in the budget debates of the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress. As with most Farm Bill programs, Congress writes them into law and USDA determines the details of how they are implemented. In the opinion of a key advocate, NRCS may have gone beyond its Farm Bill authority "too far, too fast," bringing more attention from anti-conservation members in the House of Representatives.

### *Analysis*

The summer 2011 federal budget debate targeted EQIP. According to one advocate interviewed, there may be pressure in future Farm Bills to combine different NRCS conservation programs, with the result that individual payment levels may increase for larger farms, and be even less available to small and medium scale farmers who often need smaller grants for smaller projects. With the large payments to CAFOs, EQIP likely serves as a subsidy for production methods that have unhealthful environmental and human health impacts. Some advocates want to see the rules changed so that CAFOs could not get access to these EQIP funds, while others fear that CAFO contributions to environmental pollution would be even greater without EQIP dollars. The agribusiness lobby is a powerful influence in Congress and often advocates against conservation programs that could limit profits. However, the health lobby is also powerful on Capital Hill. In future Farm Bill debates, public health advocates and experts can play an important role in helping to limit support for unhealthful farm practices by both encouraging their colleagues to consider the indirect, but important, links between conservation, environmental health, and human health, and by joining with other sustainable agriculture and food system reform advocates in support of well-designed conservation programs.

# Production Practices

## EQIP Organic Initiative<sup>48</sup>

### Policy Description<sup>49</sup>

The 2008 Farm Bill amended the Natural Resources Conservation Service's (NRCS) Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) to include language that supports the provision of financial and technical support for both existing and transitioning organic producers. Examples of organic practices include rotation cropping with cover crops, green manures, and use of field-scale composting. EQIP is primarily used to provide financial and technical assistance to implement conservation practices addressing soil, water, air, plant, animal and energy resources (see EQIP, page 23). The added focus on organic practices is of interest to the health community given that the initiative may lead to increased conversion to organic farming systems. These provisions of EQIP have been implemented by the NRCS as the "Organic Initiative."

### Funding – Mandatory<sup>50</sup> (no funding data available for 2012 at the time of writing)

2008	2009	2010	2011
NO SPECIFIC SET-ASIDE	\$50 MILLION SET-ASIDE BY USDA	\$50 MILLION SET-ASIDE BY USDA	\$50 MILLION SET-ASIDE BY USDA

### Policy Advocacy

The Organic Farming Research Foundation (OFRF) and the National Organic Coalition drafted legislation and advocated for inclusion of funds for organic conversion in the Senate Farm Bill; this was also championed by Senator Harkin (D-IA). Because funding for a standalone provision for organic conversion support could not be found, the solution was to nest this policy within EQIP without specific funding targets. Advocates for organic conversion would have preferred a standalone provision, and while not ideal, the inclusion of organic conversion in EQIP was considered the most that the 2008 Farm Bill could do for this issue given funding constraints.

### Policy Implementation

The inclusion of organic conversion in EQIP is difficult to implement due to the uneven distribution of knowledge and skills around organic farm practices within NRCS local and state offices. This policy is progressing due to leadership support from the Office of the Secretary at the USDA. Funding levels under the Organic Initiative are significantly lower than those allowed under general EQIP, with a cap of \$80,000 over six years compared to \$300,000 for other EQIP grants.<sup>51</sup> The autonomy of state programs also means that conservation practices for organic farming allowed by EQIP, such as cover crops or compost facilities, are implemented in some, but not all, states. Some states, for example, provide funds for each instance of cover cropping for a new use, while others do not provide funding for further cover cropping if the farmer has used it before in any way. This leads to an uneven application of funds. Additionally, advocates felt that authorizing language was not sufficiently detailed to guide implementation by NRCS, as it lacked key details such as which organic practices could be used and how to conduct outreach to both conventional and organic farmers.

<sup>48</sup> 16 USC Sec. 3839aa–2 and 16 USC. 3842; P.L. 110-246 Sec 2503 and 2706.

<sup>49</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture. National Resources Conservation Service. "Organic Program Initiative. Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Support for Organic Growers." July 2010. Accessed August 14, 2011. <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/?ss=16&navid=100120330000000&pnavid=100120000000000&position=SUBNAVIGATION&ttype=main&navtype=SUBNAVIGATION&pname=Organic%20Program%20Initiative>.

<sup>50</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture. National Resources Conservation Service. "Environmental Quality Incentives Program Support for Organic and Transition to Organic Production Systems - FY 2010." National Bulletin. February 19, 2010. Accessed August 14, 2011. [http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE\\_DOCUMENTS/nrcs143\\_007827.pdf](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/nrcs143_007827.pdf); National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition. "NRCS Organic Initiative." 2011. Accessed August 14, 2011. <http://sustainableagriculture.net/our-work/conservation-environment/organic-initiative/>.

<sup>51</sup> Organic Seed Alliance. "Organic Agriculture Priorities in the Next Farm Bill." June 13, 2011. Accessed August 14, 2011. <http://blog.seedalliance.org/2011/06/13/organic-agriculture-priorities-in-the-next-farm-bill/>.

### *Analysis*

An important lesson from the Organic Initiative is that advocates may face difficulty and slow progress if a good policy is put into a less than optimal part of the Farm Bill for implementation by USDA. The placement of the Organic Initiative in the EQIP program and under the authority of NRCS, has meant that advocates have to concentrate on USDA's reactive posture rather than proactively plan in a collaborative manner. While there are positive pockets of NRCS implementation around the U.S., for the most part advocates report that there has been either passive or overt resistance. Part of the problem is structural, with preexisting tension between NRCS local, county and state offices and the NRCS national office. However, even under EQIP, advocates have noted that the Initiative could benefit from reforms, such as equalizing the level of payments with general EQIP and allowing non-profit groups with prior expertise in organics to collaborate with NRCS in providing technical assistance to farmers.<sup>52</sup> Additionally, it should be noted that paying for individual practices is not necessarily sufficient to assist farmers in converting to a fully organic production practice. The health community should support efforts that take a systems approach to conservation programs and encourage the development and support for programs that tie together the environmental, economic, and social aspects of a farm and the community beyond. Such approaches help ensure positive longer-term environmental and human health impacts of farming systems.

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<sup>52</sup> Organic Seed Alliance. "Organic Agriculture Priorities in the Next Farm Bill." June 13, 2011. Accessed August 14, 2011. <http://blog.seedalliance.org/2011/06/13/organic-agriculture-priorities-in-the-next-farm-bill/>.

# Production Practices

## Specialty Crop Block Grants<sup>53</sup>

### *Policy Description<sup>54</sup>*

First established in 2001, the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP) provides block grants to State Departments of Agriculture within the 50 states and U.S. territories. A block grant is a federal grant provided to state or local governments to spend on services. The purpose of the grant program is to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops, which are defined as fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture, and nursery crops.

State departments of agriculture are encouraged to conduct outreach to gather public comments to identify funding priorities in enhancing the competitiveness of their specialty crops, and to communicate the funding opportunities and priorities to specialty crop stakeholders, including socially disadvantaged and beginning farmers. This program is important to public health as it helps increase the availability of produce, which when consumed in adequate amounts, is known to improve health.

### *Funding - Mandatory<sup>55</sup>*

2009	2010	2011	2012
\$ 49 MILLION	\$55 MILLION	\$55 MILLION	\$55 MILLION

### *Policy Advocacy*

The SCBGP came into existence in 2001 when advocates strategized with Congressional staff about a vehicle to use emergency disaster assistance funds that were available for specialty crops. By 2005, legislation was passed authorizing a set of Specialty Crop Block Grants, but the legislation did not provide mandatory funding. Advocates, talking with staff on the Agriculture Committees, succeeded in obtaining mandatory funding for the program in the 2008 Farm Bill. Major advocates for the policy were the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA), groups that represent specific vegetable and fruit growers (e.g., U.S. Apple Association), and the United Fresh Produce Association (United Fresh). Congressional champions were Senator Stabenow (D-MI) and Representative Pelosi (D-CA), who have large specialty crop producer contingents in their states.

### *Policy Implementation*

Each year, State Departments of Agriculture conduct outreach to identify public priorities for how to spend the block grant dollars in their states. Farm-to-school and local food interests in a few states have used this opportunity to advocate that a portion of their states' block grant funds be used to promote local food production and purchases. Following public priority setting, each State Department of Agriculture is encouraged to conduct a competitive grant program where a review panel scores and ranks the project proposals submitted. These ranked proposals are then submitted to the USDA for final determination of grant recipients. The 2010 grant awards announced by USDA were for approximately \$55 million, funding 827 projects, which represented a ten percent increase over 2009.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>53</sup> 7 USC Sec. 1622c; P.L. 110-246 Sec 7311.

<sup>54</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture. Agricultural Marketing Service. "Specialty Crop Block Grant Program Questions and Answers from Webinar Grant Opportunity: Enhancing the Competitiveness of Specialty Crops." n.d. Accessed August 14, 2011. <http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/getfile?dDocName=STELPRDC5088245>.

<sup>55</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture. "FY 2012 Budget Summary and Annual Performance Plan." 2011. Accessed August 14, 2011. <http://www.obpa.usda.gov/budsum/FY12budsum.pdf>.

<sup>56</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture. Agricultural Marketing Service. "USDA Announces Funds to Enhance the Competitiveness of Specialty Crops." News Release. September 17, 2010. Accessed August 14, 2011. <http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/ams.fetchTemplateData.do?template=TemplateU&navID=&page=Newsroom&resultType=Details&dDocName=STELPRDC5086651&dID=137993&wf=false&description=USDA+Announces+Funds+to+Enhance+the+Competitiveness+of+Specialty+Crops+&topNav=News>.

### *Analysis*

When State Departments of Agriculture conduct outreach to identify public priorities for the grant dollars, it is an important opportunity for public health advocates to participate in the process to advocate in their own states for grant priorities that could affect the public's health. There are producer advocates who would like to see the program be focused only on producer needs. This position can cause conflict with others, such as farm-to-school or public health advocates. Producer needs can certainly coincide with those of public health, such as when block grant funds help reduce costs, thus helping to make produce more affordable and available; in other cases, such as a recently funded effort to improve the competitiveness of California wine,<sup>57</sup> the public health benefits are less clear. Some interest groups who represent a wider-range of producers, such as United Fresh, would like to see collaboration between states around research, education, and training on issues of shared concern, such as food safety. It is important that advocates work to form a broad coalition including producer, marketing and public health advocates. Such shared advocacy has the greatest potential for the continuance and potential expansion of this program; a broad constituency from many arenas can have the greatest influence with legislators.

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<sup>57</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture. Agricultural Marketing Service. "Specialty Crop Block Grant Programs. Fiscal Year 2010, Description of Funded Programs." n.d. Accessed August 14, 2011. <http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/getfile?dDocName=S TELPRDC5084778>.



# Production Practices

## Environmental Services Markets<sup>58</sup>

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### *Policy Description*

The USDA was required for the first time in the 2008 Farm Bill to establish technical guidelines that outline science-based methods to measure the environmental services benefits from conservation and land management activities. Environmental services are benefits the earth's ecosystems provide to humans, such as food and fiber, soil fertility, water purification, disease management, climate regulation, spiritual fulfillment and aesthetic enjoyment.<sup>59</sup> These services are extensive and diverse and affect the quality of our land, water, and food and thus our health. Internationally, there has been a growing movement to quantify these services and to create markets for them in order to reduce ecological resource depletion and assign costs to the highest users. The USDA's role is to facilitate the participation of farmers, ranchers and forest landowners in emerging environmental services markets, which are created from trading environmental services. An example is a carbon market where carbon emissions are traded to encourage countries and companies to limit their carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions. The 2008 Farm Bill instructs the USDA to establish technical guidelines for farmer participation in these markets, including:

1. A procedure to measure environmental services benefits.
2. A protocol to report environmental services benefits.
3. A registry to collect, record, and maintain the benefits measured.

**Funding – None.** The USDA is currently using a small amount of dollars from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to fund this work. The 2012 USDA budget requests an additional \$2 Million for these efforts.<sup>60</sup>

### *Policy Advocacy*

The USDA wrote an entire environmental services title for the 2008 Farm Bill, including providing financing for the work. This is considered an unusual step, as administrations rarely will write proposed legislation, let alone an entire title. Mark Rey, Undersecretary for Natural Resources and the Environment in the Bush administration USDA, promoted the bill to Congress. Conservation advocates such as American Farmland Trust (AFT) and Environmental Defense Fund (EDF) worked with the Senate Agriculture Committee and USDA employees who had been detailed to the Congressional committees to get the bill included as part of the Farm Bill. However, research to develop the technical guidelines listed above was the only language included in the final 2008 Farm Bill.

### *Policy Implementation*

This work is currently carried out in the Office of Environmental Markets (OEM) in the USDA Office of the Chief Economist. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) had some concern after the 2008 Farm Bill was passed because the jurisdiction for these environmental services would go to USDA. Possible markets for which guidelines could be developed include carbon, water quality, or greenhouse gases. The USDA is evaluating the basic scientific research related to environmental services and providing technical advice for setting up markets. Due in part to a 2010 Executive Order, the current USDA emphasis for this program is on developing environmental markets in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> 16 USC Sec. 3845; P.L. 110-246 Sec 2709.

<sup>59</sup> Committee on Twenty-First Century Systems Agriculture, National Research Council. *Toward Sustainable Agricultural Systems in the 21st Century*, p. 287. 2010. [http://www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record\\_id=12832](http://www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=12832).

<sup>60</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture. "FY 2012 Budget Summary and Annual Performance Plan." 2011. Accessed August 14, 2011. <http://www.obpa.usda.gov/budsum/FY12budsum.pdf>.

<sup>61</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture. Office of the Chief Economist. "Environmental Markets in the Chesapeake Bay." April 2011. Accessed August 14, 2011. [http://www.usda.gov/oce/environmental\\_markets/Chesapeake.htm](http://www.usda.gov/oce/environmental_markets/Chesapeake.htm).

## Analysis

Environmental services markets, while a relatively new concept in public health, can have important health impacts, as they provide upstream actions that yield downstream health benefits.<sup>62</sup> These markets also provide benefits for farmers, which will be important as the farm safety net payments of the future will likely shift away from acreage and yield. Environmental services could provide an alternative basis for safety nets for farmers by providing an income source that is not tied to crop output, but instead to the services they provide through practices that support environmental health. Another example of environmental services use is incorporating environmental services criteria and metrics together with geographic preferences into a new model of food purchasing specifications for school food. See related policy on page 15. It should be noted, however, that the verification and certification processes associated with environmental services markets for agriculture may be prohibitively expensive for smaller farmers in these early stages.<sup>63</sup> Agriculture also poses a particular challenge for environmental services markets in that it is difficult to assess and quantify impacts due to the wide variation in farm conditions and needs, crops, and weather.<sup>64</sup> These potential barriers further highlight the importance of the USDA engaging in research on, and seeking to expand, environmental services markets.

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<sup>62</sup> Committee on Twenty-First Century Systems Agriculture, National Research Council. *Toward Sustainable Agricultural Systems in the 21st Century*, p. 287. 2010. [http://www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record\\_id=12832](http://www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=12832).

<sup>63</sup> Stuart, D., D. Canty and K. Killebrew. "Guide to Environmental Markets for Farmers and Ranchers." American Farmland Trust. October 2010. Accessed August 14, 2011. <http://www.farmland.org/documents/GuidetoEnvironmentalMarketsforFarmersandRanchers.pdf>.

<sup>64</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture. Economic Research Service. "Creating Markets for Environmental Stewardship: Potential Benefits and Problems." Amber Waves. September 2008. Accessed August 14, 2011. <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Amber-Waves/September08/Features/CreatingMarkets.htm>.

## Research

### Pilot Projects To Evaluate Health & Nutrition Promotion in SNAP<sup>65</sup>

#### *Policy Description*

The 2008 Farm Bill authorized \$20 million for pilot projects to evaluate health and nutrition promotion in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). The projects aimed to determine whether incentives provided to SNAP recipients at the point-of-sale increase the purchase of fruits, vegetables, or other nutrient-dense foods. This is a new program and is not in the Farm Bill baseline since it was one-time funding. The Food and Nutrition Service of the USDA (FNS) refers to this effort as the Healthy Incentives Pilot or HIP.<sup>66</sup> As stated by Agriculture Secretary Vilsack, “This pilot project will empower low-income Americans to eat more nutritious food and has the potential to strengthen the SNAP program that serves as a critical safety net to the most vulnerable in our society... Increased consumption of fruits and vegetables, especially in the place of higher calorie foods, can help move America towards healthier lifestyles and a healthier future.”<sup>67</sup>

#### *Funding – Mandatory*      One time - \$20 Million<sup>68</sup>

Because this was a one-time allocation of funds, it will not be automatically included in the next Farm Bill.

#### *Policy Advocacy*

Public health advocates sought the inclusion of a Food Stamp incentive program in the 2002 Farm Bill in order to encourage fruit and vegetable consumption. It was believed that incentives to reduce price barriers that low-income people experience around fruits and vegetables would increase consumption and could thus improve health. In 2002, the incentive program was included in the bill that came out of the Senate Agriculture Committee, but was not in the final Farm Bill. In response to this, advocates turned to another form of advocacy by asking the USDA to test the incentive concept. However, the USDA rejected the idea. By 2007, two Food Stamp incentive bills had passed in California, but were not implemented due to fiscal constraints. During the 2008 Farm Bill process, a coalition of advocates fought for the inclusion of a number of incentive concepts aimed at increasing the purchase of fruits and vegetables by SNAP participants. The final farm bill included funding for the HIP study.

#### *Policy Implementation*

USDA selected Abt Associates, Inc. of Cambridge, Mass. as the independent contractor to evaluate HIP. The evaluation will focus on whether incentives increase the consumption of fruits and vegetables and how participants’ overall diets are affected. Researchers will also study HIP effects on state administrative work, retailers, and other SNAP stakeholders and assess the feasibility of implementing HIP nationwide. Hampden County, Massachusetts was selected as the HIP site. A mix of 27 urban, suburban, and rural cities and towns, Hampden County has approximately 50,000 SNAP households. Of these, 7,500 will be randomly selected to enroll in HIP to receive incentives. HIP will reduce the cost of fruits and vegetables by almost one third through the return of 30 cents for each dollar participants spend on fruits and vegetables using their SNAP Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards.

It took USDA extended time to begin the pilot project because of changes needed to the EBT system. The USDA currently anticipates that the pilot will begin operations in November 2011 and will run through January 2013. It is not anticipated that data on HIP will be available in time for the upcoming Farm Bill deliberations.

<sup>65</sup> 7 USC. Sec. 2026; P.L. 110-246 Sec 4141.

<sup>66</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture. Food and Nutrition Service. “Healthy Incentives Pilot (HIP).” December 2010. Accessed August 2, 2011. <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/hip/>.

<sup>67</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture. Food and Nutrition Service. “USDA Selects Massachusetts to Test Ground-Breaking Nutrition Pilot Program.” News release. August 19, 2010. Accessed August 2, 2011. <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cga/pressreleases/2010/0413.htm>.

<sup>68</sup> P.L. 110-246 Sec 4141.

### *Analysis*

Despite the reduction in scope from the initial vision, HIP was an important policy win for public health advocates in the 2008 Farm Bill. The pilot has the potential to increase fruit and vegetable intake among HIP participants, and if the pilot shows positive results, the findings can eventually be used to advocate for expanding incentive programs within SNAP. HIP also illustrates the utility of pilot programs in the advocacy process. Pilot programs serve as a good way to gather initial impact data for further advocacy and to test the implementation feasibility of a policy within a smaller population prior to expanding it nationally. Additionally, pilot programs can be more politically feasible to adopt than full-scale programs since they cost less to implement and represent less of a political commitment. However, the increased political feasibility of pilots may also encourage politicians to favor pilots over full programs, thus serving as an impeding factor for the funding of full programs.

# Research

## Agriculture and Food Research Initiative<sup>69</sup>

### Policy Description<sup>70</sup>

Established by the 2008 Farm Bill, the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) at the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) is charged with funding both basic and integrated research, education, and extension grants that address key problems of national, regional, and multi-state importance in sustaining all components of agriculture. Providing this support requires that AFRI advance fundamental sciences in support of agriculture and coordinate opportunities to build on these discoveries. AFRI supports work in the following priority areas: plant health and production and plant products; animal health and production and animal products; food safety, nutritio, and health; renewable energy, natural resources, and environment; agriculture systems and technology; and agriculture economics and rural communities. Within these priority areas, AFRI supports interdisciplinary, multi-functional projects in five "societal challenge" areas determined by the USDA to achieve significant and measurable outcomes: 1) keep American agriculture competitive while ending world hunger; 2) improve nutrition and end child obesity; 3) improve food safety for all Americans; 4) secure America's energy future through renewable biofuels; and 5) mitigate and adapt agriculture to variations in climate. The 2008 Farm Bill also created a Chief Scientist position at the USDA with a staff representing each of the challenge areas listed above.

### Funding - Appropriated<sup>71</sup>

2009	2010	2011	2012
\$202 MILLION	\$262 MILLION	\$262 MILLION (ESTIMATE)	\$325 MILLION (BUDGET)

### Policy Advocacy

The Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) was the main advocate for AFRI. Their members, which include research universities, land-grant institutions and state university systems, are the main recipients of the AFRI research dollars. Professional societies, such as American Society for Nutrition, American Dietetic Association, Society for Nutrition Education, and the Institute of Food Technologists were also involved through testimony at listening sessions held by USDA. There is also an AFRI coalition that includes universities and non-profit organizations.

### Policy Implementation

AFRI solicited its first competitive grants in FY2009 and received 2,424 applications. Of these, the 470 highest ranked applications were funded a total of \$176,412,216.<sup>72</sup> An additional 365 applications were recommended for funding, but were not supported due to insufficient AFRI funds. One example of a grant awarded under the food safety, nutrition and health program area is a research grant to explore steps to reduce the prevalence of childhood obesity among Head Start preschoolers in Michigan.<sup>73</sup> Through another award, researchers will work with Cooperative Extensions in six Western states to engage people in rural areas in community-based research to assess features of rural communities that either prevent or promote obesity, and to examine community

<sup>69</sup> 7 USC Sec. 450i; P.L. 110-246 Sec 7406.

<sup>70</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture. National Institute of Food and Agriculture. "Program Synopsis: Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) Competitive Grants Program." March 2010. Accessed August 2, 2011. [http://www.nifa.usda.gov/funding/afri/afri\\_synopsis.html](http://www.nifa.usda.gov/funding/afri/afri_synopsis.html).

<sup>71</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture. "FY 2012 Budget Summary and Annual Performance Plan." 2011. Accessed August 14, 2011. <http://www.obpa.usda.gov/budsum/FY12budsum.pdf>.

<sup>72</sup> Sheely, D., M. Poth, and D. Jerkins. n.d. *Agriculture and Food Research Initiative 2009 Annual Synopsis*. U.S. Department of Agriculture. National Institute of Food and Agriculture. Accessed August 2, 2011. [http://www.nifa.usda.gov/newsroom/pdfs/2009\\_afri\\_synopsis.pdf](http://www.nifa.usda.gov/newsroom/pdfs/2009_afri_synopsis.pdf).

<sup>73</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture. National Institute of Food and Agriculture. "USDA Awards University of Michigan Grant to Help Reduce Childhood Obesity in Preschool Children." News release. March 14, 2011. Accessed August 2, 2011. [http://www.nifa.usda.gov/newsroom/news/2011news/03141\\_michigan\\_obesity.html](http://www.nifa.usda.gov/newsroom/news/2011news/03141_michigan_obesity.html).

resources that could help with prevention efforts.<sup>74</sup> In the Northeast, the Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future is working with Pennsylvania State University and others to evaluate regional food systems in the Northeast to enhance food security of underserved populations in the region.<sup>75</sup>

### *Analysis*

Through AFRI, the 2008 Farm Bill significantly increased dollars for research in addition to authorizing the USDA to fund basic and integrated research. Integrated research is notable in that it encourages multidisciplinary work, by allowing single function education programs to cross disciplines through partnerships. This is also the first time that core research and intramural research agencies are under one position of a Chief Scientist, allowing those in specific research areas to work across the research arms of the USDA and improve the USDA's culture of collaboration. Eliminating research silos facilitates a more systems-based approach that can bring together multiple stakeholders to address challenging public health issues such as obesity. It is too early to know how this approach will work, but the research projects that have been awarded for integrated research are a significant step forward. There is concern from some advocates and others who use the AFRI program over language in the 2008 Farm Bill that limits the funding for integrated research to only colleges and universities. Some suggest advocating removal of this limitation in the next Farm Bill. Another concern about AFRI is that despite a Congressional mandate to address classical (non-genetically engineered) plant and animal breeding, the USDA has yet to make any significant efforts to fund such projects.<sup>76</sup>

As noted above, the USDA defined the challenge areas for the AFRI program, and USDA staff writes the Requests for Proposals describing the specifics of the research the AFRI program will fund. Both are examples of the importance of working directly with the USDA, and not just with Congress, to influence Farm Bill programs. While the creation of the AFRI program was a positive step toward addressing some of the research needs around health and agriculture, there still could be a greater focus on health within AFRI. Advocates have noted that much of the health research AFRI focuses on is around choice and behavior at the consumer end of the food supply. As it currently stands, the program could continue to improve its capabilities for approaching health research from a food *systems* lens.

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<sup>74</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture. National Institute of Food and Agriculture. "USDA Announces Grant to Develop Obesity Prevention Program at Oregon State University." News release. January 11, 2011. Accessed August 2, 2011. [http://www.csrees.usda.gov/newsroom/news/2011news/01131\\_oregon\\_obesity.html](http://www.csrees.usda.gov/newsroom/news/2011news/01131_oregon_obesity.html).

<sup>75</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture. National Institute of Food and Agriculture. "USDA Awards Grants to Improve Sustainable Food Systems and Reduce Hunger." News release. May 5, 2011. Accessed August 2, 2011. <http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?contentid=2011/05/0199.xml&contentidonly=true>.

<sup>76</sup> National Organic Coalition. "AFRI Classical Breeding Analysis and Recommendations." June 2011. Accessed August 4, 2011. <http://www.nationalorganiccoalition.org/NOCJune2011/AFRI%20Classical%20Breeding-June%202%20final%20W-C.pdf>.



# Research

## Food Desert Study<sup>77</sup>

### *Policy Description*

The 2008 Farm Bill directed the USDA to conduct a 1-year study to assess the extent of areas with limited access to affordable and nutritious food, identify characteristics and causes of such areas, consider how limited access affects local populations, and outline recommendations to address the problem. This policy is one from the suite of *Healthy Local Foods Provisions* advocated for by public health community stakeholders in the 2008 Farm Bill process. It was believed that a government-backed study of urban and rural underserved markets, or “food deserts,” would help justify the development of other related programs and policies.

### *Funding – One Time Allocation by USDA*

2009
\$500,000

Because this was a one-time allocation of funds for a discrete project, it will not be included in the next Farm Bill.

### *Policy Advocacy*

Northeast Midwest Institute (NMI), PolicyLink, the Community Food Security Coalition (CFSC), and public health stakeholders were key advocates for this policy. The first draft language suggested by advocates was conveyed to Senator Stabenow (D- MI) in meetings with Michigan constituents and thereafter was included in the Senate Bill. Advocates from Illinois talked with Representative Rush (D-IL) who, with the Tri-caucus (Congressional Black, Hispanic, and Asian Pacific American Caucuses together), had a hearing on food access issues, including food deserts. This was important because these representatives are typically not Agriculture Committee members, but represent a large number of House members. During the House floor debate, Representative Velasquez (D-NY) urged inclusion of the Food Desert Study in the legislation. Through these means the Food Desert Study was included in both Senate and House versions of the 2008 Farm Bill. However, the Farm Bill authorization of funding for the study was discretionary, and was never allocated since the USDA indicated that it could fund the study from existing resources. Due in large part to support from the USDA’s Economic Research Service (ERS), \$500,000 was allocated to the study by the USDA after the Farm Bill passed.

### *Policy Implementation*

The Food Desert Study Report<sup>78</sup> was prepared by the ERS, with support of the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) and the National Institute for Food and Agriculture (NIFA). ERS lobbied to implement the study and executed it within one year as mandated. ERS received input from experts at two ERS-sponsored workshops and collaborated with the National Poverty Center at the University of Michigan to commission several studies on food access. The Report defines food deserts in terms of limited food access and measures impact on diet and health outcomes. The final Report was published in June 2009 and is available at: <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/AP/AP036/>.

<sup>77</sup> P.L. 110-246 Sec 7527.

<sup>78</sup> Ver Ploeg M, V Breneman, T Farrigan, K Hamrick, D Hopkins, P Kaufman, BH Lin, M Nord, T Smith, R Williams, K Kinnison, C Olander, A Singh, and E Tuckermanty. June 2009. *Access to Affordable and Nutritious Food—Measuring and Understanding Food Deserts and Their Consequences: Report to Congress*. U.S. Department of Agriculture. Economic Research Service. <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/AP/AP036/AP036.pdf>.

## Analysis

ERS had previously wanted to do this type of study, and was eager to do this research in-house. The final report discussed the lack of access to healthy food, but avoided mention of over-access to unhealthful foods. The study, nonetheless, had an impact (as described by advocates) on the later development of the USDA's "Food Environment Atlas"<sup>79</sup> and served as important background work for the White House Obesity report,<sup>80</sup> the First Lady's *Let's Move!* Initiative<sup>81</sup> and the national Healthy Food Financing Initiative (HFFI).<sup>82</sup> Just four years after Congress expressed interest in the issue, it became a national initiative with a White House commitment to eliminate food deserts by 2017.<sup>83</sup> While many advocates did not (and still do not) support the term "food deserts," the ERS study was an important opening to future debate on issues of race and equity in relation to underserved markets and at-risk populations. At the time of passage, if the language mandating the study had focused more on sustainable food production or unhealthy foods, the study would likely not have been included in the Farm Bill. Additionally, there was not enough political support for the assessment of questions of local food, local ownership and cooperative responses to the lack of healthy food, which led to a focus on retail supermarkets as a response to the problem. Factors relating to political feasibility also ensured that the study addressed rural issues in addition to urban ones. Despite what some might call a narrow focus of the study, it has been useful, not only in terms of its findings, but also as a catalyst for other initiatives, as mentioned. As the public health community and colleagues plan for the next Farm Bill, it would be wise to consider other research needs that could be addressed in a similar way, promoting a relatively small investment in research that can lead to additional programs and policies that benefit health. Because funding will be limited for the next Farm Bill, any programs or policies with a small (or zero) price tag and the potential for far-reaching impacts will be important to promote.

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<sup>79</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture. Economic Research Service. Food Environment Atlas. Accessed August 2, 2011. <http://www.ers.usda.gov/foodatlas/>.

<sup>80</sup> The White House. "Childhood Obesity Task Force Unveils Action Plan: Solving the Problem of Childhood Obesity Within a Generation." News release. March 11, 2010. Accessed August 2, 2011. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/childhood-obesity-task-force-unveils-action-plan-solving-problem-childhood-obesity->.

<sup>81</sup> The White House. "Let's Move!" Accessed August 2, 2011. <http://www.letsmove.gov>.

<sup>82</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. "Obama Administration Details Healthy Food Financing Initiative." New release. February 19, 2010. Accessed August 2, 2011. <http://www.hhs.gov/news/press/2010pres/02/20100219a.html>.

<sup>83</sup> Black, J. "Michelle Obama on obesity: Time for a wake-up call." All We Can Eat Blog. *The Washington Post*. February 9, 2010. Accessed August 2, 2011. <http://voices.washingtonpost.com/all-we-can-eat/food-politics/obama-its-time-for-a-wake-upcal.html>.

# Research

## Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education<sup>84</sup>

### Policy Description<sup>85</sup>

Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) works to increase knowledge about - and help farmers and ranchers adopt - practices that are profitable, environmentally sound and good for communities. Now in place for over 20 years, SARE awards several types of competitive grants through four regional administrative councils. Research and education grants ranging from \$60,000 to \$150,000 fund projects that usually involve scientists, producers, and others in an interdisciplinary approach. Professional development grants offer educational opportunities for USDA's Extension Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and other agricultural professionals. Producer grants go to farmers and ranchers who test innovative ideas and share the results with their neighbors to encourage others to adopt the practices. The program has been described by Dr. Kathleen Merrigan, Deputy Secretary of the USDA, as a "jewel in the crown" of the USDA's research portfolio.<sup>86</sup> SARE is an important research program for the public health community to support as it addresses both upstream environmental-health-related farming practices with environmental health impacts on water, soil, food and fiber, as well as a number of issues with more direct community health implications.

### Funding – Appropriated<sup>87</sup>

2009	2010	2011	2012
\$19 MILLION	\$19 MILLION	\$19 MILLION (ESTIMATE)	\$20 MILLION (BUDGET)

### Policy Advocacy

The National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition has been the principal advocate of this policy since before its inception. SARE was first developed as the Low Input and Sustainable Agriculture (LISA) program and authorized in the 1985 Farm Bill. It was changed to SARE in the 1990 Farm Bill and has grown from a few million dollars in early years to its present size of about \$20 million per year. Thanks to the active sustainable agriculture community in Vermont, Senator Leahy (D-VT) has been a consistent champion of SARE.

### Policy Implementation<sup>88</sup>

To date, SARE has funded over 4,200 grants addressing a range of issues, including energy, vegetable and crop production, livestock production, organic production, pest management, crop improvement and new crops, manure management, soil health and resource conservation, and water health, among other topics. Funded projects vary across the four SARE regions in response to local needs. A 2005 survey of Western SARE grantees found that 79 percent of farmers and ranchers said their SARE projects helped them improve soil quality, and 64 percent attributed higher sales to their projects.<sup>89</sup> In addition to projects with upstream environmental health impacts, SARE has also funded efforts with more direct public health benefits. For example, the Milwaukee urban farming venture Growing Power received SARE grants in 2001, 2003, and 2005 to, among other things, create an educational component for a program in which poor urban families receive discounted deliveries of

<sup>84</sup> 7 USC Sec. 5801 to 5832.

<sup>85</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture. National Institute for Food and Agriculture. "Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program (SARE)." March 2011. Accessed August 4, 2011. <http://www.csrees.usda.gov/fo/sustainableagricultureresearchandeducation.cfm>.

<sup>86</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture. *2009-2010 SARE Report From the Field*. Accessed August 4, 2011. <http://www.sare.org/content/download/322/1949/file/2009-2010%20Report%20from%20the%20Field.pdf>.

<sup>87</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture. "FY 2012 Budget Summary and Annual Performance Plan." 2011. Accessed August 14, 2011. <http://www.obpa.usda.gov/budsum/FY12budsum.pdf>.

<sup>88</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture. National Institute of Food and Agriculture. "Highlights of Selected Projects from the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) Program." March 2009. Accessed August 4, 2011. [http://www.nifa.usda.gov/nea/ag\\_systems/sri/sustain\\_ag\\_sri\\_sare.html](http://www.nifa.usda.gov/nea/ag_systems/sri/sustain_ag_sri_sare.html).

<sup>89</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture. National Institute of Food and Agriculture. "Surveys confirm Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program results." October, 2010. Accessed August 4, 2011. [http://www.csrees.usda.gov/nea/ag\\_systems/sri/sustain\\_ag\\_sri\\_survey.html](http://www.csrees.usda.gov/nea/ag_systems/sri/sustain_ag_sri_survey.html).

fresh produce.<sup>90</sup> Another recent SARE grant funded the Threshold Foundation to establish a Mobile Farmers' Market to deliver fresh produce to low-income and elderly populations in Pennsylvania.<sup>91</sup> SARE grants have also funded farm-to-school programs and efforts to improve food safety. However, the bulk of SARE grants go to more explicitly agricultural purposes. In the Southern SARE region, for example, integrated crop and livestock systems and pest management received the largest numbers of research grants between 1988 and 2007, while community development and quality of life received the fewest.<sup>92</sup>

### Analysis

SARE was the first federal research grant program to require collaboration of more than one discipline in order to receive funding. It is also one of the few programs that gives farmers a role in directing research projects, which has led to a favorable view of SARE among many in both the sustainable and conventional agriculture communities. These two elements have significantly affected the research culture of U.S. agricultural colleges and universities, helping to shape much of the food systems research and analysis of the past 10 years. This program is not likely to grow in the 112th Congress and may be targeted for cuts along with many other conservation programs considered to be of lesser importance by the Republican-led House Agriculture Committee. Support is likely to continue in the Senate because of Senator Leahy's (D-VT) championship. While Congress designates funding levels for SARE, the program itself is decentralized, with the allocation of grants and determination of program priorities taking place at the regional administrative council level. Therefore public health advocates should also seek to work with the councils, which are comprised of volunteers, to support the funding of more public health focused projects.

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<sup>90</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture. *2009-2010 SARE Report From the Field*. Accessed August 4, 2011. <http://www.sare.org/content/download/322/1949/file/2009-2010%20Report%20from%20the%20Field.pdf>.

<sup>91</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture. Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE). "A mobile farmers market for senior and WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program beneficiaries." 2009 Final Report. Accessed August 4, 2011. <http://mysare.sare.org/mySARE/ProjectReport.aspx?do=viewRept&pn=CNE09-060&y=2009&t=1>.

<sup>92</sup> National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition. October 2010. *Draft Progress Report, Assessment of the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program*.

# Research

## Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative<sup>93</sup>

### Policy Description<sup>94</sup>

The Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative (OREI), first established in the 2002 Farm Bill, seeks to address critical organic agriculture issues, priorities, or problems through the integration of research and extension activities. The purpose of this program is to fund high priority research and extension projects that will enhance the ability of producers and processors who have already adopted organic standards to grow and market high quality organic agricultural products. Research focused on organic systems differs from the broader multidisciplinary research on sustainable farming practice in SARE, though there have been organic research projects funded by SARE. The public health benefits of OREI are indirect, based on the health benefits of organic production – particularly, the potential to reduce community and occupational exposure to pesticides and other toxic chemicals and drugs used in conventional crop and livestock production.

### Funding - Mandatory<sup>95</sup>

2009	2010	2011	2012
\$18 MILLION	\$20 MILLION	\$20 MILLION	\$20 MILLION

This program has zero baseline after fiscal year 2012.

### Policy Advocacy

The Organic Farming Research Foundation (OFRF) completed an analysis in the 1990s, which showed that federal research dollars for organic agriculture basically were absent. After a decade of work, organic advocates secured the first organic research dollars in the 2002 Farm Bill with support from Senator Leahy (D-VT). Advocates continued their work with the 2008 Farm Bill and achieved a five-fold increase in funding. This was due to advocates' work, increased public interest in organics and assistance from key Congressional leaders with seniority - Senator Harkin (D-IA), then Chairman of the Senate Agriculture Committee, and Senator Leahy (D-VT) - to champion the policy debates. Representative Farr (D-CA) on the House Agriculture Appropriations Committee was also a strong champion. OREI was part of a package of programs that the organic community advocated for in order to support organic production practices. Additionally, organic farming was given status, if not adequate funding, by being named in a separate title in the 2008 Farm Bill – Horticulture and Organic Agriculture. In the 1980s and 1990s, organic farming was considered by the Congressional Agriculture Committees to be marginal in U.S. agriculture. It is still not equal to conventional agriculture in terms of the level of advocacy and lobbying on the issue, nor does it receive equal funding and research from the USDA.

### Policy Implementation

While the increase in funding for OREI in the 2008 Farm Bill was significant, the level of funding remains insufficient to meet current research needs. In FY2009, OREI received 132 applications and could only fund 20 percent of them.<sup>96</sup> In FY2010, only 18 percent of applicants were funded.<sup>97</sup> Overall, OREI has been a highly

<sup>93</sup> 7 USC Sec. 5925b; P.L. 110-246 Sec 7206.

<sup>94</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture. National Institute of Food and Agriculture. "Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative.. 2011 Request for Applications." n.d. Accessed August 14, 2011. [http://www.csrees.usda.gov/funding/rfas/pdfs/11\\_orei.pdf](http://www.csrees.usda.gov/funding/rfas/pdfs/11_orei.pdf).

<sup>95</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture. "FY 2012 Budget Summary and Annual Performance Plan." 2011. Accessed August 14, 2011. <http://www.obpa.usda.gov/budsum/FY12budsum.pdf>.

<sup>96</sup> Peet, M. n.d.. "Integrated Organic Program: Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative (OREI) and Organic Transitions Program (ORG)." Presentation. U.S. Department of Agriculture. National Institute of Food and Agriculture. Accessed August 4, 2011. <http://arc.wsu.edu/grant-writing/presentations/peet.pdf>.

<sup>97</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture. National Institute of Food and Agriculture. "Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative." November 2010. Accessed August 4, 2011. <http://www.csrees.usda.gov/fo/organicagricultureresearchandextensioninitiative.cfm>.

popular program and is thought of as “the USDA’s flagship organic research program.”<sup>98</sup> However, farmers and advocates have also expressed concern that OREI may be failing to support grants for projects that seek to find alternative strategies for organic production. For example, the National Organic Coalition has noted that a grant to develop an alternative to antibiotics for controlling a bacterial disease that impacts fruit trees was denied, as was a grant to develop an alternative to the addition of a synthetic amino acid to chicken feed.<sup>99</sup> Without these alternatives, organic producers may find that they must continue to use products that would otherwise not be desirable in an organic system of production.

### *Analysis*

Two important lessons from the initial passage of OREI are that: 1) legislative developments in the Farm Bill often take years, even decades (it took at least ten years for OREI to be established), and 2) Congressional champions are essential. It can be challenging to obtain Congressional support for research that benefits organic agriculture and even more challenging to obtain the systemic and cultural shifts needed in the USDA and academic communities to enable funding to conduct this research. Unfortunately, given current budget constraints and Republican House leadership, it may be difficult to obtain the needed increase in funding for OREI in the next Farm Bill. As noted above, OREI will not be in the baseline for the next Farm Bill and therefore is at an elevated risk of being cut. Additionally, while USDA Deputy Secretary Dr. Kathleen Merrigan has worked to promote organic production, by, for example, directing all 27 USDA agencies to include organic agriculture in their program planning (an initiative within the authority of USDA and not as a result of a Congressional mandate), there are still concerns about the USDA’s financial and research commitment to organics relative to conventional agriculture. Advocates should seek to leverage the current administration’s support for organic agriculture in order to encourage further support for research and production of organics. As a start to moving organic agriculture as a whole forward, there are many suggestions in the recent National Organic Action Plan that could be implemented (plan available at: <http://www.rafiusa.org/docs/noap.pdf>).

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<sup>98</sup> Etko, Steve (National Organic Coalition). Testimony on the Review Specialty Crop and Organic Agriculture Program in Advance of the 2012 Farm Bill. Hearing. July 21, 2010. Accessed August 4, 2011. <http://www.nationalorganiccoalition.org/policycomments/2012FarmBilltestimony.pdf>.

<sup>99</sup> National Organic Coalition. Comments to the National Organic Standards Board. April 10, 2011. Accessed August 4, 2011. <http://www.nationalorganiccoalition.org/policycomments/NOC%20Comments%204-10-11.pdf>.



# Research

## Organic Production and Market Data Initiatives<sup>100</sup>

### Policy Description<sup>101</sup>

First established in the 2002 Farm Bill, Organic Production and Market Data Initiatives (ODI) require the USDA to collect, publish, and conduct statistical analysis and surveys concerning organic production and markets. The organic industry has grown very rapidly, yet basic price and yield information continues to be lacking in relevant USDA agencies. To correct this information deficit, the 2008 Farm Bill provided \$5 million over five years in mandatory funds to ODI to collect this needed information. While an additional \$5 million annually was also authorized, a significantly smaller sum has actually been appropriated for fiscal years 2009-2011. The data collected under ODI are important to substantiate the trends and scope of the organic market and to support organic production methods and products, and thus their direct and indirect impacts on environmental and human health. Data supported by the program are also needed to create actuarial formulas that help organic producers gain increased access to loans and insurance programs.

### Funding – Mandatory

\$5 Million over 5 years. This program has zero baseline after 2012.

### Additional Funding – Appropriated<sup>102</sup>

2009	2010	2011	2012
\$500,000	\$750,000	AGENCY DISCRETION DUE TO LACK OF DETAIL IN BILL	\$300,000 FOR AMS. UNDISCLOSED AMOUNT FOR NASS AND ERS. (ADMINISTRATION BUDGET REQUEST)

### Policy Advocacy

The National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition and the National Organic Coalition were primary advocates for funding for ODI during the 2008 Farm Bill debates. These advocates developed the legislative priorities for sponsors in the Senate and House. Key champions were Representatives Blumenauer (D-OR), Rush (D-II), and Farr (D-CA) in the House and Senators Leahy (D-VT), Tester (D-MT), and Harkin (D-IA) in the Senate. All these champions have either been long-term supporters of organic agriculture or have come to recognize the market value and health impact of organic production practices

### Policy Implementation

ODI has been implemented jointly by three divisions of the USDA: the National Agriculture Statistics Service (NASS), Economic Research Service (ERS), and the Agriculture Marketing Service (AMS). Collaboration across these divisions has been challenging, primarily due to the silo effect. Additionally, there are reports that there are not adequate resources dedicated for administration of this policy. As of April 2011, according to advocates, the primary accomplishment of ODI is a NASS survey of organic producers from across the U.S. A number of additional data collection and analysis efforts are underway. The final survey was released in 2010, and can be found here: [http://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/2007/Online\\_Highlights/Organics/](http://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/2007/Online_Highlights/Organics/). ODI has not been a top

<sup>100</sup> 7 USC Sec. 5925c; P.L. 110-246 Sec 10302.

<sup>101</sup> Nally, Shannon. "A Snapshot of Organic Agriculture Activities at the USDA- Post 2008 Farm Bill." U.S. Department of Agriculture. National Organic Program. Presented at the Natural Products Expo East. October 16, 2008. Accessed August 9, 2011. <http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/getfile?dDocName=STELPRDC5073502>.

<sup>102</sup> National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition. "Agriculture Appropriations Chart, Fiscal Year 2012." 2011. Accessed August 15, 2011. <http://sustainableagriculture.net/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/NSAC-FY-2012-Ag-Appropriations-Chart-Presidents-Request-April-2011.pdf>; Organic Farming Research Foundation. "FY12 Agriculture Appropriations Request." 2011. Accessed August 15, 2011. [http://ofrf.org/policy/federal\\_legislation/appropriations/fy12/fy12\\_approps\\_testimony.pdf](http://ofrf.org/policy/federal_legislation/appropriations/fy12/fy12_approps_testimony.pdf).

priority among all of its advocates; accordingly the lack of ongoing pressure on the USDA for implementation may also be contributing to delays.

### *Analysis*

Organic production and market data are essential for the USDA to track the organic market more completely. Yet, despite the fact that organics have been the largest growth area in U.S. agriculture, many advocates find that data collection has been inadequate. While ODI represents an important step towards meeting these needs, continued low levels of funding and obstacles to developing greater collaboration and leadership commitment to organics inside the USDA continue to serve as barriers to collecting sufficient data. Going forward, ODI will need new funds to continue these data collection and analysis activities. Advocates have also suggested that NASS commit to conducting a comprehensive survey of organic producers every five years.<sup>103</sup> While an amendment to fund ODI for FY2012 received bipartisan support in the House,<sup>104</sup> ODI is still at risk in the next Farm Bill due to budget constraints and continued reluctance to prioritize organics. The public health community can help support organic production by advocating for funding and full implementation of this program.

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<sup>103</sup> Etko, Steven (National Organic Coalition). Testimony regarding Fiscal Year 2012 Appropriations Requests before the Senate Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies. June 16, 2011. Accessed August 9, 2011. <http://www.nationalorganiccoalition.org/NOCJune2011/NOCappropsFY12SenatetestimonyFINAL.pdf>.

<sup>104</sup> National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition. "House of Representatives Passes FY 2012 Agriculture Funding Bill." June 17, 2011. Accessed August 9, 2011. <http://sustainableagriculture.net/blog/house-passes-fy12-funding-bill/>.

# Education

## Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Nutrition Education<sup>105</sup>

### Policy Description<sup>106</sup>

The SNAP Nutrition Education Program (SNAP-Ed) is a federal-state partnership that supports nutrition education for persons eligible for SNAP. State agencies that choose to conduct nutrition education through SNAP are eligible to be reimbursed for up to one-half of their nutrition education costs by USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS). State agencies generally contract with land-grant institutions, state public health departments, food banks, tribal programs, and local health organizations to deliver the nutrition education. As of the 2010 Child Nutrition Act Reauthorization (CNR), both program eligibility and allowable types of nutrition education were expanded, addressing a limitation that had been perceived as a problem by program contractors.

SNAP-Ed, which is learner-centered and behavior-focused, is delivered directly through group and individual interactive learning opportunities, indirectly through the distribution of print and video materials, and—as of 2010—through social marketing campaigns. SNAP-Ed is included here primarily because the recent policy changes around it are a good example of how the vehicle for a policy change can shift from one piece of legislation to another in order for the policy change successfully to become law.

**Funding - Appropriated<sup>107</sup>** (no funding data available for 2011 and 2012 at the time of writing)

2007	2008	2009	2010
\$275,684,607	\$315,591,531	\$350,281,595	\$379,088,433

### Policy Advocacy

Public health advocates began working during the 2002 Farm Bill to expand the legal definition of nutrition education beyond individual and group education to include public health models for education, such as the social-ecological model and the spectrum of prevention, which stress interventions at multiple levels, including the context in which a person or community lives. Advocates were unsuccessful at that time because of difficulties in getting those outside the field to fully understand public health education models. Subsequently, eligible audiences for education were restricted by USDA regulations allowing only those in the SNAP program to participate in education. This policy affected many state programs because it meant that community-based nutrition education activities, such as social marketing, were now *disallowed* by the USDA. Advocates worked to insert language into the 2008 Farm Bill regarding who would be eligible for SNAP nutrition education and how the education could be performed. This language was included in the bill voted on and passed by the House Agriculture committee, however, it was determined by the Congressional Budget Office that the cost of the policy would be too great as it was funded like an entitlement program, so it was stripped from the bill.

However, with the reauthorization of Child Nutrition Programs in 2010, advocates succeeded in getting nutrition education language expanded to include individuals who reside in a community with a significant low-income population. Allowable nutrition education was also expanded to include: (i) individual and group-based nutrition education, health promotion, and intervention strategies; (ii) comprehensive, multilevel interventions at multiple complementary organizational and institutional levels; and (iii) community and public health approaches to improve nutrition.<sup>108</sup>

<sup>105</sup> 7 USC Sec. 2020; P.L. 110-246 Sec 4111.

<sup>106</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture. National Institute of Food and Agriculture. "SNAP-Ed." March 2009. Accessed August 14, 2011. <http://www.csrees.usda.gov/nea/food/fsne/fsne.html>.

<sup>107</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture. "Approved Federal Funds for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education by Fiscal Year." n.d. Accessed August 14, 2011. <http://www.nal.usda.gov/fsn/ApprovedFederalFundsSNAP-Ed01202010.pdf>.

<sup>108</sup> PL 111-296 Sec. 241.

### *Policy Implementation*

The SNAP-Education expansion has not had an opportunity to be implemented since being passed into law in late 2010. Additionally, there may still be some resistance within the USDA, where the focus has traditionally been on one-on-one nutrition education. It is currently anticipated the FNS will define relevant terms (such as “community and public health approaches”) by January 1, 2012.<sup>109</sup>

### *Analysis*

During the work on the 2008 Farm Bill, there was some controversy between regions in the U.S. over SNAP-Education because of differences in programs. This served as a hindrance to the adoption of SNAP-Education language in the Farm Bill. In CNR, it was easier to gain acceptance for the policy shift to a public health model of nutrition education because the legislation itself is focused on the wellbeing of children. Additionally, much of the attention of Congress at the time was on using SNAP funds to pay for CNR, which allowed the SNAP-Education policy to face less debate. And finally, the SNAP-Education changes were supported by White House policy staff who collaborated with Agriculture Committee staff in writing language and working for the enactment of the provisions. Public health advocates may wish to make note of different pieces of legislation in which desired policies might be enacted, as each piece of legislation has a distinct profile and may impact the feasibility of passage.

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<sup>109</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture. Food and Nutrition Service. “Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 Clarification on Section 241: Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention Grant Program.” Memo. March 14, 2011. Accessed August 14, 2011. <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/rules/Memo/2011/031411.pdf>.

## Lessons from Public Health Engagement in The 2008 Farm Bill

The range and complexity of the 18 policies outlined above attest to the density and depth of the Farm Bill, which is one of the most complicated federal omnibus bills enacted by Congress. Since its genesis, the Farm Bill has focused fundamentally on agriculture, and its policies have been conceived of and enacted with the farmer in mind. Over time, however, the Bill evolved to serve not only farmers, but also the people who were most in need of what farmers had to offer—food. These vulnerable people in need of food assistance are low-income Americans and schoolchildren.

It is unfortunate, then, that while the Farm Bill has come to serve those most in need of the fruits of the farmer's labor, it has neglected the connection between the consumers and producers. In other words, the Bill has until recently ignored the significance of food systems for health, and the need for healthy communities.

But that is changing.

Thanks in large part to the work of public health, community food security, and food systems advocates, the policy discourse has gradually begun to shift to include a greater focus on issues such as food security, organic foods, increased access to local and affordable produce, and the content of the food supply. The 2008 Farm Bill saw both increased advocacy by public health groups and a greater recognition of the environmental, social, and nutritional health impacts of food and agriculture than ever before. It is our hope that advocates, while continuing to bring attention to the issues just mentioned, will continue to honor the original intent of the Farm Bill and acknowledge that successful engagement with the Bill requires a commitment to understanding and respecting farmers' needs, including the importance of maintaining and building markets for their products. Public health needs and farmers' needs do not have to be mutually exclusive; in fact, they can complement each other with a great deal of grace.

This report highlights 18 policies from the 2008 Farm Bill that illustrate the potential for such complimentary goals and provide examples of how the Farm Bill can be successfully navigated. While the 18 policies are diverse, both in focus and in scope, they offer clear lessons for advocacy and implementation. The lessons presented in this report represent important considerations for advocates to consider as the next Farm Bill approaches. Given that budget constraints threaten the funding levels, and continued existence, of several policies examined here, it is extremely important that the public health community engages with the 2012/2013 Farm Bill. As noted throughout the report, the following policies currently not in the baseline will need special efforts to ensure continued existence and eventual expansion (see page 8 for background on this issue): Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program, Farmers' Market Electronic Benefits Transfer Program, Healthy Urban Food Enterprise Development (HUFED); Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative (OREI); and Organic Production and Market Data Initiatives (ODI). Additionally, the Pilot Projects To Evaluate Health & Nutrition Promotion in SNAP and the Food Desert Study were one-time allocations for specific projects.

### Key Lessons From the 18 Policies

Public health advocates and their partners saw a number of policy successes in the 2008 Farm Bill. However, much remains to be done. The following advocacy and implementation lessons are drawn from the development, advocacy, and implementation experiences surrounding the 18 policies highlighted in this report, with the intention of allowing both new and returning advocates to learn from past experiences. Many of the lessons from the 2008 Farm Bill hold particular relevance for the challenging budget situation that is anticipated to shape much of the debate around the next Farm Bill.

#### *Lessons for Advocacy*

While not seeking to provide a guide to basic advocacy strategy, these lessons offer insight into some of the specific practices that brought success in 2008 and point attention to a number of issues that advocates should be aware of as they engage with the next Farm Bill.

##### *1. Look for No-Cost and Low-Cost Policy Solutions*

With the federal budget increasingly limiting the feasibility of establishing new programs and expenditures, no-cost and low-cost policies are appealing options for accomplishing reforms in the

2012-2013 Farm Bill. Even at the time of the 2008 Farm Bill, budgets were already tight and advocates successfully pushed for a number of such policies. One example of a no-cost policy change is the expansion of the local preference for school food purchases across all Child Nutrition Programs. A related strategy is to establish set-asides for desired activities within pre-existing programs. Two examples of this are the establishment of the Organic Initiative within EQIP (and using EQIP funds) and the requirement that 5 percent of Rural Development Business and Industry (B&I) Loan Program funds go towards local and regional initiatives for healthy foods.

## 2. *Consider Pilot Programs*

Pilot programs were a notable theme in the 2008 Farm Bill – both in the further expansion of programs that once began as pilots, and in the creation of new pilot programs. While by definition less comprehensive than full-scale programs, pilot programs can set the stage for future program expansion, and require less financial and political capital for passage and implementation. Advocates had worked an extended period of time to try to win to passage a SNAP incentive to encourage fruit and vegetable purchases. However, lacking political support both in Congress and at the USDA, advocates instead successfully won the inclusion of a pilot program to study the incentives. Once evaluation has been completed, data from the pilot study can be used to support future advocacy efforts and full-scale implementation. The Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program and the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable program both started as pilots and grew into full programs due to initial successes.

## 3. *Consider Other Pieces of Legislation*

An important determinant of successful policy passage is the piece of legislation to which it is attached. The legislation's purpose and budgetary, political, and other context are important elements for consideration. While the Farm Bill is the right setting for many policies, it can be valuable to consider other pieces of legislation. In some cases, there are multiple "right" policy vehicles and time and luck are the determining factors. This issue is illustrated in the choice of legislation for the amendment to SNAP-Ed enabling the use of modern public health educational tools. Congress failed to include it in the 2008 Farm Bill, but later passed it as part of the Child Nutrition Reauthorization (CNR). The Farm Bill is focused primarily on agriculture and anti-hunger programs, and while the role of health has been growing, many of those focused on the Farm Bill lack background in public health models. In this particular case, the CNR was a better choice for the policy change because the discourse surrounding that legislation is inherently focused on the wellbeing and health of children.

## 4. *Be Mindful of Urban-Rural Dynamics*

Understanding the complex and changing urban-rural dynamics of the Farm Bill proved critical to the creation of the Healthy Urban Food Enterprise Development (HUFED) program and the local foods set-aside in the Rural Business and Industries (B&I) Loan and Loan Guarantee Program in 2008. When first proposed, the two programs were joined; however, due to issues of jurisdiction surrounding USDA Rural Development funds, the rural and urban portions of the program were split from one another. It appears that splitting the two programs was essential to their successful enactment. Indeed, the entire Farm Bill reflects the benefits of rural and urban cooperation, as those supporting farm programs and those focused on SNAP have come together to assure the bill's passage decade after decade. While there are often clear benefits to both parties from joining urban and rural programs, there are remaining administrative barriers to such efforts. As evidenced by negative views on the B&I set-aside program reportedly expressed by rural development interests and some in the USDA, there may also be those who view the focus on food systems as primarily a concern of those in urban areas. Advocates should then be mindful of urban-rural dynamics as they engage with the next Farm Bill, seeking to balance efforts to bridge the rural-urban divide with the practical reality that doing so may be challenging in the short term. An effective urban-rural coalition at state and national levels can grow policy and programs that benefit both consumers and producers tied to economic, health, and environmental benefits.



### 5. *Evidence and Data can be Critical*

High quality research documenting the need for a policy, as well as potential policy impacts, was critical to several policy successes in, and after, the 2008 Farm Bill. Perhaps the most notable piece of public health focused research coming out of the 2008 Farm Bill was the Economic Research Service's Food Desert Study. Advocates reported that the study helped motivate the creation of a number of efforts, including the USDA's "Food Environment Atlas" and the First Lady's *Let's Move!* Initiative. While it is clear that Obama administration interest in the issue also played a key role in the creation of these efforts, the report illustrates the ways in which a relatively small investment in research can motivate policy efforts. For future Farm Bills, there is an opportunity to build further on current research to justify new policy needs. There is also an opportunity to commission new research on public health priorities, either as stand alone research and pilot programs or by pushing for a greater focus on the public health aspects of agriculture and food systems in larger research programs such as Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) and Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE).

### 6. *Identify Congressional Champions*

In the 2008 Farm Bill, champions from the Senate and House Agriculture Committees, as well as Congressional leadership, played a key role in the passage of public health focused policies. During the run-up to the 2008 Farm Bill, there were numerous "marker bills" introduced by champions in both the Senate and the House that brought health-related policy into the "markup"<sup>110</sup> of the Agriculture Committee bills. Most of the policies reviewed in this report originated in one or more of these marker bills. For example, Senator Brown (D-OH) and Representative Blumenauer (D-OR) introduced the Healthy Food Enterprise Development program in marker bills, which eventually led to the successful passage of the Healthy Urban Food Enterprise Development (HUFED) program and the local foods set-aside in the Rural Business and Industries (B&I) Loan and Loan Guarantee Program. The tighter the funding for the Farm Bill, the fewer issues each committee member will be able to win for their constituents and the more important it becomes to have champions engaged early in the legislative process. Floor amendments do occur, but these are difficult and subject to rule changes that are hard to predict. Champions are most likely to be found among members who are already vested in a particular issue, such as Representative DeLauro (D-CT) in the case of Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program, or those who have constituents engaged with the issue in question, exemplified by Senator Leahy's (D-VT) championing of Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) due to the active sustainable agriculture community in Vermont.

### 7. *Establish Clear Parameters for Coalitions*

Several of the policies addressed here are supported by a broad range of interests, from public health and anti-hunger advocates to producer groups and corporate interests. While cross-sector coalitions are important to legislative success, the 2008 Farm Bill highlighted a number of instances where advocates and lobbyists supporting the same policy had clearly different visions of the specific details of the policy. For example, the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program saw support from a coalition of producer and public health groups. While all favored the expansion of the program, several producer groups lobbied hard for the inclusion of dried fruits and nuts in the program, while others wanted to ensure only fresh fruits and vegetables were part of the program. Similar tension is present with the Specialty Crop Block Grants Program, where producer groups often favor using funds for efforts to further competitive ventures with no apparent public health benefit. The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) poses another set of challenges, as public health advocates must determine if the benefits of supporting the program are

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<sup>110</sup> There is often confusion between the terms *markup and marker*. The first refers to the "marking up" or drafting of the committee bill, also called the "markup", or the "chair's mark". A "marker" Bill is introduced by a small or large set of co-sponsors, often including members of the committees of jurisdiction, to call attention to issues those members want included in the Chair's mark or what will become the committee bill. If the issues in a marker bill are not included in the markup they may become amendments offered when the full House or Senate votes on the committee bill. All these (and other) moments in the legislative process are opportunities for advocates to influence the legislative language.

outweighed by continued producer interest in using funds to benefit confined animal feeding operations. Public health advocates need to work to set clear parameters for the alliances they build with groups who have inherently different motivating factors. Establishing in advance the extent to which compromises are willing to be made, and which policy elements are non-negotiable, can help advocates navigate the important coalition building process.

### *Lessons for Implementation*

The work of advocates does not end upon the successful passage of a desired policy or program. Indeed, ongoing work to ensure successful implementation is a critical step in the Farm Bill process. Looking across the implementation efforts for the 18 policies covered in this report, one can draw several significant lessons. There are cases of effective engagement in the implementation process, as well as cases where results could have been better. Working closely with implementers can help ensure successful results, as can a good understanding of the administrative and cultural barriers that may impede full implementation and USDA support.

#### *1. Work with Lead USDA and State Implementers*

Many of the 2008 Farm Bill policies addressed here left a great deal of discretion to the USDA and state and local implementing agencies. For example, advocates felt that the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) had too little direction from Congress in how the EQIP Organic Initiative should be implemented, and states are able to make critical implementation decisions under the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program and Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program. Under Sustainable Agriculture Research Education (SARE), grant decisions and priorities are made through regional administrative councils made up of volunteers. All of these represent instances where advocates might seek to continue their efforts and relationships with the USDA and state and local agencies to ensure implementation choices that are desirable from a public health perspective. One example of successful advocate engagement can be found in the expanded local preference for school food purchases. This effort represented relatively new territory for USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) and advocates worked closely and consistently with lead implementers for positive results, including the creation of the new USDA Farm to School Tactical Team which was a result of direct requests from advocates.

#### *2. Be Prepared for Implementation Challenges*

There were a number of challenges faced in the implementation of the 18 policies addressed here. The Organic Production and Market Data Initiatives (ODI) and the administration of SNAP benefits through the Farmers' Market Promotion Program both represent instances where collaboration between USDA divisions proved to be a challenge. Given the "siloe" manner in which the USDA has historically operated, advocates may wish to encourage efforts undertaken by the Office of the Secretary that foster a more integrated and collaborative culture at the USDA. Another factor that posed a challenge for several of the policies is the USDA's continued prioritization of conventional agriculture over more sustainable practices. This manifests itself both as a lack of experience that hampers the review of loan/grant applications and the provision of technical assistance for sustainable practices, as in the case of the local set-aside in the Rural Development Business and Industry (B&I) Loan Program and the EQIP Organic Initiative, and as a negative attitude by some towards many of these new policies. Advocates reported that there had been instances of active resistance towards the implementation of the EQIP Organic Initiative by some in the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Based on the 18 policies, these issues occur primarily when a program or policy is implemented under a larger pre-existing initiative focusing on conventional agriculture. There is also some indication that the Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative (OREI) and Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) may be intentionally choosing not to fund certain types of sustainable agriculture projects. These types of challenges suggest that advocates need to be prepared to actively encourage full implementation of policies.

#### *3. Contractors Can Help the Implementation Process*

The 2008 Farm Bill's Healthy Urban Food Enterprise Development Program (HUFED) made successful use of an external contractor to administer grants and provide technical assistance. Given the USDA's

relative lack of experience with some of the newer programs authorized by the Farm Bill, contractors who are already familiar with the particular field can ease the USDA's transition into work on these issues. In the case of HUFED, both the USDA and the contractor agreed that the arrangement was working well once some initial obstacles had been addressed. The National Institute of Food and Agriculture's (NIFA) Community Food Projects has also established a successful model, in which technical assistance grants are made to nonprofit organizations that in turn help train potential grantees and provide outreach and evaluation services. Other Farm Bill programs, such as the local set-aside in the Rural Development Business and Industry (B&I) Loan Program and EQIP Organic Initiative might benefit from similar types of arrangements given aforementioned barriers to implementation. While several USDA divisions are stepping up to these new challenges, exemplified by the Economic Research Service's willingness to take on the Food Desert Study in-house, advocates may wish to encourage the use of external contractors where implementation appears to be posing more of a challenge.

### **Conclusion: Growing an Integrated Body of Health Related Farm Bill Policy.**

The 2008 Farm Bill took notable steps toward protecting the public's health, specifically in the five policy categories addressed in this report: Provision of Healthy Foods, Local and Regional Food Systems, Production Practices, Research, and Education. With these steps, the Bill moved a little further from primarily serving conventional farming operations, which so often work against public health, and closer toward supporting the full scope of a food system that facilitates improvements in the health of Americans.

The 18 policies described in this report were chosen because they represent policies touching on a range of public health goals and actions. It is important to note that the list of policies does not represent the complete picture of "health in the Farm Bill." In particular, the report does not take to task the programs that have potentially negative impacts on health. It also excludes the main SNAP program, commodity subsidies, and the Conservation Stewardship Program, for reasons described in the introduction.

The five categories addressed in this report are the policy areas that the authors believe merit attention and protection. Specific policy and program needs are highlighted, as follows.

**Provision of Healthy Foods:** With the increase in funding for the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program, significant expansion of the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program, and set aside of funds for EBT use in farmers' markets, there were a number of policies seeking to expand access to healthy food in the 2008 Farm Bill. However, these types of policies can be prone to tension between public health advocates, anti-hunger advocates, and large fruit and vegetable producers due to questions of program priorities and what types of foods are appropriate to subsidize. Public health advocates generally being more concerned with the nutritional content of foods, while anti-hunger advocates traditionally focus on caloric intake, and producers on profits and expanding markets. These tensions may rise further given increasing competition for scarce funding. While the tension is inherent, it can potentially be minimized through the creation of formal coalitions with a very specific focus, as was the case with the ad hoc Work Group, which successfully brought together health, community food security, and agriculture groups to work on the 2008 Farm Bill.

**Local and Regional Food Systems:** Efforts to improve and build food systems at the local and regional level saw a number of successes, with room for continued improvement. New flexibility in geographic preferences for purchase of school foods was an important step for farm-to-institution markets. Innovative grants to support Community Food Projects (CFP) and Healthy Urban Food Enterprise Development (HUFED) funded a number of promising projects that seek to meet the need for infrastructure to supply more fresh and minimally processed food in every region. However, the rural equivalent of HUFED faced more challenges due to its inclusion in the Rural Development Business and Industry (B&I) Loan Program. Ensuring continued funding so as to allow communities to build on current food systems work should be a priority for the public health community.

**Production Practices:** The new EQIP Organic Initiative, the Specialty Crop Block Grants Program, and environmental services market policies collectively build upon the food systems approach to address "upstream" practices that protect and develop natural resources and ecosystems that are necessary for clean air, healthy soil and clean water—all essential for human health. The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

itself continues to have mixed impacts, funding both sustainable practices and some known to be detrimental to human health. The work to develop environmental services markets may be particularly promising. It holds the potential for tying farming practices that actively preserve or provide environmental services (such as water quality and climate regulation) to procurement policies for large institutional markets. With the support of the public health community, future Farm Bills may be able to incorporate environmental quality metrics together with geographic preferences for food purchasing.

**Research:** USDA research priorities in the 2008 Farm Bill moved perceptibly towards a greater focus on food systems issues and research with public health benefits. Examples in this report are the SNAP Healthy Incentive Program, the continuation of Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE), the creation of the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI), the Food Desert Study, the Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative (OREI), and research and data collection on organic crops (ODI). Going forward there is still opportunity and need for both additional targeted research efforts and expansion of public health related research within AFRI and SARE. One should note that not all of these research policies fall under the research title of the Farm Bill.

**Education:** While this report highlights only one education policy, the changes to SNAP-Education in the Child Nutrition Reauthorization were critical to allowing state SNAP programs to maximize the benefits of their education efforts. The policy change allowed for nutrition education dollars to be committed to proven social marketing and food environment approaches that until now had not been allowed. This change also means that SNAP-Education funds can more easily be complimented with CDC and other non-USDA funding to bring nutrition education to many more citizens in need of such efforts. Ultimately, this policy change was not brought about through the Farm Bill, and as such it brings attention to the fact that advocates can often find innovative alternative strategies for policies that do not pass in the Farm Bill.

### *A Final Word:*

We began to research this report in early 2011, and since that time, acute budget pressures have continued to besiege the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress. Because of these budget pressures, it will be critical for advocates to agree on which policies are most important to protect. Low-cost and no-cost changes can have significant impacts, even without additional funding, as evidenced by the expanded local preference in school food purchasing. Pilot programs may also be increasingly relevant. Yet advocates should not limit their work to low-cost and no-cost changes and pilot programs. It is important to enter the debate strong, and the recent media discussion of the possible elimination of some commodity subsidy programs has shown that the status quo for farm policy may be shifting. It should also be noted that there is interest in cost-savings across government, and improved health through better farm policy can contribute to lower health care costs.

All of the 18 policies included in this report are likely to be challenged, as both the Senate and the House are pressured to make drastic cuts. This will be an opportunity for the public health community to join other groups engaged with the Farm Bill in defending, streamlining, and in some cases expanding these policies. At the same time, however, the public health community will need a strategy with clearly understood objectives and targeted messaging on what it seeks to accomplish, as well as a consensus on what compromises will be acceptable if forced to compete with the goals of other advocacy groups and industry.

With the next Farm Bill so rapidly approaching, the various components of the public health community will need to focus on working together to decide on policy priorities. Public health advocates must join with like-minded groups focused on agriculture, sustainable agriculture, anti-hunger, farmworkers, and other issues of joint concern. Supporting the principles of a healthy food system is a start.

The public health community must now commit to specific policies that help achieve these goals. The 18 policies highlighted in this report may be a good starting point for devising a specific set of public health priorities, but we emphasize that they should not be the only policies considered. The report's information on policy advocacy and implementation, as well as the brief analyses, may provide useful background and insights about next steps going forward. This report may also be useful for informing legislators and their staff about how the policies passed in the 2008 Farm Bill have played out. The "Lessons" section of this report provides further, generalized

insights from the 2008 Farm Bill on advocacy, implementation, and coalition building. These insights should be useful to advocates regardless of the final priorities.

The Farm Bill is a powerful tool. Its policies reach into every corner of food production and consumption in the U.S. Farm Bill policies contribute broadly to many of the harms of today's food system, including harms affecting food consumers, farmworkers, and the environment. Yet also nestled within the Farm Bill's hundreds of pages are policies with great potential to reverse these harms and improve the health of people and the environment. The negotiations around the next Farm Bill will no doubt be contentious, however, there is nothing controversial about the public health community's goal: strong, sensible food systems and better health in the 2012/2013 Farm Bill and beyond.

## Appendix A. Table of Acronyms and Abbreviations

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<b>ADA</b>	American Dietetic Association
<b>AFRI</b>	The Agriculture and Food Research Initiative
<b>AFT</b>	American Farmland Trust
<b>AMS</b>	Agriculture Marketing Service (USDA)
<b>APHA</b>	American Public Health Association
<b>APLU</b>	Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities
<b>B&amp;I</b>	Business and Industry (Rural Development Business and Industry Loan Program)
<b>CAFOs</b>	Confined Animal Feeding Operations
<b>CBO</b>	Congressional Budget Office
<b>CDC</b>	Center for Disease Control and Prevention
<b>CFP</b>	Community Food Projects
<b>CFSC</b>	Community Food Security Coalition
<b>CLF</b>	Center for a Livable Future
<b>CNR</b>	Child Nutrition Reauthorization
<b>CSP</b>	Conservation Stewardship Program
<b>EBT</b>	Electronic Benefit Transfer
<b>EDF</b>	Environmental Defense Fund
<b>EPA</b>	United States Environmental Protection Agency
<b>EQIP</b>	Environmental Quality Incentive Program
<b>ERS</b>	Economic Research Service (USDA)
<b>F2S</b>	Farm to School
<b>FFVP</b>	Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program
<b>FMNP</b>	Farmers' Market Nutrition Program
<b>FMPP</b>	Farmers' Market Promotion Program
<b>FNS</b>	Food and Nutrition Service (USDA)
<b>HFED</b>	Healthy Food Enterprise Development
<b>HFFI</b>	Healthy Food Financing Initiative
<b>HIP</b>	Healthy Incentives Pilot
<b>HUFED</b>	Healthy Urban Food Enterprise Development
<b>IATP</b>	Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy

<b>LISA</b>	Low Input and Sustainable Agriculture
<b>NAFMNP</b>	National Association of Farmers' Markets Nutrition Programs
<b>NASDA</b>	National Association of State Departments of Agriculture
<b>NASS</b>	National Agriculture Statistics Services (USDA)
<b>NFFC</b>	National Family Farm Coalition
<b>NIFA</b>	National Institute of Food and Agriculture (USDA)
<b>NMI</b>	Northeast Midwest Institute
<b>NRCS</b>	Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA)
<b>NSAC</b>	National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition
<b>ODI</b>	Organic Production and Market Data Initiatives
<b>OEM</b>	Office of Environmental Markets (USDA)
<b>OFRF</b>	Organic Farming Research Foundation
<b>OREI</b>	Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative
<b>POS</b>	Point of Sale
<b>RD</b>	Rural Development (USDA)
<b>RFP</b>	Request for Proposals
<b>SARE</b>	Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education
<b>SCBGP</b>	Specialty Crop Block Grant Program
<b>SFAs</b>	School Food Authorities
<b>SFMNP</b>	Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program
<b>SNAP</b>	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
<b>SNAP-Ed</b>	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program—Nutrition Education
<b>SNE</b>	Society for Nutritional Education
<b>USDA</b>	United States Department of Agriculture
<b>WIC</b>	Women, Infants, and Children Program



## **Appendix B. Coalition Members and Supporters - 2008 Farm Bill**

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- American Heart Association (AHA)  
<http://www.heart.org/>
- American Public Health Association (APHA)  
<http://www.apha.org/>
- Association of State and Territorial Health Officers (ASTHO)  
<http://www.astho.org/>
- Community Food Security Coalition (CFSC)  
<http://www.foodsecurity.org/>
- Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP)  
<http://www.iatp.org/>
- Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future (CLF)  
<http://www.jhsph.edu/clf/>
- National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO)  
<http://www.naccho.org/>
- National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC)  
<http://sustainableagriculture.net/>
- Northeast-Midwest Institute (NEMW)  
<http://www.nemw.org/>
- PolicyLink  
<http://www.policylink.org/>
- Trust for America's Health  
<http://healthyamericans.org/>
- United Fresh Produce Association  
<http://www.unitedfresh.org/>

## Appendix C. Information Gathering Template for Policies

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**I. Policy Official Title:**

**II. Policy Description:**

**III. Funding Status:**

Mandatory or Appropriated

**IV. Policy Reference History:**

Code Citation

Report Language-Citation and Language

Administrative Language – Citation and Language

Co-sponsors

**V. Policy Implementation / Information Website(s):**

Grant recipients, etc.

URL for program at USDA

**VI. Contacts For Policy:**

Advocate(s) of Record

USDA Regulator

Affected Community

**VII. Contractors' Perspective on Policy:**

## Appendix D. Interview Questions

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Note: Not all questions will be asked of all interviewees

1. What was/is your involvement with this policy?
2. What aspects of this policy have been implemented at this point?
3. How are grants/program dollars awarded? What is the process?
4. Who did you see as key advocates and opponents (both on the Hill and in larger community)? Future? Elected and not elected – in beltway and out of beltway
5. Has there been any evaluation (or planned evaluation) of this policy?
6. What important lessons were learned in the advocacy stages of this policy?
7. What important lessons were learned in the implementation stages of this policy?
8. Have there been unintended consequences from the implementation of this policy? What?
9. Has the implementation of this policy been within the 'spirit' of the law?
10. What is your view of the progress in implementation of this policy?
11. What is your assessment of the collaboration that was needed to deliver this policy? Would you have done anything differently?