

THE 2007 FARM BILL:

A New Vision for U.S. Agriculture, Food Production and Healthy Eating

**Farm Sanctuary & Brighter Green
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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In recent years the ways that we in the United States produce and consume food has captured the attention of a growing number of individuals, communities and groups far outside the Washington, DC Beltway and traditional farming areas. Mothers, community organizers, environmentalists, anti-poverty campaigners, nutrition experts, faith communities, and advocates for immigrants, farmed animals and poor people in developing countries, among others, have come to see the vast reach of U.S. farm policy and to question some of the results of that policy.

Farm policy, far from being a technical matter with little relevance except for a small group of producers and legislators, in fact has huge impacts. These extend from what those of us in the United States eat to how our food is produced and marketed; from the ways rural and urban communities develop to whether Americans live in vibrant food sheds or barren food deserts; from our health as individuals to our health as a nation; and from the quality of our water and air to the way we trade with other countries and influence their economies, food systems and even diets.

Farmers and the Farm Bill: The U.S. Farm Bill is really a food bill, and given that food is the stuff of life, the Farm Bill is a manifestation of how we live now—and potentially a blueprint for how we could in the future. Unfortunately, Farm Bills have not served the public good. Instead, they cater to the interests of a small slice of the farming community, namely large conglomerates or “agribusiness.” Each year billions of dollars in subsidies are provided to growers of just a few select crops, namely wheat, corn, grain, sorghum, barley, oats, cotton, rice, soybeans and other oilseeds.

The largest farmers obtain a significant majority of government payments for these crops, large portions of which do not become food for people, but rather feed for animals raised for food. In the case of corn, much of the harvest is processed into corn syrup, a near-ubiquitous sweetener for food and drinks that most nutritionists now consider an unhealthy addition to the U.S. diet and a prime culprit in the nation’s epidemic of obesity. Small farmers and those producing health-promoting vegetables and fruits, or seeking to farm organically, are effectively shut out.

Get big, or get out: Since the 1950s, U.S. farm policy has pursued a mass-production, cheap-food paradigm and farmers have been told by government and industry leaders to “get big or get out.” In the same period, the agriculture sector has experienced massive consolidation. Farm Bills have encouraged the development of agribusiness through their subsidy programs while at the same time making it harder for the small family farmer to compete economically. Small family farms have been shuttered as large, industrial operations—heavily subsidized by the government—have come to dominate the agricultural landscape.

The majority of farmers who operate smaller, more diverse farms and grow foods, such as fruits and vegetables that U.S. consumers are demanding more of, receive nothing in the way of federal help. Many of these farmers also use more sustainable practices that protect watersheds, wetlands and wildlife habitats from development, conserve water and energy, and reduce pollution. Only about one-third of America’s farmers grow crops eligible for traditional farm subsidies. That leaves two-thirds of American farmers, and 90 percent of minority farmers, producing fruits, vegetables, and other products that receive no assistance through the crop subsidy title at all. (See Sidebar.)

Cheap food, many costs: Even as U.S. farm policy of the last several decades has vastly expanded the quantity of food available, the quality of that food has diminished. Today the cheapest, most available foods are also the unhealthiest—heavily processed and laden with saturated fats and sugars. In 1930, nearly one-third of the average American’s income was spent on food. Today, in large measure due to the billion-dollar budgets of Farm Bills, food is cheaper. However, this development has come at a considerable cost. Poor diets which are high in processed foods, sugars and unhealthy fats, are central to the nation’s rising levels of adult and childhood obesity as well as a number of chronic conditions, such as heart disease, diabetes, many cancers and asthma.

Treating obesity-related health conditions now costs the nation \$117 billion a year, according to the American Heart Association. Americans spend a similar amount on low-cost fast food—\$110 billion a year, up from \$6 billion in the mid-1970s. This consumption pattern is made possible, and in some poor communities made practically inevitable, because of the skewed policy priorities of the Farm Bill. Too many people in the U.S. today don’t have consistent access to the building blocks of a healthy diet: fresh vegetables, fruits and other whole foods.

Of particular concern is the escalating health crisis facing our children. They are now developing many chronic diet-related diseases that once rarely appeared until adulthood. Indeed, projections are that this will be the first generation of kids whose life expectancy is lower than that of their parents. The National School Lunch Program feeds approximately 29 million children every school day. Many of the foods provided in school breakfasts and lunches through the commodity surplus foods program are highly processed and are affecting the health of students in adverse ways.

Factory farms’ dominance, growing public concern:

As the agriculture sector has consolidated, rural communities have been depopulated. The loss of small farms has coincided with the increase of large, corporate operations that raise and slaughter thousands, even millions, of cows, pigs and chickens every year. These “factory farms” release enormous amounts of waste and toxins into our air and water, and contribute significantly to global warming. They also impose immense cruelty on the animals, who are kept in cramped indoor quarters without the ability to move freely or express their natural behaviors.

U.S. FARM AND FOOD REALITIES

Percentage of population employed full-time in farming: **0.7.**

Farm subsidies 2005: **\$21 billion.**

Percentage of farmers receiving subsidies: **33.**

Amount Americans spent on food 2005: **\$894 billion.**

Spending on fast food per year: **\$110 billion.**

Costs of treating obesity-related conditions per year: **\$117 billion.**

Sales of organic foods 2005: **\$14 billion** (2.5% of total retail market for food)

Number of farmers’ markets, 2007: **4,500.**

Cargill 2005 gross revenues (brands include Excel Fresh Meats, Angus Pride, Shady Brook Farms, and Tender Choice, among others): **\$71 billion.**

Percentage of market controlled by top four cattle processors, IBP, Monfort (owned by ConAgra), Excel (owned by Cargill) and Farmland National: **80.**

Number of animals raised and slaughtered for food, 1950: **around 1 billion.**

Number of farmed animals raised and slaughtered for food, 2005: **nearly 10 billion.**

Concern about the treatment of farmed animals has been growing among the U.S. public, and has become an increasingly important policy objective. A 2003 Gallup poll found that nearly two-thirds of Americans “support passing strict laws concerning the treatment of farm animals.” In Arizona and Florida, significant majorities have voted for ballot initiatives that ban some standard—and cruel—factory farm practices. Even as the number of animals raised and slaughtered in the U.S. has skyrocketed, and factory farming systems have become dominant over the past several decades, U.S. Farm Bills have never included any provisions that address the welfare of farmed animals.

A new direction: For America’s small farmers, rural communities, farm workers, families, schools, farmed animals, and the environment, the current approach to farm policy simply isn’t working. The Farm Bill is broken and needs to be fixed.

This Year’s Farm Bill—What’s Needed

In January 2007, Secretary of Agriculture Mike Johanns unveiled the Bush Administration’s plans to reauthorize many U.S. agricultural programs in the 2007 Farm Bill. Its 65 proposals span nine titles (program areas) and would cost about \$100 billion over five years. These titles fund subsidies for a handful of crops, promotion of U.S. agricultural products overseas, food stamps and nutrition initiatives and a range of conservation programs. The Administration’s proposal is just one of several that Congress is considering. Some members of Congress have introduced bills addressing food and farm policy, several of which include promising proposals that deserve attention.

Farm Sanctuary, the U.S.’ leading farm animal protection organization and **Brighter Green**, an action tank working to advance public policy on the environment, animals, equity, sustainability and rights, have prepared this white paper together to urge a wholesale rethinking of U.S. food and farm policy. Our interest is in creating a more sustainable, humane and healthy agriculture and food system, now and well into the future.

While a handful of the program and policy ideas in the Administration’s proposal are promising, it does not shift significantly the Farm Bill in the direction that’s needed. Nor does it correct substantially the irrationalities and injustices that have characterized U.S. food and farm policy for decades. Regrettably, the Farm Bill proposal is more or less business as usual.

Nonetheless, the U.S. Congress and the Bush Administration have a historic opportunity to craft a Farm Bill both visionary and practical that takes U.S. food and farm policy on a new path that is a clear break with the past. They should seize it.

What Congress should do

While the Administration’s proposal provides a template, Congress has a key role to play in making farm policy through legislation as well as the appropriations process. As Congress grapples with the renewal of farm programs, we believe that U.S. farm policy—and the 2007 Farm Bill—should:

- Be substantially redesigned to support the survival of family farms and reverse the trend toward consolidation of animal agriculture
- Take the welfare of farmed animals seriously by ending policy incentives that support factory farm systems and the routine cruelty these methods of production entail

- Support and encourage small farmers who supply healthy foods like fruits and vegetables in safe and environmentally responsible ways for U.S. consumers, including organic growers
- Broaden the availability of fresh, healthy foods to families and school nutrition programs, regardless of income or social or geographic status; and
- Ensure the protection and restoration of critical wildlife habitat on private agricultural land

In line with this vision, we urge Congress to:

1: Eliminate Farm Bill Programs that Promote the Spread of Factory Farming

- End subsidy payments for industrial corn, soy and other feed crops that artificially lower the price of animal foods
- Eliminate subsidies directed to the livestock and dairy industries, including those for marketing and lost income
- Disallow factory farm exemptions from air emissions, water quality monitoring and other environmental protection programs
- Stop the practice of providing funds from USDA environmental quality programs to factory farms for storing and treating wastes

2: Give Small and Organic Farmers a Helping Hand

- Affirm that only farmers with annual incomes below \$200,000 will be eligible for subsidy payments
- Redirect subsidy payments from corporate farmers for feed crops to small and family-run vegetable and fruit farmers, including for technical assistance, loan and credit programs, crop insurance and conservation initiatives

3: Assist in Creating New Markets for Organic Foods

- Support farmers who want to transition to organic production through cost-sharing and marketing assistance
- Prioritize organic producers for grants, technical assistance, training and education to enter or expand their market share
- Target programs to support producers practicing, or seeking to adopt, veganic agriculture, which does not use animals or animal manure
- Restore funding to promote organic farming methods to the \$25 million level

4: Ensure Access to Healthy, Humane, Plant-based Foods for All Americans—School Children, the Elderly and Low-income Communities

- Support increases in funding for specialty crop development and phytosanitary (plant health) programs
- End subsidies that lead to the mass production of unhealthy, sugar- and fat-laden foods that have come to dominate the American diet, including high fructose corn syrup, trans fats and dairy and meat products
- Approve increased funding to purchase vegetables and fruits for school breakfast and lunch programs
- Bar from federal contracts for school-based and other nutrition programs producers that fail to meet animal welfare standards or violate environmental, labor or food safety laws or regulations

5: Use Federal Food Assistance to Increase the Availability of Healthy Foods

- Raise the average food stamp benefit, now just over \$1 per person per meal, to a more realistic level that would ensure a healthier diet
- Increase available funds to provide marketing and transportation services so food stamp recipients can access farmers' markets
- Direct funds to enable farmers' markets to purchase and maintain electronic card readers required for food stamp program recipients to use their benefits
- Fully fund programs to expand provision of locally-grown fruits and vegetables to participants in WIC (Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children) and others with low incomes
- Fully fund initiatives to increase the access of elderly Americans to healthy foods, including organic vegetables and fruits, through farmers' markets, community supported agriculture (CSAs), community gardens or buying clubs

6: End the Farm Bill's Silence on Animal Welfare

- Eliminate factory farm practices that have been shown to impact negatively farmed animals' health and welfare, including gestation crates for sows, veal crates for calves, and battery cages for laying hens
- Create and enforce national animal welfare regulations that meet or exceed those in place or planned in the European Union
- Bar from doing business with the federal government any producer that does not provide farm animals with adequate shelter and space, effective access to food and

water, and decent veterinary care; or that practices force feeding or starvation, or denies care to injured or sick animals

- Ensure that “downed” animals (those too sick or injured to stand) do not enter the U.S. food supply and are promptly and humanely euthanized
- Extend humane slaughter protection to birds and ratchet up enforcement, improve and enforce transport limits on the conveyance of farm animals by truck

7: Redirect Research Funds to the Benefits of Plant-based Diets and Animal Well-being

- End the practice of using federal research funds to promote increased livestock production at the expense of animal welfare
- Devote funds to research that promotes sustainable agriculture, protects rural communities and the environment, and supports plant-based agriculture as well as a far higher level of animal welfare than the typical cruelty found today on U.S. factory farms

8: Strengthen Conservation Programs and Provide Sufficient Funding to Meet Demand

- Expand and improve administration of programs that support farmers to be good environmental stewards
- Ensure budget levels are met or exceeded in appropriations to clear the backlog of farmers who would like to participate
- Give priority to farmers using sustainable practices to reduce water, air and soil pollution and to protect and enhance wildlife habitats and wetlands

II: A NEW VISION FOR U.S. FARM POLICY: PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

The renewal in 2007 of the nation’s farm programs provides an important opportunity to achieve many critical priorities essential to creating a more healthful, sustainable, equitable and humane agriculture and food system. Without dramatic change in the Farm Bill, the U.S. simply won’t be able to deal effectively with the immense public health, environmental, animal welfare, food security, and economic challenges created by current farm and food policy. Palliative measures won’t work. It’s time to get to the roots of the problems, and the solutions.

1. FARM BILL PROPOSAL MISSES OPPORTUNITY TO CURTAIL DESTRUCTIVE FACTORY FARMING

Factory farms are growing all across America and wiping out smaller, family-run farms. According to the USDA, the four largest U.S. beef packers slaughter and process 80 percent of the animals. The top U.S. pig slaughterers control 64 percent of the market. As part and parcel of this consolidation, production and consumption of animal protein has skyrocketed. In 1950, just over a billion farmed animals were killed for food. By 1975, it was over three billion, and in the late 1980s, more than six billion. By 2005, the annual number hovered near ten billion: more than nine billion chickens along with approximately 100 million pigs, 35 million cows and calves, and more than 250 million turkeys. Among the most pervasive justifications for subjecting animals to inhumane, industrialized farming

conditions is that these systems are necessary to produce large quantities of cheap food. But while the price paid at the retail counter for mass-produced animal foods may appear low, the externalized costs are numerous. They include environmental degradation and pollution, resource depletion, destruction of rural communities and human health risks. Moreover, they raise serious questions about the ethical treatment of animals.

Environmental consequences: water, air and climate

Producing animal foods requires vastly more land and water resources than producing plant foods, and industrial animal farming is notorious for polluting the environment. In factory farm systems, sometimes known as confined animal feeding operations (CAFOs), animals and the natural world are regarded as commodities to be exploited in the pursuit of profit. CAFOs result in the production of 500 million tons of animal waste every year. Many factory farm operators routinely dump this untreated waste into pits and onto the land where the manure decomposes, emitting quantities of toxic gases into the air that have been shown to damage human health.

The waste also ends up in our waterways, creates noxious odors in nearby communities, and spreads disease. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), pig, chicken and cattle waste has polluted 35,000 miles of rivers in 22 states and contaminated groundwater in 17.

In recent years, global warming has garnered the public's attention. Intensive livestock is a factor here, too. According to a 2006 report by the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), "Livestock's Long Shadow," one of the greatest contributors to the release of greenhouse gases, even more than transportation, is livestock production.

Realities for farm animals

Factory farming is also devastating to the animals. In these massive industrial animal factories, the traditional, stewardship-based connection between farmer and animal ceases to exist. Pigs are confined by the thousands in industrial barns where they are forced to spend their lives in tight metal pens, standing on slated concrete floors and breathing ammonia and hydrogen sulfide from their manure. Pigs and other farm animals are sentient, social creatures who can be debilitated by stress when deprived of outlets for their natural behaviors.

Huge beef feedlots in western Kansas, the Texas and Oklahoma panhandles, and eastern Colorado hold thousands of steers and heifers on dry or muddy ground, not pasture, as they're fattened on a corn-heavy diet. Factory dairies are now the norm for milk production. Thousands of dairy cows are confined in feedlots or large indoor sheds. Modern cows have a calf approximately once every 13 months and live a constant cycle of impregnation, birth and re-impregnation. They often produce ten times more milk than is normal. To boost milk production, the cows can be injected with hormones that further tax the animals' bodies and exacerbate crippling leg and joint disorders and increase the incidence of mastitis, a painful udder infection. Milking is done by mechanical devices, up to three times each day.

Among the most intensely confined of all farm animals today are egg-laying hens, who are kept in giant industrial warehouses. They spend their entire lives packed in small wire metal enclosures, called "battery cages," stacked one atop another. Hens are forced to artificially molt (lose their feathers) through systematic starvation. In addition, millions of broiler chickens are housed in industrial barns that can contain up to 25,000 birds each. The chickens are bred to be so heavy that many are unable to stand, and some die of thirst because they cannot move to reach water.

Antibiotics and other artificial inputs are routinely given to farmed animals, in part, to overcome the physical symptoms of the stress of their confinement, as well as to make the animals grow bigger and faster. Twenty-five million pounds of antimicrobials (antibiotics and other substances) are fed or injected into animals raised for food each year in the U.S., many times the amount of antibiotics used to treat human illnesses. This use of antibiotics in farm animals risks increasing human vulnerability to the diseases antibiotics have been developed to treat. Some researchers have also suggested a link between growth hormones given routinely to farm animals and early puberty in children.

Rural communities pay a heavy price

Research has shown that factory farms diminish the quality of rural life by affecting social relationships within the community and causing negative economic impacts. A study conducted by economists at Illinois State University found that factory farms hinder economic growth in rural areas and decrease revenues of local businesses because larger operations tend to purchase their supplies from farther away. Another study done by the University of Minnesota found that local farm expenditures by animal feeding operations decreased as the size of the operation increased.

Rural communities must also bear the cost of damage to roads and erosion caused by heavy truck traffic associated with large confined feeding operations. Although a factory farm may add to the tax revenues of a community, multiple smaller operations could likely produce this or an even greater benefit—with fewer negative impacts. Cheap food is, in fact, very costly.

Corn subsidies and consolidation

The animals on factory farms consume vast quantities of government-subsidized corn. In fact, almost 60 percent of the corn grown on U.S. farms is used for animal feed. According to the National Cattlemen's Beef Association, corn comprises about 85 of every 100 pounds of cattle feed. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) helps subsidize industrialized animal farming by handing out \$4 billion in checks to corn growers every year. Such payments help promote the vast acreage of corn in the U.S., which is likely to grow given increasing demands for ethanol, a corn-based fuel, as a substitute for oil. This exponential increase in production of corn could have negative consequences for U.S. waterways, since pesticides on corn crops run off into streams and rivers, and then to oceans. Pressure to increase corn acreage may also lead to wildlife habitat being plowed under.

Factory farms could be drastically affected by ending corn subsidies. Many of the government's subsidy payment checks go directly to operations that grow corn for livestock. And agribusiness receives other benefits from the Farm Bill. In 2005, nearly \$300 million in subsidies went to the livestock and dairy industries, according to the Environmental Working Group, for, among others, emergency livestock feeding assistance and marketing fees. According to Tufts University researchers, the poultry industry has received \$1.25 billion a year in grain subsidies since the passage of the 1996 Farm Bill. Industry giant Tyson Foods was able to save \$2.59 billion over an 8 year period from this tax-payer funded support of their grain production. *These subsidies should be eliminated.*

Misuse of conservation funds

In the 2002 U.S. Farm Bill, factory farming syndicates, which earn billions in annual profits, became eligible to receive funding under the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) to build

manure lagoons to contain the waste produced by their facilities. The program was created by Congress in 1996 to help farmers implement comprehensive nutrient management and other land management programs.

Unfortunately, that mandate has been subverted and exploited by irresponsible factory farms. Although no records are kept on how much funding goes to concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs), it is estimated that to date the USDA has handed out hundreds of millions of dollars to CAFOs, as direct cost-share payments for projects involving facilities and equipment for waste storage and handling. (There are no publicly available records on EQIP funding for manure-related projects or structures at new or expanding CAFOs, a clear impediment to the public's right to know how government funds are being spent.) In some cases, the government's portion of cost sharing may be as high as 75 percent.

The Administration's 2007 Farm Bill proposal would continue this policy of using U.S. taxpayers to help corporations manage and clean up the messes they create, through the farm bill conservation title. Even more perverse, the 2002 Farm Bill raised the upper limit on funding for an EQIP contract from \$50,000 to \$450,000. The USDA specifically set aside funding for the CAFO sector and, in some states, USDA ranking systems for approving EQIP applications rewarded the largest CAFOs with the poorest design, located in sites that cause the most harm to neighboring residents and communities.

In addition to making sure they are eligible for government handouts, owners of factory farms also want to escape compliance with environmental protection and hazardous waste laws. Legislation introduced in the 110th Congress (S. 807 and H.R. 1398) would exempt the hazardous substances associated with livestock waste (phosphorus, ammonia and hydrogen sulfide) from polluter-pays and toxics right-to-know reporting requirements.

In addition, some factory farm operators are exploring the potential to process animal wastes, or even the bodies of farm animals that die in facilities, into biofuels. While reducing reliance on fossil fuels is a commendable and necessary goal, expanding biofuel production by excusing the poor practices of industrial producers is not a practical, long-term solution to U.S. energy needs. Developing biofuels in this way also provides an excuse for not fundamentally changing factory farm operations. It would also offer an unwarranted justification for continuing the kind of environmentally ruinous and cruel farming methods that have devastated rural communities, poisoned our air and water, and stunted the lives of billions of farm animals.

The Farm Bill should discourage irresponsible factory farming practices instead of subsidizing them. The Farm Bill should not include any provisions to exempt factory farms from air emissions, water quality monitoring, or other environmental protections. It should require transparency and make polluters accountable for the harm they cause.

2. SMALL FARMERS NEED A HELPING HAND

Although a stated goal of U.S. farm policy over the last several decades has been to assist farmers, the farm bills of the past have done very little to expand the number of family farms, or to help beginning farmers get started. In 1950 the U.S. had 5.38 million farms, but today only 2.17 million remain. Between 2005 and 2006, the U.S. lost 8,900 farms, slightly more than one farm per hour.

The average farm size has grown from 213 acres in 1950 to 444 acres in 2005. Today, just over one percent of all farms accounts for nearly half of total farm product sales.

The U.S. family farmer faces the real danger of extinction due to competition from corporate monoliths like Cargill and Archer Daniels Midland, Tyson and Smithfield. Smithfield's 2005 gross revenues were \$11.84 billion, and profits at Tyson, which owns IBP, Madison Foods and Tyson Poultry, were nearly twice that: \$26.02 billion. Cargill, whose brands include Excel Fresh Meats, Angus Pride, Shady Brook Farms, and Tender Choice, among others, dwarfed both. In 2005, it had gross revenues of \$71 billion.

It is not just the size of the operations themselves that threaten small and medium-sized farmers. It is what is primarily grown on these farms—not fruits and vegetables, the foundation of a healthy diet, but commodity crops like corn and soybeans. The constant flow of farm subsidies to the gigantic farms run by corporations means that more entrepreneurial and diversified farms, and regions, producing other types of crops, including fruits, vegetables or legumes are neglected. In 2005, farm subsidies came in at \$21 billion; the highest amount ever, although less than half—only 33 percent—of U.S. farmers received any subsidy at all.

Not only are these subsidies unfairly distributed, often benefiting millionaire corporate farmers, they have considerable negative impacts on farmers in poor countries. Bolstered by subsidies and USDA marketing support, U.S. farmers ship huge amounts of commodity crops around the world each year. Most developing countries, at the urging of international financial institutions, the U.S. and Europe, have ended agriculture subsidies. This means their farmers, many of whom survive on subsistence agriculture, often can't compete against U.S. imports of corn, cotton or wheat flooding their markets. The effects have been particularly devastating in Africa, already the world's poorest continent. Even though the World Trade Organization has ruled that most U.S. farm subsidies are illegal, the proposed 2007 Farm Bill doesn't eliminate them.

Moreover, cheap feed crops may also be a major contributing factor to why giant factory farms are being established in many developing countries, including China, where U.S. agribusiness is searching for new markets. With the globalization of factory farms and increases in the industrialized production of animal-based foods go all the negative effects on rural communities, the environment, individual nutrition and public health, and the animals themselves.

Significantly, the Administration's 2007 Farm Bill proposal would limit farm payments to owners with annual adjusted gross incomes of under \$200,000. *We support this provision, which would go a long way toward ending subsidies to large, often wealthy, farmers, and offer more opportunities to smaller farm operations.*

An aging farming sector, and new hope

In the United States today, the average principal farm operator is 55.3 years old, and farmers over the age of 65 outnumber farmers under 35 by two to one. Rural communities, the backbone of our food system, are losing their populations at an astounding pace. Many of those living in agricultural communities, with no other job opportunities, are forced to work as low-paid hired hands for corporate food giants that have inordinate influence over the means of production and markets.

Integrated food companies shift costs down to contract farmers who have little choice but to bear them. These contractual agreements between farmers and corporations have become increasingly common. They also have many negative impacts, chief among them the removal of the profitability and independence once enjoyed by small family farms in the U.S. The USDA's own statistics reveal that 90 percent of the nation's meat birds, 60 percent of the pigs, 53 percent of dairy products and 21 percent of beef cattle are now being raised by growers under contract.

But a very different group of farmers is beginning to emerge—with the potential to revitalize America's farm communities. According to the Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, an alliance of farm, environment and rural organizations, unlike previous generations of farmers who primarily came from multi-generation farm families, this new generation is diverse. It includes: college-educated young people, including many women, who have chosen farming as their first career; people from non-farming backgrounds who may have worked for years in other careers; and Latino, Somali, Hmong, and Eastern European families, including immigrants. These new farmers, along with African-American farmers who have faced decades of discrimination in farm programs, are the key to America's rural resurgence.

Growing demand for healthy, local food and new suppliers

These farmers want to make a living and support their families. However, at the same time they also want to preserve wildlife habitat, protect drinking water supplies, use fewer chemicals, and adopt other sustainable and humane farming practices. Simultaneously, consumers in increasing numbers have expressed an interest in purchasing responsibly grown food from local and regional producers. Farmers' markets, community-supported agriculture programs (CSAs), urban gardens, organic farms, and farm stands are gaining in popularity, not just because they are convenient, but because they employ appropriate, sustainable practices that consumers increasingly demand, and expect.

Since 2002, the number of farmers' markets has almost doubled, from 2,750 to nearly 4,500 today. There are farmers' markets in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Locally grown food uses less energy, less packaging, and results in less pollution in the form of transportation fuels (and emission of global warming gases like carbon dioxide) because the food doesn't have to travel as far. This direct-to-consumer marketing also allows farmers to obtain a fair price for their products. In this way, local farms strengthen and build rural communities.

Emerging farmers often require help in obtaining capital and/or access to USDA conservation and technical assistance programs. The Administration's Farm Bill proposal recognizes that beginning farmers need federal assistance if they are going to compete in the 21st century. This new direction in farm policy is long overdue, and necessary. As Secretary of Agriculture Johanns himself acknowledged, when presenting the 2007 Farm Bill proposal, "High land prices, increasing equipment costs, and government payments predominantly delivered to larger, more established farmers serve as barriers to entry."

The Administration's recommendations include providing beginning farmers a 20 percent increase in their direct payment rate and reserving 10 percent of conservation assistance for beginning farmers and socially disadvantaged producers. New farmers would also receive a package of credit discounts. For example, the USDA would cut the loan interest rate in half for these farmers, defer the first payment for one year, decrease the minimum contribution of the property purchase price from 10 to 5 percent, and eliminate the \$250,000 cap on the value of property that must be purchased. (This

would allow historically disadvantaged producers to receive benefits for higher-value land.) The USDA also would set a target for direct farm ownership loans for these farmers of 100 percent. These are important proposals to reinvigorate the small farm sector and allow new groups of farmers to join the agricultural economy. They deserve support.

In addition, the Sustainable Agriculture Coalition has developed a set of proposals for the 2007 Farm Bill to support small farmers and encourage a new generation of them, many of which we support. These include:

- Strengthening training, technical assistance and loan and credit programs for new farmers, particularly those cultivating vegetables and fruits
- Expanding financial and technical assistance to facilitate farmers' transition to organic methods, including crop insurance, which rewards diversification, on a par with those for conventional farmers
- Closing loopholes in subsidy payments that give preferential access to large farmers and instead target support to small or new farmers using sustainable practices
- Rewarding small farmers employing effective conservation measures; and
- Amending the Agricultural Fair Practices Act so that producers cannot be denied access to markets for belonging to or organizing associations of producers or a cooperative

3. ENHANCING MARKETS FOR ORGANIC FOODS

The 2007 Farm Bill has another opportunity to encourage a healthy diet and promote sustainable, environmentally responsible farming—by assisting organic farmers. Organic farmers grow fruits, vegetables, grains and legumes without the use of pesticides or genetically modified materials, and their farming processes maintain and replenish soil fertility. Organic food is produced without the use of antibiotics, synthetic hormones, sewage sludge or irradiation. Organic farming also exerts a much lighter toll on land and water resources than conventional agriculture and helps reduce emissions of global warming gases.

Today, organics represent about 3 percent of all food sold in the U.S. But sales of organic foods are rising fast and in 2005 reached \$14 billion. This growth has been accomplished with very little government support compared to other agricultural industries. Organic farmers, and those seeking to transition to organic farming, deserve, on an equal basis with other farmers, inputs in the areas of technical assistance, conservation, access to capital, research, marketing and insurance.

Over the years, hundreds of millions of federal research dollars have been devoted to conventional and biotechnology agriculture at the expense of organic research. More, not fewer, research dollars are needed to promote organic farming. Congress should reverse the Administration's proposal to cut organic research funding from \$25 million to \$10 million.

The Administration's Farm Bill proposal does, though, include some positive provisions. To help farmers seeking to transition to organic farming, the Administration's proposal recommends increasing the cost-share certification reimbursement from \$500 annually to \$750 annually, or 75

percent of certification costs, whichever is lowest. (The costs of meeting certification requirements are often too high for many small farmers to afford.) The Administration also proposes \$1 million to fund the collection and publication of organic production and marketing data. We support these proposals.

However, the USDA could do more to assist the fledgling organic farming movement. The Organic Trade Association (OTA), among other groups supporting sustainable agriculture, has made several important recommendations for inclusion in the Farm Bill, which Congress should adopt. These include providing funding for:

- An inter-agency organic working group within the federal government
- Training or technical assistance to farmers receiving loans or payments to make the transition to organic farming
- Organic farm advisors in agricultural universities; and
- Beginning farmer programs that offer education in organic production methods

The OTA also recommends development of a comprehensive national organic policy to help identify barriers to growing the U.S. organic sector.

If included in the 2007 Farm Bill, these proposals could also help create a humane, sustainable and healthy food production system in the U.S. that doesn't rely on killing animals or using animal manure. Manure can contribute to the spread of diseases that can sicken or even kill humans, including E. coli 0157:H7; children are particularly vulnerable. Veganic agriculture, while a small part of the organic farming sector, should be encouraged. Small farmers can grow a variety of vegetables, fruits, grains, and legumes, all fertilized with non-animal sources. Farms like these have the potential to inject new life into traditional farming communities across the country. (See Sidebar.)

ORGANIC AND VEGANIC AGRICULTURE PUTTING DOWN ROOTS

Over the past two decades, New York state dairy operations have had a hard time staying afloat, amid high fuel and feed costs and declining milk prices. Each year, hundreds of commercial dairy farms go out of business, and for some time the state's farming economy overall has been depressed. But in parts of upstate New York, new farmers are setting up small operations and, in the process, helping breathe new life into the agricultural sector. Many are producing organic vegetables or fruits for sale in farmers' markets and through community supported agriculture programs (CSAs). This mirrors a small national trend. According to the USDA, the number of small farms is increasing in the U.S. by 2 percent a year.

The number of farms supplying produce to CSAs—in which consumers invest financially and become farm stakeholders, benefiting from good harvests and outlasting lean crops—doubled between 1999 and 2004, according to the Rodale Institute. Near Saratoga Springs, NY, for example, Steve Gilman's weekend farm is now a profitable producer of organic lettuce. He's part of a shift underway in many parts of the country.

"What's happening is a response to industrial agriculture," Gilman told the Christian Science Monitor in 2006. "It's so heavily subsidized and centered around commodity crops that it's opened up new niches, which are growing considerably."

Veganic farming, too, is gaining ground. The Huguenot Street Farm in New Paltz, NY, practices veganic agriculture on 77 acres of cropland, wetland and forest. It produces over 125 kinds of vegetables, cut flowers, and fruits, and for nearly a decade has been supplying a local CSA; for the 2007 season, all the farm's CSA shares have been sold.

4. MORE FEDERAL ACTION NEEDED TO PROMOTE A HEALTHIER DIET FOR ALL CITIZENS

In many parts of America, poor working families struggle daily to put food on their tables. According to the USDA, more than 35 million people in the U.S. do not know where their next meal will come from. Another serious problem faced by Americans with low incomes is lack of access to healthy, nutritious food. Health and nutrition policy experts know that the limited availability of supermarkets, which can be a problem in low-income neighborhoods, reduces the consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables.

A 2005 study found that California has four times as many fast food outlets and convenience stores as it does supermarkets and produce vendors. In many states, it is inner-city neighborhoods that have a preponderance of fast and convenience food options while wealthier suburbs have more supermarkets and other outlets from which to purchase healthy, whole foods.

Obesity, chronic disease and poor nutrition

The Surgeon General of the United States has noted that physical inactivity and poor diet—of which limited consumption of fruits and vegetables is a key part—causes diseases that result in the death of more than 300,000 people in the U.S. each year. Heart disease and type-2 diabetes are major contributors to shortened lifespan. In addition, approximately 27 percent of people in the U.S. are considered obese, with the incidence of obesity higher among members of minority groups. The prevalence of overweight children has increased from 4 percent in 1974 to 17.5 percent in 2004. This generation of children may be the first in U.S. history to have shorter life spans than their parents as a result of chronic diseases, many of which are diet-related.

The 2007 Farm Bill can help combat the devastating effects of hunger and poor nutrition in a myriad of ways. It can also help right a historic error. In 1977, a Senate Select Committee on Nutrition held hearings on research showing a steep increase in diet-related cancers, heart disease and diabetes. The Committee drafted the first national dietary goals, which included the recommendation that Americans eat less meat and fewer dairy products.

However, after forceful lobbying by the meat and dairy industries, that recommendation was abandoned. Subsequent Farm Bill commodity support programs have fueled the production of cheap meat and dairy products. Moreover, sound, unbiased advice on healthy eating has been hard for people in the U.S. to come by, while adults and children have been bombarded with an ever-increasing array of mass-produced foods and mass media advertising for them.

Farm Bills also have done almost nothing to help farmers who grow fresh produce to bring their products to Americans whose diets could be greatly improved. Currently, farmers who grow fruits and vegetables are not eligible for assistance under the USDA's farm commodity and price support programs—even though it's precisely these kinds of foods that Americans ought to be consuming on a much greater scale.

Increasing production and consumption of fruits and vegetables

Increased funding for conservation programs, according to the USDA, for example, will "provide more opportunity for the specialty crop producer to be protected from urban encroachment, while providing more resources geared toward pest management, air quality, and water conservation issues . . ."

In its 2007 Farm Bill proposal, the Administration proposes phasing in an additional \$68 million in funding for the Technical Assistance for Specialty Crops (TASC) program over the next eight years, and a new \$20 million grant program, which would address international sanitary and phytosanitary (plant health) issues that threaten export of U.S. fruits and vegetables. However, the amounts allotted in the Administration's proposal may be too small.

These are positive developments that could help small farmers producing fruits, vegetables or legumes in environmentally responsible ways to break into national and international markets. These proposals should be supported by Congress and funded at levels consistent with their benefits.

Harmful subsidies and unhealthy foods

But there is much more that can be done. The Farm Bill could stop subsidizing the crops that are turned into the unhealthy foods that have come to dominate the American diet, especially among those in lower income brackets. High fructose corn syrup, for example, a liquid sweetener with six times the potency as cane sugar and far cheaper, is a direct byproduct of corn. The majority of the soybean harvest is used not in whole soy-based foods like tofu or soymilk, but rather to provide a cheap and abundant source of added fats in the form of hydrogenated oils. These harmful trans-fats are already too prevalent in the modern American diet, yet soybean producers receive price supports and other subsidies. *Subsidies for industrial corn and soy crops should be ended.*

Dairy and meat products made from livestock raised in inhumane conditions and fed rapid weight-gaining diets of corn and soybeans are also high in unhealthy fats. Federal dairy subsidies include direct producer payments, price supports, subsidized exports and milk marketing orders. *The Farm Bill should bar subsidies to operations that fail to meet animal welfare standards, routinely violate environmental or labor laws, or send contaminated food to market.*

Improving school lunches

The Farm Bill can and should be an important policy tool to bring healthy eating choices—particularly more whole and fresh fruits and vegetables—to the millions of U.S. children who eat in school cafeterias. Many of the children eating in schools are economically disadvantaged and rely on the government to provide them with free or reduced-priced breakfast and lunch meals. This means that they may be consuming the majority of their calories at school. The Farm Bill needs to provide subsidies for high-quality produce that will make it affordable for schools to provide optimal nutrition to students.

The Administration proposes \$500 million over 10 years to purchase fruits and vegetables for the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs, plus a new, five-year, \$20 million grant program to develop and test solutions to combat the rising problem of obesity. An additional \$2.75 billion would be available to increase purchases of fruits and vegetables for federal food and nutrition programs.

All of these proposals merit strong Congressional support. It would be optimal if Farm Bill appropriations also included funds to teach students about how food affects their physical, emotional and intellectual health.

It is also important that high standards be applied to producers that supply school nutrition programs. The USDA, the EPA and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) should

make information, including violations of federal laws by companies that do business with the federal government, transparent and easily available on their websites. *The 2007 Farm Bill should bar violators of environmental, labor or food safety laws or regulations from federal contracts for school-based and other nutrition programs.*

5. INCREASING FEDERAL FOOD ASSISTANCE TO IMPROVE HEALTHY EATING

Another important way exists that the Farm Bill can link low-income residents of the United States with healthy food. That is by making improvements in programs that serve recipients of federal nutrition programs like Food Stamps, and expanding other important nutrition assistance programs created in the 1992 Farm Bill. More than 2.2 million Americans, half of whom are children, benefit from receiving food stamps.

Food stamps are perhaps the best route to enabling low-income Americans to put healthy food on their table. The Food Stamp program is the government's first line of defense against hunger and food insecurity, and is a key factor in bolstering economic success, ameliorating poverty and improving nutrition and health, according to James D. Weill, President of the Food Research and Action Center. According to the USDA, the large majority of food stamp benefits are spent on basic food items such as vegetables, fruits and grains. The ability to consume healthier foods helps children flourish and benefits all of society. In one study, children whose families received food stamps achieved significantly greater improvements in reading and math scores than did those children from families that stopped receiving food stamps.

Expanding the reach and impact of food stamps

As many nutrition advocate groups have attested, the food stamp program needs more funding, more outreach to enroll more Americans who suffer from hunger or food insecurity, and higher benefit levels. Although the food-stamp program serves an estimated 26 million needy people each month, it fails to reach 40 percent of those eligible for the program. According to America's Second Harvest, the American Public Human Services Association and the Food Research and Action Center, more funds are necessary to provide states with the technology and administrative resources to bring more people into the program.

Further, they argue, neither the average benefit level of \$1 per person per meal, nor the \$10 monthly minimum benefit, is sufficient. (Food stamp recipients receive, on average, less than \$80 monthly to help them purchase foods of their choice.) A number of elected leaders have recently sought to live on food stamp allotments for varying periods of time and found the quality of their diets declined significantly. Fresh and whole foods were largely off-limits given their costs compared to processed foods. The legislators also reported feeling more hungry and tired than before they began the diet, and several gained weight. *Food stamp benefits should increase to a more realistic level.*

Even with increases in funding for the Food Stamp program, lack of access to healthier food choices will continue to impede those struggling economically. Grocery stores are often not located close enough to or within poor neighborhoods, limiting people's options to fast food and convenience stores with few nutritious choices. Many food stamp recipients simply cannot afford to shop at organic groceries or farmers' markets where food comes from local farms and tends to be more nutritious. While food from farmers' markets is often organically grown or at least free of pesticides and hormones, it is often more expensive.

Accessing farmers' markets to expand options for healthy food

Another barrier is that, of the more than 4,000 farmers markets around the country, only a small segment accepts food stamps. This is the case even though many accept coupons or checks from other federal or state nutrition programs. One problem is that a great many of these markets lack the point-of-sale electronic debit machines that are used by food stamp recipients. Even where the Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) machines exist, they are plagued with problems. In the Washington, D.C. area, the director of the Capital Area Community Food Bank noted in comments to the USDA that, "at the Anacostia Farmers' Market, EBT customers have been double- and triple-charged during their transactions due to mechanical or processing errors . . . and the [Point-of-service] POS terminal reports are inaccurate and sales are lost due to signal failure."

If farmers markets' were made more accessible to food stamp recipients, community activists believe that they would be more likely to use them. For example, more federal funding could be made available through the Farm Bill to provide marketing and transportation services to access farmers' markets.

The USDA's Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) Program addresses such issues, and Congress should support and fund this program at an adequate level.

Based on evidence that increased consumption of fruits and vegetables would improve the diets of federal food aid recipients, the Government Accountability Office, the investigative arm of Congress, recommended in 2002, that the USDA expand farmers' market programs for food assistance participants. Congress created several important initiatives in the 1992 Farm Bill to help increase access to nutritious food for needier Americans. The Farmers' Market Promotion Program (FMPP) was intended to provide important financing for growing and expanding the number of direct marketing opportunities for local farmers to sell and market their products directly to consumers. Unfortunately, this program has received only \$1 million in funding—a level that is grossly inadequate to the need.

Still, with just a small amount of seed money, the FMPP program has accomplished a good deal. For example, the USDA funded a pilot project in New York State, to implement wireless and other innovative electronic solutions that will allow and fund farmers' markets to accept food stamp and Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) benefits. Also, the Natwani Coalition of Kykotsmovi, Arizona, received funding to help sustain a farmers' market on the Hopi Reservation.

The \$100 million in the Administration's Farm Bill proposal, for competitive grants to establish programs that demonstrate ways to curb the rising rates of obesity, could theoretically fund developing means of helping low-income consumers gain access to farmers' markets. These grants could be used, according to Nancy Montanez Johner, USDA's Under Secretary for Food, Nutrition and Consumer Services, to "evaluate creative and innovative solutions in this complex area, such as point-of-sale incentives to purchase fruits and vegetables, increased access among food stamp recipients to farmers' markets, and integrated initiatives that use multiple communication channels to reinforce key messages." *The Farm Bill should allow these innovations.*

The Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) was created in 1992 as an amendment to the Child Nutrition Act. The 2002 Farm Bill provided mandatory funding for the program: \$15 million over 5 years to provide fresh, nutritious, unprepared, locally grown fruits and vegetables to participants in

the WIC program, and to expand awareness, use and sales at farmers' markets. WIC participants receive coupons for purchases at farmer's markets. In fiscal year 2005, 2.6 million WIC participants received farmers' market benefits. According to the Government Accountability Office (GAO), in surveys developed by the National Farmers' Market Association and conducted by states annually from 1996 to 2000, most of the over 20,000 people who participated reported that they had increased their consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables.

In addition, the USDA found that coupons redeemed through the FMNP resulted in over \$23.4 million in revenue to farmers in fiscal year 2005. Congress provided only \$19.8 million for this critical program in fiscal year 2006. Congress must reauthorize and fully fund this program in the 2007 Farm Bill. Additional funds should also be used to allow farmers to purchase and maintain electronic card readers for the food stamp program.

The 1992 Farm Bill also established the Community Food Projects Competitive Grants Program (CFPCGP) to help local organizations working to meet the food needs of low-income people through promotion of comprehensive responses to local food, farm and nutritional issues. (See Sidebar.) This worthy program deserves to be reauthorized in the 2007 Farm Bill.

Improving nutrition for older Americans

The Farm Bill could also help improve the diets of the elderly. According to the USDA, the elderly, who live in households with income below 130 percent of the federal poverty level, tend to have lower nutrient intakes than elderly people in households with higher incomes. The nutrition of millions of older Americans would greatly improve if they had more access to fresh fruits and vegetables.

The 2002 Farm Bill created a pilot program to help older Americans in need of financial assistance gain access to farmers' markets. The Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP) was funded through the Commodity Credit Corporation and provided \$15 million in its first year. But the appropriations process left this initiative severely underfunded: only \$5 million was provided over five years in the 2002 Farm Bill. The 2007 Farm Bill should ensure that this program receives adequate funding.

HEALTHY FOOD FOR ALL

Past Farm Bills have begun the process of making fresh, healthy foods more readily available to people with low incomes or members of historically marginalized groups. For example, the USDA's Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) Program awarded a grant to the Capital Area Community Food Bank in Washington, DC. The grant allowed the food bank to encourage and maintain small-farmer participation at a start-up market in a low-income community. The USDA has also provided grants in the range of \$10,000 to \$250,000 to a variety of community food projects. For example, a non-profit group in Mississippi received funds to implement a comprehensive community food security strategy that will provide high quality, nutritious and affordable food on a regular basis to low-income residents and help sustain minority farmers. Efforts such as these should be expanded in the 2007 Farm Bill. Other innovative programs should also receive support. The Food Studies Institute, based in upstate New York, has developed a curriculum ("Food is Elementary") and outreach program to expose school children to healthy nutrition with a focus on vegetables, fruits and whole grains.

Seeking to change the poor health destinies of so many children in the U.S., the Food Studies Institute works with schools to provide kids positive experiences of food and food preparation. The institute also works with schools to make more healthy offerings available through the school lunch program.

One program participant, Willie, a student at the Bay Point School for Boys in Miami, a facility for troubled teens, describes his experience with the Food Studies Institute's program and a new approach to eating like this:

"...I feel like Hercules...I now feel like my body is just 100% purified blood and organs...I can just feel my brain thinking better. I used to have all C's now I have only A's and B's... I always thought vegetables [were] nasty. You just have to know how to cook them."

6. PRIORITIZING HUMANE TREATMENT OF FARM ANIMALS

American consumers have expressed a strong interest in improving the treatment of farm animals. A 2003 Zogby poll found that nearly 70 percent of Americans find it “unacceptable” that farm animals have no federal protection from abuse while on the farm. Several additional polls by Zogby and others have in recent years found that majorities of Americans consistently view industrial farming practices as cruel and unacceptable. Such concerns have also resonated in elections. In 2002, a significant majority of Floridians voted to outlaw gestation crates for pregnant pigs, and in 2006, a similar majority of Arizonans voted to outlaw veal crates and gestation crates.

However, despite strong public opinion in favor, currently no federal regulations or inspection systems exist governing the way farmed animals are raised. This has helped precipitate the terrible abuses inflicted by factory farming across the U.S. Yet, the Administration’s Farm Bill proposal is silent on this matter, even though the USDA is responsible for overseeing entities that raise and slaughter billions of animals each year. This oversight is particularly glaring since many of our major European trading partners have instituted a number of animal welfare measures. (See Sidebar.) Indeed, striking differences exist between U.S. national animal welfare standards—weak, rarely enforced and largely voluntary—and laws and regulations on the books in European countries.

Non-existent laws and standards; global trade

The European Union (EU) and the U.S. have the largest bilateral trading and investment relationship in the world, with U.S.-European trade representing 40 percent of trade worldwide. In the past 20 years, the EU has adopted a number of regulations and directives to protect farm animals. No comparable federal laws exist in the U.S. While laws against animal cruelty in a number of states do not specifically exempt farm animals, charges of cruelty against livestock operations are rarely brought or supported by courts.

The slaughter of livestock is the only area where the U.S. has enacted an animal protection law comparable to that of the EU. But this law is poorly enforced and has a huge loophole: it exempts poultry, the overwhelming majority of farm animals in the U.S. Although U.S. industry has developed guidelines that cover a few of the routine practices on factory farms, for the most part, these guidelines are voluntary in nature, neither enforced nor monitored, and far inferior to the provisions of the EU directives.

Disparities in farm animal welfare measures between the U.S. and other countries have the potential to create conflicts. The United States needs to take strong action to step up its standards to at least meet or preferably, exceed those in place or planned in Europe, which, while better than nothing, are still far from ideal. The Farm Bill provides an opportunity for the U.S. to begin the process of closing the gap with its international trading partners on the issues of animal welfare. *The bill should contain a provision eliminating the cruel practices shown to negatively affect the health and welfare of animals. These include gestation crates for sows, veal crates for calves and battery cages for laying hens.*

Federal action on standards and practices

Additionally, the Farm Bill should ensure that producers selling animal products to the federal government be required to provide farm animals with adequate shelter and space, daily access to food and water, and adequate veterinary care. They should not be permitted to starve or force-feed animals, leave sick or injured animals to languish without treatment or humane euthanasia, or confine animals so restrictively that they are unable to turn around and extend their limbs. Farm ani-

imals are commonly denied these basic humane considerations on today's factory farms.

Including these provisions would bring the Farm Bill in line with an important piece of legislation introduced in the last Congress by Representatives Christopher Shays (R-CT) and Peter DeFazio (D-OR): the Farm Animal Stewardship Purchasing Act. The Act would require that animal producers supplying meat, dairy products and eggs to the military, prisons, school lunches, and others meet modest animal welfare standards, in line with those described above.

The Farm Bill should also include provisions in line with the Downed Animal and Food Safety Protection Act (DAFSPA), which would ensure that "downers" (non-ambulatory farm animals who are too sick or injured to stand) are kept out of the human food supply.

The USDA issued a temporary ban on slaughtering downed cattle for human food after mad cow disease was discovered in a downed cow in Washington State. Under DAFSPA, which was recently reintroduced in the Senate and House, the prohibition on slaughtering downed cattle would be made permanent and extend to other species, including pigs. These critically ill or injured animals would be humanely euthanized, and their slaughter for human food would be prohibited.

Other priorities for the 2007 Farm Bill include extending and enforcing humane slaughter protection to birds, and adopting and enforcing stringent federal humane transport standards. The federal standards now in place are weak, inadequate and largely unenforced.

7. RESEARCH MUST BE REDIRECTED TO BENEFITS OF PLANT-BASED DIETS AND TO ANIMAL WELL BEING

A recent review by Farm Sanctuary, of animal agriculture research projects performed and/or funded by the USDA found that:

- Less than 2 percent of these projects addressed the well being of animals. The remaining 98 percent were designed to support the agriculture industry by increasing production and profitability.

EU AND U.S. LAWS PROTECTING FARMED ANIMALS

Housing for adult, younger and female pigs

EU: Directives requiring minimum floor space; access to materials for rooting and play; use of tethers prohibited; crates to be prohibited by 2013.

U.S.: No federal law or industry guidelines setting requirements for space or rooting materials, or restricting use of tethers and crates.

Housing for calves

EU: Directives requiring minimum space requirements; prohibitions on use of crates after eight weeks of age.

U.S.: No federal law or industry guidelines prohibiting use of crates; voluntary industry guidelines setting minimum space requirements for "veal" crates.

Housing for egg-laying hens

EU: Directive setting minimum space requirements; prohibition on use of battery cages by 2012.

U.S.: No federal law or industry guidelines restricting use of cages; voluntary industry guidelines setting minimum space requirements for cages.

Housing for "meat" chickens

EU: Proposed directive setting minimum space requirements.

U.S.: No federal law on housing for chickens; voluntary industry guidelines setting minimum space requirements.

- Research projects, identified as being for the purpose of animal welfare or well being, and frequently cited objectives other than welfare, including food safety, waste management and international trade.
- Few of the current well being projects addressed animal welfare exclusively, without regard to production or profits. This leads to the inevitable conclusion that modifications in current farming practices to improve animal welfare are acceptable only if they also increase productivity.
- Some projects proposed solving welfare problems by changing the nature of the animals themselves rather than the nature of the environmental conditions or management practices that caused the problem.
- In many cases, government-funded projects appeared to be working at cross-purposes; that is, public money is being spent to fund research into animal welfare problems that are exacerbated by the application of findings from research projects designed to increase production.

Spending research dollars wisely

Perhaps most disturbing, even when USDA-funded research concludes that more humane animal treatment methods are needed, little has been done to apply the findings. The USDA's own research, for example, has found that mutilations that are routine in animal agriculture, like de-beaking (cutting off part of a bird's beak without anesthesia) and tail docking (removing an animal's tail, again without anesthesia) cause unnecessary animal suffering.

But the agency has taken no action to ban these practices. U.S. farm policy should be redesigned to ensure that federal money, including what is apportioned under the Farm Bill, is not spent on narrowly focused research that promotes increased livestock production at the expense of animal welfare.

Funding in the 2007 Farm Bill should be allotted to research promoting healthy plant-based foods and sustainable agriculture, protecting rural communities and the environment, and providing a far higher level of animal welfare than the appallingly cruel conditions that remain industry norms on the nation's factory farms.

8. FARM BILL WOULD UNDERFUND CONSERVATION PROGRAMS

Nearly half of all privately held land in the U.S. is agricultural land. Farmers and ranchers are responsible for maintaining huge tracts of woodlots, forests, wetlands, grasslands, and pastures. Thus, farmers have a huge stake in improving the quality of the soil, water and wildlife habitat on these lands. The federal government can help by providing technical assistance and funding for a range of conservation initiatives through the Farm Bill. Some are already in place in existing titles. To date, though, funds have never been sufficient to ensure full implementation.

The 2002 Farm Bill, for example, increased the amount of federal funding for eligible farmers to be used for becoming better environmental stewards. It greatly expanded the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), created in 1985, which pays farmers to take environmentally sensitive land out of production for 10 to 15 years. The Conservation Security Program (CSP), created in 2002, funds

projects that conserve and improve soil, water, air, energy, and plant and animal life on private lands. Farmers are rewarded for adopting practices that lead to energy efficiency, pesticide reduction and clean water.

The CSP has proved to be extremely popular with farmers across the country. According to Loni Kemp, senior policy analyst at the Minnesota Project, which works on farm and food policy, in just three years of implementation starting in 2004, the CSP has enrolled 16 million acres of land in 280 watersheds. Yet, because of a lack of funding, 90,000 farmers and ranchers have been denied access to the program. Moreover, many organic farmers have been considered ineligible to apply to the CSP. Only a fraction; 10 percent, of U.S. watersheds have received any funds for protection or restoration through the CSP.

EQIP funds diverted from original intent

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) was set up to help farmers put nutrient and land management efforts in place. Farmers could use funds, for example, to prevent pesticide runoff into sensitive waterways. As noted earlier, however, much of this funding has been diverted to paying for clean up of factory farm wastes and run-off, a clear misuse of the EQIP program. In 1996, along with EQIP, other programs were established to help prevent suburban sprawl and to protect wetlands and wildlife habitat. Grasslands and farmland protection programs were also included in the 1996 and 2002 Farm Bills.

Since the inception of the Farm Bill's conservation programs, thousands of farmers across the nation, who want to do the right thing and protect the environment, have sought funding. But the budget levels appropriated by Congress have always fallen well below what's needed to make the programs truly effective and equitable. The USDA has had to turn down nearly \$3 billion in projects over the life of the programs because of lack of funds. In fiscal year 2004, three-fourths of farmers' applications were turned down.

New directions and opportunities for conservation

The 2007 Farm Bill needs to dramatically expand conservation programs that allow farmers to be environmental stewards. The Administration's Farm Bill proposal would consolidate, strengthen and expand existing conservation programs to better serve farmers— harmonizing eligibility requirements, regulations and application procedures. Six existing environmental improvement programs would be joined to form a newly designated EQIP.

As part of this process, the Conservation Security Program would be modified to emphasize incentives for implementing improved, more effective conservation practices. As originally conceived and passed by Congress, the CSP was an innovative program designed to help producers across the country put in place good conservation practices. However, because of resistance to fully funding the CSP, implementation has focused on watersheds, with a rotating regional program—thereby denying geographical diversity and severely narrowing the scope of the program and its potential impact.

The 2007 Farm Bill should restore to the CSP its original mandate and adequate funding. Under the Administration's proposal, the CSP also would be expanded from its current 15.5 million acres to an estimated 96.5 million acres over the next 10 years, which would be an increase of \$500 million. Overall conservation funding would rise by \$7.8 billion. Both of these proposals deserve strong support, and full funding in the appropriations process.

However, while the Administration's stated goal of better administration of Farm Bill conservation titles is a desirable goal, it should not be done at the expense of funding. *These conservation programs require more funding to match or exceed the levels in the Farm Bill in order to allow the huge waiting lists of eligible farmers to participate. Congress needs to renew and strengthen conservation programs and provide a steady source of funding to meet demand. It also needs to use the funds as they were intended.*

Priority for Farm Bill conservation title funding should be farmers with good records of environmental stewardship and lands that are prime wildlife or bird habitat. Moreover, no EQIP monies should be used to subsidize the clean up of factory farm pollution.

IV: VISION FOR THE FUTURE

From large retail chains to food cooperatives to conscientious consumers, growing numbers of people in the United States are searching for a vision of agriculture that does not disregard the needs of the land, the animals, and public and personal health. Instead they seek one that honors and sustains all of these. True food security means diversifying food sources, making its production transparent, and ensuring that everyone has access to healthy, sustainable options.

Awareness and action on healthy food: Armed with greater information, many Americans are changing the way they eat—choosing more fresh fruits and vegetables, opting for whole grains, and reducing or eliminating their consumption of animal products and heavily processed foods, which may be high in calories and have low nutritional value. Lower-income people want to eat healthy food as much as do middle and upper-income earners, and they are seeking ways to afford it.

Farmers' markets, farm shares and garden produce: More and more people are buying organic produce and shopping at farmers' markets, or joining Community Supported Agriculture programs, buying clubs or starting community gardens. Urban community gardens can provide city-dwellers, including low-income communities, with a place to grow local, healthy food and in the process, enhance economic self-sufficiency.

Organizing vs. excesses: Citizens appalled by industrialized farming and massive subsidies for commodity crops, are, however, expressing their concerns through ballot initiatives in county zoning processes and other public forums, the media, and in how they eat and where they purchase their food.

Lessons from the past, facing the future: The advent of the internal combustion engine allowed enormous leaps forward in terms of technology and industrialization. However, it also brought with it a host of negative consequences for the environment with which we all are now grappling. In a similar way, the half-century of industrial agriculture, while undoubtedly providing more food to more people at a lower cost than ever before, has had severe negative consequences for the environment, public health, rural communities, and animal welfare.

What's needed is a new agricultural paradigm based on sustainability, transparency, health, animal well being, fairness, accountability, and environmental stewardship. We urge Congress to take up the challenge of supporting this new and essential vision, and participating in bringing it into being.

It is not only farmers, but also every U.S. citizen, who is a stakeholder in U.S. farm policy. The 2007 Farm Bill should reflect the public's priorities and serve its interests. The Farm Bill provides the Administration, Congress and all of us in the U.S. with an opportunity to contribute to and participate in the vital work of democracy.

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Farm Commodity Programs and the 2007 Farm Bill. Jim Monke Specialist in Agricultural Policy Resources, Science, and Industry Division. Summary. The farm commodity programs are the most visible part of the farm bill. A new farm bill is necessary because the 2002 farm bill expires with the 2007 crop year and, without an update, an undesirable reversion to permanent laws would occur. The debate is whether to continue with the current system, or reduce subsidies in response to equity considerations, legal challenges from international trade agreements, federal spending constraints, and economic conditions. The Senate passed its version of the farm bill on December 14, 2007 (Senate amendment to H.R. 2419); the House passed its version, H.R. 2419, on July 27, 2007. (NewsTarget) The still-unresolved 2007 Farm Bill is getting the United States in trouble with her bookies at the WTO, while diverse and powerful groups wrangle over their own interests on Capitol Hill, with consumers caught in the middle. It's like every other Farm Bill except that this time someone noticed. In 2007, the links between the Farm Bill, USDA policy, human health and energy policy have been touched on in the popular press for the first time since the USDA's role was significantly expanded in the early 1950s (<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/04/22/magazine/2...>) .