

Farm Bill Backgrounder



The Farm Bill is a multi-year package of legislation that authorizes a variety of domestic and international food and agricultural programs. CRS focuses its advocacy on Title III, which addresses foreign trade and international food aid programs. Programs authorized in this title include **Food for Peace, Food for Progress, McGovern-Dole Food for Education and Farmer-to-Farmer**.

Food for Peace Title II

For 70 years, the Food for Peace program has provided food assistance around the world. During an emergency, Food for Peace delivers U.S.-sourced agricultural commodities—like corn, soybeans, oil, etc.—as well as cash, vouchers and locally procured food to people facing crises. In-kind food commodities help people access food to survive and prevent the need for people to sell critical assets like seeds or livestock or to migrate to other regions and countries in search of food and better opportunities for their families.

In addition, Food for Peace supports communities that are susceptible to economic, social or climate-related shocks and stresses to improve and sustain their food and nutrition security through non-emergency programs. These programs, called Resilience Food Security Activities (RFSAs), are unique,

multi-year programs. They build on emergency food security interventions: enhancing individual, community and national resilience; reducing chronic vulnerability; and facilitating inclusive growth. RFSAs support communities to recover, rebuild and strengthen their resiliency to provide for themselves and thrive. Investing in long-term solutions builds self-sufficiency so that communities are no longer dependent on aid, reducing the need for future humanitarian assistance.

American Farmers Feed the World Act (AFFWA)

The American Farmers Feed the World Act (S. 2862, H.R. 4293), introduced in the House and Senate for inclusion in the Farm Bill, puts Food for Peace Title II programs, especially RFSAs, at risk. If the AFFWA is enacted or parts are included in the Farm Bill, Food for Peace long-term development programs could become inoperable due to funding limitations requiring too much money be spent only on purchasing food aid and paying for ocean freight. At a time of rising global hunger and malnutrition, the loss of Food for Peace non-emergency programs could result in 2.3 million fewer people receiving critical assistance to build self-sufficiency.

One of the main concerns with the AFFWA is that it establishes that 50% of Food for Peace funds go to purchasing U.S. in-kind food and ocean freight costs. This is an increase from 40% that is currently used for procuring and shipping U.S. commodities. Implementing organizations like CRS proudly support the use of U.S. commodities in Food for Peace as long as it is appropriate for the specific needs of the community being served. Programs are most effective when CRS and other organizations can provide the right response based on community and market needs. This may include U.S. commodities but can also include other approaches that improve market access and help generate income. The AFFWA could undermine the flexibility necessary to effectively implement food assistance programs tailored to the diverse needs of communities worldwide.



The Legislative Process

The Farm Bill must be extended or reauthorized every five years or many of its provisions will lapse and it will revert to the original 1938 version. The House and Senate draft a bill, hold committee hearings and finalize text before going to the Floor of each chamber for consideration and passage. Once the two versions of the Farm Bill are passed in the House and Senate, the bill will go to a joint or “conference” committee that includes members of the House and Senate. The conference committee will reconcile the differences in the bills and return a single bill to the full House and Senate for final passage. Finally, it is sent to the president to be signed into law.

Once programs have been authorized in the Farm Bill, it allows the ability for U.S. funding to be appropriated to these programs, which is a separate step that happens during the annual federal appropriations process.

ADDITIONAL LEARNING

For more information on global hunger and the Farm Bill, view:

- [What Is the Farm Bill, and How Does it Help Farmers Around the World?](#)
- [CRS Campaign Issues Background—Hunger and Climate Change](#)

For examples of the importance and impact of CRS’ Farm Bill Food for Peace programs, read these stories:

- [What the Farm Bill Makes Possible: Raúl’s Story](#)
- [Improving Child health and Survival in Guatemala](#)
- [Livestock Fairs Build Resilience in South Sudan](#)
- [How Climate Change is Pushing Herders in Northern Kenya to the Brink](#)