

Your Food and the Food System

When you're in the grocery store, do you think about the farmers and ranchers, processors, distributors and retailers who bring you your food? America's food system is big. It employs nearly 24 million people—more than 14 percent of American workers—and generates roughly 12 percent of the total gross domestic product. Farmers and ranchers manage close to half of America's land, making agriculture the nation's single largest land use.



Given its size, it is no surprise that the food system affects more than the food on your plate.

It influences public health, the well-being of your community and the quality of the environment. America's food system is the safest and most productive in the world. But will it continue to sustain us?

Did you know that in the U.S.:

- More than 1 million acres of farm and ranch land are developed each year
- 1.7 billion tons of topsoil are washed or blown away each year, affecting air and water quality
- Nearly 87,000 farms were lost in the past five years
- 66 percent of adults are overweight
- 35.1 million people live in households without enough food to meet basic nutritional needs

What can be done to improve the food system?

Federal farm policy is the place where these complex issues come together.

What is the Farm Bill?

The farm bill is a package of federal legislation enacted every five to seven years to set the general direction for America's farm and food policy.

Congress enacted the first farm bill in the wake of the Great Depression. It introduced an era of farm income support that encouraged farm consolidation, drove up land prices and affected global trade.

The 2002 Farm Bill authorized a public investment of \$274 billion over six years.

More than half of the money—\$150 billion—was allocated to Nutrition Programs, such as food stamps and emergency food assistance. Commodity Programs, which provide payments, or “subsidies,” to farmers who raise certain crops, received \$99 billion. Congress allotted \$21 billion to Conservation Programs to encourage sound stewardship and protect agricultural land.

Today's Commodity and Conservation Programs do not meet the needs of America's farmers and ranchers. Only one-third of farmers and ranchers qualify for payments tied to commodities such as rice, corn, wheat and soybeans. Of this group, 10 percent receive 70 percent of all such payments. Fruit and vegetable growers and livestock producers do not receive any of these benefits. Seventy-five percent of farmers and ranchers who want to participate in Conservation Programs are turned away for lack of funding.



Why the Farm Bill Matters

This year, most of the programs in the 2002 Farm Bill expire. Congress will rethink policies that set the course for America's food and farming system.

How Congress allocates your tax dollars among farm and food programs influences everything from what farmers grow and how they grow it to food stamp eligibility and even investments in renewable energy.

The farm bill is one of the nation's most significant pieces of environmental legislation.

It affects natural resource management decisions on nearly half of the nation's land and dedicates more public dollars to resource protection than the Environmental Protection Agency. It encourages farmers to reduce erosion, develop and improve wildlife habitat, and protect water quality.



Farm bill programs enhance the quality of life in communities nationwide by protecting the farms and ranches that provide fresh food, beautiful landscapes and maintain local character.

Farm policy is poised to enter a new era that will promote the economic viability of family farms and ranches, encourage organic and sustainable agriculture, and support land and water conservation. It's not just about farms. It is your Farm and Food Bill.

www.ourhealthyland.org



What You Can Do

You can make a difference. Start with the choices you make in the grocery aisle. Then get involved in the larger effort. Debate on the Farm and Food Bill is underway. Join the discussion and talk about the changes you want to see in America's food and farming system.

Get Informed

Find out what is being proposed and where your Congressional representatives stand. To learn about the bills that have already been introduced, visit www.ourhealthyland.org and sign up for *U.S. Farm Policy Update*. To find out about American Farmland Trust's policy recommendations, read *Farm and Food Policy for All—Farmers, Citizens and Communities*. To find out which bill or policies your U.S. Representative and Senators support, visit their Web sites or call their offices. Contact information for Congressional offices is available at www.ourhealthyland.org.

Mark Your Calendar

Find out when to act. Congress begins its hearings in spring 2007. Contact your U.S. Representative and Senators. Tell them why you care and what bills you support. During the summer, Congress will act on legislation. Look for a "compromise" bill in October and a final vote in November. This timeline may change. Visit www.ourhealthyland.org for updates.

Act Now

Share this brochure. Contact your U.S. Representative and Senators by phone, mail or e-mail. Visit www.ourhealthyland.org to find out how and when.

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This brochure and the supporting Web site are a joint project of Coleman Natural Foods (CNF) and American Farmland Trust (AFT)

through the Coleman Eco-Project 2015, a decade-long conservation program. The Coleman Eco-Project 2015 raises awareness about the link between conservation, healthy land, healthy products and healthy people.



CNF is the leading natural and organic meat and poultry company in the United States.



AFT is a nonprofit organization that works nationwide to protect the best land, keep it healthy and to plan for the future of agriculture.

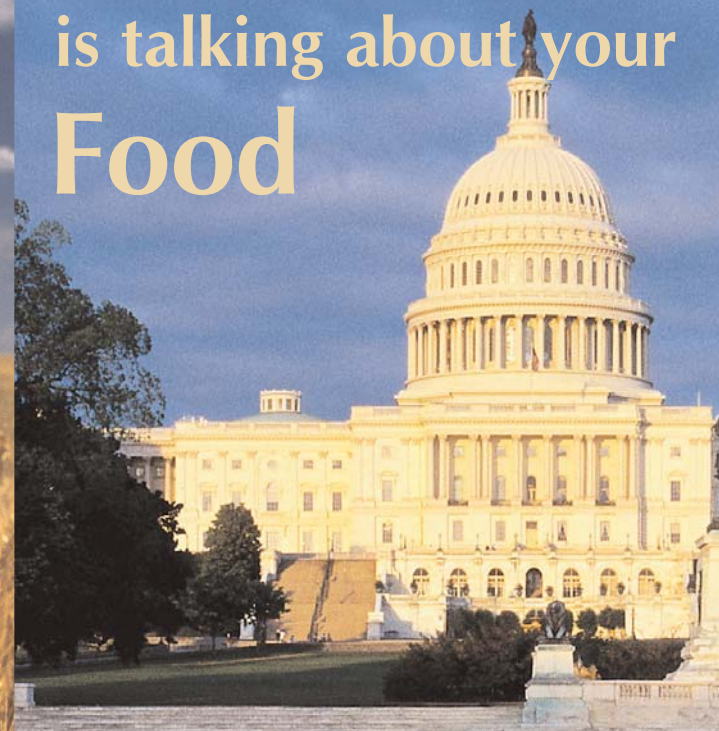
AFT and CNF share a commitment to protect farms and ranches and to advance good land stewardship.

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Congress

is talking about your
Food



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the
Discussion