

# 2023 Farm Bill

## What's Needed to End Hunger in the U.S.



As Congress works to reauthorize the Farm Bill, Feeding America urges lawmakers to strengthen federal nutrition programs. These programs work in tandem with food banks across the country to assist families and individuals facing hunger.

Especially as grocery prices rise and supply chain disruptions continue, food banks alone cannot meet the increased demand for food support. Congress must double down on our nation's commitment to ending hunger by strengthening critical anti-hunger programs in the 2023 Farm Bill.

### The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) and the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP)

Our nation's food banks—and programs like TEFAP and CSFP that support them—are lifelines for families who face challenges putting food on the table. **Charitable donations alone cannot ensure families get enough to eat. Food banks rely on federal nutrition programs to help keep shelves stocked for people in need.**



TEFAP moves food from farms to food banks to families.

- **Strengthen TEFAP Funding**

TEFAP is a means-tested federal program that provides food at no cost to individuals in need through organizations such as food banks, food pantries and emergency shelters. A reliable and continuous stream of TEFAP foods is essential, particularly now as the demand for food assistance in our country remains high. TEFAP also has a strong, positive impact on the farm economy. According to the USDA's Economic Research Service, TEFAP purchases give U.S. growers and producers an average of 27 cents per dollar, compared to about 16 cents per dollar from retail.

Lawmakers must increase TEFAP mandatory funding by \$250 million per year for food purchases. This level of investment will ensure the flow of TEFAP foods remains steady throughout the food assistance network, continue to help people facing hunger, and support the U.S. agricultural economy. Congress should also authorize \$200 million per year for TEFAP storage and distribution funds and \$15 million per year for TEFAP infrastructure grants. This additional funding will better cover the cost of moving TEFAP foods from farms to food banks to families in need, especially in rural communities.

- **Reauthorize and Streamline CSFP**

Every month, CSFP provides boxes of nutritious food to around 760,000 older adults (age 60+) who are low-income. CSFP helps to prevent the health issues often experienced by older adults facing hunger. Congress should streamline reporting requirements to reduce the administrative burden for program participants and increase program efficiency.

### Partnerships with Growers and Producers

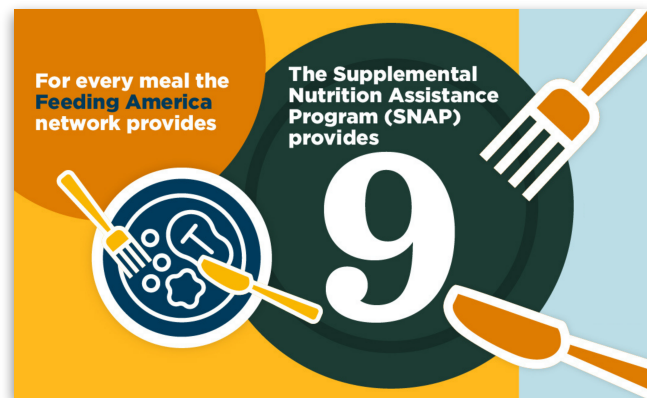
Each year in the U.S., around 70 billion pounds of food do not make it from farm to plate. Feeding America network food banks partner with growers, producers, food companies, retailers and restaurants to rescue this nutritious food and distribute it to people in need. **Congress must act to help increase food donations to communities in need.**

- **Bolster the TEFAP Farm to Food Bank Program**

Congress should increase funding for this program, remove the state match, and allow states to prioritize projects for donated food or food purchased at a low cost from local growers and producers.

## Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

Food banks are key partners in the fight against hunger, but they alone cannot end hunger permanently. SNAP is the nation's first line of defense against hunger, providing food benefits that are timely, targeted and temporary. Around 40 million people receive monthly SNAP food benefits, delivered through debit cards that can be used to purchase groceries at retailers nationwide. Food banks are the largest nongovernmental providers of SNAP application assistance in the country. **Congress must protect SNAP's funding and structure while addressing systemic barriers to access to ensure everyone who qualifies for benefits receives them.**



For every meal the Feeding America network provides, SNAP provides nine.

- **Increase SNAP's Purchasing Power**

Congress should set SNAP benefit levels to match the true cost of food. This is especially important given food price inflation. Basing SNAP benefits on the Low-Cost Food Plan will help families purchase enough nutritious food to thrive. Strengthening SNAP benefits will also help older adults, people with disabilities, people working low-wage jobs and others who are most likely to qualify for the minimum benefit.

Congress should also improve upon SNAP's well-designed structure to allow for a more gradual tapering of benefits as program participants earn more income. This will stave off the "benefits cliff" and provide individuals and families with a more stable transition toward economic self-sufficiency.

- **Streamline SNAP Eligibility and Enrollment**

Current SNAP eligibility rules and enrollment processes can be complicated and confusing. For households with older adults or people with disabilities, enrollment criteria vary widely in implementation and do not reflect mobility and transportation challenges. Congress should improve and simplify SNAP access, particularly for older adults, college students, immigrants and other people who face additional eligibility and enrollment barriers.

- **Provide Better Support for Individuals Seeking Employment**

Most people on SNAP who can work, do work. For people who are temporarily unemployed, SNAP is one of the few resources available for receiving food support during a job search. The program also offers helpful job search resources. The policy that ends food assistance after only three months is complex, error-prone and has not been shown to increase employment. Instead of inflexible penalties that provide a one-size-fits-all approach, Congress should adequately fund and improve state employment and training programs, ensure SNAP recipients are offered training opportunities that align with best practices, and remove the time limit on benefits to support participants as they find work.

- **Ensure Parity in Food Assistance for U.S. Territories and Sovereignty for Native Communities**

U.S. citizens residing in Puerto Rico, American Samoa and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands are excluded from SNAP. The capped Nutrition Assistance Program (NAP) block grant available in those territories has highly restrictive eligibility requirements, lower monthly benefits and greater instability compared to SNAP. In consultation with the territories, Congress should provide a pathway to help them transition from NAP to full participation in SNAP.

Additionally, Native Americans and Alaska Natives experience food insecurity at a much higher rate than white individuals. Congress should work with tribal stakeholders to strengthen food security in Native American communities. This should include allowing tribal governments the flexibility to administer federal programs as decided by the tribe. Congress should allow SNAP participants to also receive Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) benefits.