

Farm Bill | Letter to Congress

Dear United States Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry,

The [Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility \(ICCR\)](#) is a coalition of more than 300 institutional investors collectively representing over \$4 trillion in invested capital. Our members comprise a cross-section of religious investors, pension funds, foundations, asset managers, and other long-term institutional investors. ICCR members regularly engage the management of corporations to mitigate social and environmental risks resulting from corporate operations and policies. Our fundamental proposition as investors is that responsible and sustainable business practices are in the long-term interest of companies, their investors and, more broadly, society. We are writing to you today to share our perspective on the reauthorization of the [Farm Bill](#).

ICCR hosts a working group of investors focused on nutrition insecurity as part of its broader [health equity](#) program. We encourage food and beverage companies to create strong nutrition policies, improve the nutritional profiles of their product portfolios, market products responsibly and equitably, increase access to healthy choices, and communicate clearly with consumers about the nutritional content of their offerings. This group has been engaging food and beverage manufacturers, casual restaurant chains, and grocery retailers, calling on them to assess how their business models may exacerbate adverse health outcomes, which not only present risks to consumers, communities, and shareholders but to the economy more broadly.

We actively engage our portfolio companies to:

- 1) Increase access to nutritious and affordable foods and beverages through product formulation and affordability measures;
- (2) Responsibly exercise their influence on consumer choice and behavior through marketing and labeling; and,
- (3) Ensure that lobbying activities are consistent with the company's position regarding health and wellness (i.e., transparency and accountability in the direct and indirect use of corporate funds to influence legislation and regulation).

We recognize that government policies and legislation can serve as barriers or facilitators to alleviating health inequities, particularly nutrition insecurity. A foundational principle of [Healthy People 2030](#) is “working to attain the full potential for health and well-being of the population is a component of decision-making and policy formulation across all sectors.” Supporting this foundational principle is one [leading health indicator \(LHI\)](#): to reduce household food insecurity and hunger. Doing that well involves a re-envisioning of our food system by recognizing the intersectionality of health and well-being across sectors. In the short term, the [Farm Bill](#), our nation's most important national food system legislation, is expiring at the end of September and the reauthorization of the bill provides an opportunity for the government to work towards ending food insecurity at home and abroad.

As Congress works to renew our food and farm programs through the Farm Bill, we urge you to support legislation that builds healthy, equitable, and sustainable food systems.

Specifically, we ask you to:

- Increase access to fresh fruits and vegetables by increasing support for produce-specific Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits in the Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program (GusNIP). This provides resources on top of monthly SNAP benefits for the purchase of fresh fruits and vegetables, primarily at farmers' markets, for a limited number of households.
- Eliminate barriers to SNAP for disenfranchised communities, communities that experience discrimination and exclusion due to unequal social, political and economic power structures, including ending the ban on former drug offenders, eliminating work requirements for college students, and permitting indigenous communities to administer SNAP and other federal nutrition programs on reservations.
- Increase healthy foods sold in-store, particularly for smaller SNAP retailers. Increase technical assistance support for retailers to sell healthy foods.
- Pilot healthy food marketing strategies with SNAP retailers.
- Increase support for farms producing specialty crops such as fruits and vegetables and incentivize farmers to adopt conservation practices.
- Keep food out of landfills by increasing support for post-harvest food recovery efforts and addressing the threat to food security posed by extreme weather.
- Support funding for international food aid programs such as Food for Peace.

As investors, we recognize the importance and financial benefits of resilient and inclusive economies, which includes supporting policies that aid people experiencing hunger and poverty no matter where they live. In 2021, [12.5%](#) of U.S. households with children were food-insecure. Research indicates that food insecurity can contribute to an increased risk for various negative health outcomes and disparities, such as an increased risk of obesity. These health disparities contribute to reduced productivity and lost work, higher insurance premiums for both employers and employees and annual U.S. [medical costs](#) in the hundreds of billions. Programs such as SNAP and WIC help to reduce food insecurity and extensive research indicates that access to healthy and affordable food contributes to decreased risk for diet-related diseases and reduced healthcare costs.

It is for these reasons that we urge you to support a Farm Bill that builds healthy, equitable, and sustainable food systems to enable Americans to live more productive, healthier lives.

Sincerely,
ICCR's Nutrition Insecurity Workgroup