



Call Your Senators Today
Ask Them to Support Amendments that Feed the Hungry and
Target Farm Supports to Those Who Need It Most
November 5, 2007

The Senate will be voting on *The Food and Energy Security Act* (HR 2419), the version of the Farm Bill approved by its Senate Agriculture Committee last week. We urgently need your help in supporting critical funding for Food Stamps and emergency food assistance; reforms in commodity supports to help smaller and moderate scale farmers; as well as support for conservation programs that benefit all rural communities.

IMMEDIATE ACTION REQUIRED:

Call your Senator(s) now (Capitol switchboard is 202-224-3121). Ask to speak with the staff person who deals with nutrition and agriculture policy. Urge your Senator(s) to:

Vote YES on amendments that provide additional funding for Food Stamps and for emergency food assistance (TEFAP). The Senate Agriculture Committee-approved bill contains \$1 billion less in new investments for the Food Stamp Program and The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) than the House-passed bill (H.R. 2419).

Vote YES on the Dorgan-Grassley amendment, which ensures support for U.S. farmers who need it most. Today 66 percent of commodity payment programs go to 10 percent of our nation's farmers, the biggest and most affluent. Urge the Senate to pass a fair commodity title that better targets payments to those who need them while closing loopholes that have permitted the powerful to collect multiple payments. The status quo, which directs the majority of payments to large and wealthy agribusinesses while leaving behind the majority of farm families, is unacceptable.

Vote YES on amendments that reduce trade-distorting subsidies. Our brothers and sisters who till the land in developing countries, where three-quarters of the population rely on small-scale farming for their livelihood, are struggling to survive in an increasingly global market that stymies their efforts to feed their families and work their way out of poverty.

Support the Food Aid provisions of the bill. Support the committee bill which provides for a "safebox" with no waivers, and sets aside \$600 million of PL 480 Title II resources for development programs. We must protect Title II resources that address chronic hunger, in order to mitigate future emergencies and to help the poorest reach long term food security. Oppose attempts to weaken Committee-passed provisions on Food Aid.

BACKGROUND:

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, National Catholic Rural Life Conference, Catholic Charities USA and Catholic Relief Services have been working together to seek a new kind of Farm Bill that reflects a commitment to feed the hungry at home and abroad, to offer effective support for those who till the land, while promoting fairness and equity for farmers and ranchers. We especially support efforts to target agriculture resources to those who need help the most rather than those who need it least.

The 2007 Farm Bill was approved by the U.S. House of Representatives (HR 2419) this summer. The Senate expects to begin voting on its version of the Farm Bill the week of November 5. The bill approved by the Senate Agriculture Committee makes important investments in conservation and includes key provisions for beginning farmers and socially disadvantaged farmers. However, more needs to be done to address the inequities in farm supports, especially programs that are trade distorting and that harm farmers in developing countries. While ensuring a genuine farm safety net, savings from greater fairness improvements need to be used for nutrition assistance to low-income people, conservation and rural development.

We will continue to work for fairness and justice in our food and farm policies as the Farm bill moves to conference committee for final passage, possibly before Thanksgiving.

USCCB POSITION:

The U.S. Bishops have stated that "the primary goals of agricultural policies should be providing food for all people and reducing poverty among farmers and farmworkers in this country and abroad." (*For I Was Hungry and You Gave Me Food: Catholic Reflections on Food, Farmers and Farmworkers*). See letters on USCCB's 2007 Farm Bill priorities at: <http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/national/agric.shtml>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Roxana Barillas at USCCB (202) 541-3445, rbarillas@usccb.org; Fr. Andrew Small OMI at USCCB (202) 541-3153, asmall@usccb.org; Bob Gronski at the National Catholic Rural Life Conference (515) 270-2634, nrcrcg@mchsi.com; Lucreda Cobbs at Catholic Charities USA, (703) 236-6243, lcobbs@catholiccharitiesusa.org; and Brendan Cavanagh at Catholic Relief Services, (410) 951-7462, bcavanag@crs.org.