Did You Know?

• 90% of Farm Bill money goes to 10% of farms, most to huge corporate farms. Almost none goes to small or medium-sized farms.

• Fifty billionaires, including banker David Rockefeller Sr., Microsoft co-founder Paul Allen, and stockbroker Charles Schwab, received millions of dollars in Farm Bill subsidies over the past 25 years. Individuals earning up to $900,000 a year are eligible for farm subsidies even if they never get their hands dirty on a farm.

• About one-third of climate-changing greenhouse gasses* are produced by agriculture, much of it on factory farms, known as Confined Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs)*.

• The Farm Bill does not directly support CAFOs—but it heavily subsidizes commodity crops* that are used as feed. Owners of CAFOs can buy feed cheaply which makes CAFOs lucrative while they pollute air and water and make unhealthy, meat-heavy diets cheap.

• Agribiz spends about $1.5 billion on lobbyists every year.

TAKE ACTION: Convincing Congress to Listen

Agribusiness employs an army of lobbyists to get what they want from the Farm Bill. The Bill can change if millions of citizens tell Congress loudly, consistently, and effectively that the Farm Bill should benefit small farmers, people, and the environment—not agribusiness.

Here’s what you can do:

• Educate yourself
• Write letters
• Print this brochure and give it to as many people as you can
• Call Congress
• Get to know your representatives by attending constituent meetings

For more information, go to our website: nyc.sierraclub.org/farmbill

It’s Time to Fix the Farm Bill!

The next Farm Bill will be passed in 2023. We have to speak up NOW—before the deals are made.

Every five years, Congress passes the Farm Bill, which determines what is grown and eaten in the U.S. and has an enormous impact on the environment. Should the Farm Bill subsidize agribusiness polluters—or improve the health of our planet and people?

“...the most important legislation that most people never heard of and that affects them three meals a day.”

—Daniel Imhoff, from his Introduction to The Farm Bill: A Citizen's Guide

“The way we eat determines, to a considerable extent, the way the world is used.”

—Wendell Berry
What’s Wrong with the Farm Bill?

The Farm Bill should help farmers grow healthy food and reduce pollution. Right? Instead:

* By subsidizing animal feed, it indirectly subsidies the most harmful farms—especially CAFOs* (Confined Animal Feeding Operations) for beef, pork, chicken, and dairy, which emit huge amounts of greenhouse gasses* and sewage—and encourage unhealthy diets.

* It does little to reduce pollution, promote the crops that provide the most nutrition, or provide benefits to the farms that need them most.

* Why? Because agribusiness has a very effective lobby that persuades Congress to act on their behalf instead of ours. And because most people don’t understand the Farm Bill and don’t tell Congress that we care about our food and that we’re watching.

* * *

“The [Farm] Bill Is a fully rigged system, gamed by Big Agriculture in collusion with government.”

—Marion Nestle, in the Foreword to The Farm Bill: A Citizen’s Guide

What’s in the Farm Bill?

Farm Bill programs are divided into 11 “Titles”*, four of which receive about 95% of the funds.

* Nutrition Assistance programs*; including SNAP (formerly Food Stamps), received over 75% of the funding; over $750 billion over ten years—a necessary expenditure that reduces hunger and poverty.

* Crop insurance*, about $90 billion over ten years, about 9.4%. Includes important disaster relief, but in some cases encourages farmers to plant on land that is too fragile.

* Conservation programs* include some valuable programs that prevent runoff and improve soil; also pays for things like manure lagoons* on CAFOs. $56 billion, about 6%.

* Commodity subsidies* pay farmers who grow crops like corn and soybeans, used mainly for animal feed. $44 billion, about 5%.

* The rest of the categories receive less than 5% of the funds.

See our website for more information about what is covered by the Farm Bill:

nyc.sierraclub.org/farmbill

How Can the Farm Bill Be Improved?

* Increase funding to farms that grow and sell fresh vegetables, fruits, and grains.

* Reduce subsidies for commodity crops that are mainly used for animal feed.

* Research and promote crops that cause less pollution and produce more nutrition, like hemp, legumes, and perennial crops.

* Fund local processing facilities and infrastructure.

* Fund conservation measures that regenerate soil and reduce run-off. Reduce payments for conservation measures needed by CAFOs, such as manure lagoons*.

* Focus on equity, ensuring that young farmers and minority farmers receive maximum benefits.

* Promote consumer participation in the food system by promoting community gardens*, CSAs*, farmers’ markets*.

*See our website for explanations of asterisked terms:

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