



seeking balance

Farm & Food Policy Project

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NEW ALLIANCE PUSHES FOR BOLD CHANGES IN 2007 FARM BILL

Washington, DC – A broad alliance of family farm, rural, conservation, sustainable and organic agriculture, anti-hunger, nutrition, faith-based, public health and other groups say the next farm bill should advance a new generation of farm and food policies designed to address some of the nation’s most pressing social, economic, environmental and public health challenges.

They detailed their recommendations in the report, “*Seeking Balance in U.S. Farm and Food Policy*,” released today. The report outlines innovations that would make real progress toward creating opportunities for young and beginning farmers, expanding new agricultural markets and value-added enterprises, helping more farmers move to organic production to meet increasing demand, reducing hunger and soaring rates of obesity; encouraging local food production and access to healthy food choices, promoting entrepreneurship and economic development in rural communities; providing incentives for more environmentally friendly farming systems; fostering cooperative conservation partnerships; and providing increased support for socially disadvantaged farmers and farmworkers. Developed under the auspices of the Farm and Food Policy Project, the report has been endorsed by more than 350 organizations across the country.

“It’s unprecedented for organizations with such diverse interests – many of whom have not been involved in the farm bill debate in the past – to come together like this. But it’s not surprising if you start with the idea that the farm bill shapes the food system that we all depend on, and sets important parts of our nation’s rural, nutrition, environmental and energy policies. Since the farm bill impacts all of us – farmers, consumers, taxpayers, and citizens – we need more, not fewer, voices at the table,” said Allen Hance, Farm and Food Policy Project coordinator.

Speaking at the press announcement, Ralph Grossi, president of American Farmland Trust, said: “Every year we lose almost 1.5 million acres of prime farmland in the United States. And that should concern everyone, not just the farm community as we think about policies for the future. There are a tremendous number of unmet needs related to agriculture and food, and the best program ideas are desperate for funding. Innovative programs that expand new markets for local, regional and value-added products will increase access to healthier and more sustainably produced foods; and provide tools offering farmers and ranchers real economic opportunities.”

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Building on these ideas, Ferd Hoefner, policy director for the Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, stated: “The future of family farming, land stewardship, and rural communities requires that Congress get serious about advancing new innovations. We need a comprehensive beginning farmer initiative to reduce entry barriers for the next generation of farmers and ranchers, targeted investments in value-adding enterprises to improve mid-sized farm viability, and transition support to help farmers catch up with consumer demand for organic and other certified foods. We need to retool our rural development programs to promote entrepreneurship and build rural businesses and community assets. And we need increased support for agricultural research and conservation stewardship incentives to make the farms of the future more profitable and environmentally sustainable.”

Linda Berlin, from the University of Vermont and representing the Society for Nutrition Education, stated that: “Two fundamental goals of this legislation are reducing hunger and improving nutrition and public health. With 35 million Americans facing hunger in our land of plenty, it is imperative that we strengthen the Food Stamp Program and other federal food assistance efforts. Public health considerations also should guide the next farm bill since as a nation we now spend at least \$100 billion annually treating diet-related diseases. By connecting farms in every region to schools, hospitals, food banks, and other institutions, we can dramatically increase access to healthy local food in all communities, but especially in those underserved by our current food system.”

“More than half of America is working farmland, which makes farmers, ranchers and forest landowners our greatest allies in addressing pressing air and water quality issues, in addition to health, environmental and energy concerns," said Scott Faber, farm policy analyst for Environmental Defense. "Yet the USDA turns away three out of four farmers who apply for conservation funding because of misplaced spending priorities. Instead of settling for the status quo, Congress should insist on farm policy that works for farmers, consumers and the environment.”

Speaking on behalf of a diverse group of minority farmers, farm workers, and urban food system advocates, Savi Horne, executive director of the Land Loss Protection Project in North Carolina, said: “As the nation’s overall population becomes increasingly diverse, people of color are poised to play a much larger role in creating a viable and sustainable farm and food system for the future. The 2007 Farm Bill must break the patterns of the past – ensuring redress to those unjustly denied assistance in the past, removing barriers that continue to limit access, and opening new doors to socially disadvantaged farmers and farm workers.”

A complete copy of the Farm and Food Policy Project’s policy statement and recommendations may be viewed and downloaded from its Web site at www.farmandfoodproject.org. The Farm and Food Policy Project (FFPP) is a collaborative of diverse organizations united by the common vision of a more sustainable food and agricultural system for the United States. FFPP is coordinated by the Northeast-Midwest Institute, 50 F Street NE, Suite 950, Washington, DC 20001.