

A Farm Bill for the future

Putting farmers, ranchers and forest landowners at the center of conservation solutions that make business sense, protect nature and make our food system more resilient.

The Farm Bill is a package of legislation with an enormous impact on American agriculture, natural resources and rural communities. The Farm Bill helps ensure that farmers, ranchers and other agricultural producers can supply abundant, affordable food for all Americans.

Farm Bill conservation programs are our country's largest investment in the voluntary conservation, restoration and management of private working lands. These lands—which include farms, ranches and forests—make up over half of the nation's land area.

The Farm Bill's incentive-based conservation programs deliver real benefits for rural communities and working lands. These incentives result in healthier soils, cleaner water, enhanced wildlife habitat and more opportunities for hunting and fishing. They can help farmers save money, diversify their income streams and recover after natural disasters such as floods and drought.

Farm Bill conservation programs are in high demand. Applications already far exceed available funds. **The Nature Conservancy urges Congress to safeguard all available funding for Farm Bill conservation programs.**

TNC and the Farm Bill

The Nature Conservancy has a long history of working with farmers, ranchers and forest landowners. We help them implement practices that protect their lands and bottom lines, while building more resilient communities and natural landscapes. As an owner, operator, and manager of agricultural and forest lands, TNC engages with and advocates for Farm Bill policies from an on-the-ground perspective.

What's at stake?

Congress typically reauthorizes the Farm Bill every five years. The current bill expired in October 2023, and Congress has since passed two extensions.

The Farm Bill will again expire in October 2025 if Congress does not act. Without a full, forward-looking reauthorization for this law, the future of our working lands and food supply is in jeopardy.

The Nature Conservancy's Farm Bill recommendations

TNC calls on Congress to safeguard all available funding for Farm Bill conservation programs. This is our top priority for the 2025 Farm Bill.

The following are some of our other high-level policy recommendations for Congress to consider:

Incentivize soil-building practices and support needed technical assistance for these practices:

- Simplify Technical Service Provider requirements to encourage greater private-sector technical assistance capacity.
- Give the U.S. Department of Agriculture authority to provide crop insurance premium discounts to producers who adopt conservation practices like cover crops.
- Streamline Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCP) administration.

Conserve working grasslands and wildlife habitat:

- Provide permanent authorization for the Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative.
- Modernize the Conservation Reserve Program by allowing cost-share for grazing infrastructure, providing cost share for mid-contract management, increasing the annual payment limitation, and allowing co-occurring program contracts for non-duplicative practices.
- Increase the federal share for entity-held Agricultural Land Easements and RCP easements overall as well as for grasslands of special significance.

Support home-grown energy production:

- Continue baseline funding for the Energy Title and programs like the Rural Energy for America Program.
- Incentivize agrivoltaics and dual-use renewable energy projects to maximize benefits for conservation, agricultural communities and climate.
- Promote the development of sustainable aviation fuel feedstocks only in cases that meet market needs for real decarbonization, avoid land conversion and spur adoption of conservation practices.

Improve water quality and supply:

- Authorize agricultural easements for floodplain reconnection.
- Modernize the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Program (PL-566) to support and prioritize funding for projects that provide multiple benefits to watershed health, rural communities and agricultural producers.
- Authorize 100% cost share for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program's high-priority practices that have no economic benefit to the farm as a business, but a high return on investment to water quality, such as grassed waterways, working wetlands and buffers.

Maintain healthy and resilient forests:

- Support watershed-level conservation, fire resilience and fire risk reduction across relevant federal agencies and promote ecologically beneficial forest management, including by providing long-term reauthorization of the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration and Water Source Protection Programs.
- Provide accessible, affordable forest restoration opportunities for private landowners and incentives to expand seed collection and nursery infrastructure.
- Update the Forest Inventory and Analysis program strategic plan and modernize FIA data collection and increase data accessibility.

Increase opportunity and access:

- Increase funding, credit availability and program accessibility for historically underserved producers and facilitate their access to markets.