



Wednesday, February 7, 2024

To: Interested Parties, U.S. House of Representatives
From: David Scott, Ranking Member, House Agriculture Committee
Subject: Democratic Principles for the Next Farm Bill

Every five years, the United States House of Representatives has the opportunity to improve the lives of millions of Americans by passing a law that supports the hardworking farmers, ranchers, and foresters who help keep our Nation housed, clothed, and fed.

House Agriculture Committee Members have been engaged in a years-long process of preparing a farm bill that will affect every community in America, from the most geographically remote to the densest metropolitan area.

We have hosted bipartisan farm bill listening sessions nationwide. We have solicited input from stakeholders and requested legislative priorities from every Member of the House. We have held Committee hearings. We have held Member and staff briefings. We have had hundreds of individual conversations at the Member and staff level.

This is our responsibility. This is our work. We are committed to getting it done. We have gone through this process in good faith and with goodwill, ever striving to pass a strong, effective, bipartisan farm bill. After watching Republican infighting delay work in the House on any legislation, we were able to extend the 2018 Farm Bill to give the House the time necessary to finish this important work. To that end, we want to make clear the principles and standards against which the final farm bill will be measured to earn Democratic support.

A strong, effective, and bipartisan farm bill must:

Reduce Hunger: Ensuring a robust domestic food supply without providing adequate food access to hungry American families is a non-starter. Protecting and enhancing Federal nutrition assistance programs by improving access, extending program delivery to communities in need, and supporting resilient local food systems benefits America's health, prosperity, and security. House Democrats will oppose any attempt to take food away from hungry Americans, including our Nation's vulnerable children, seniors, people with disabilities, and veterans.



Strengthen America’s Farmers: Supporting our Nation’s farmers—including small-, mid-sized, and beginning farmers—means providing access to capital, technical assistance, and crop insurance, while investing in the research and local infrastructure necessary to keep American agriculture viable in an era of rapid innovation and global competition.

Invest in Sustainable Agriculture: With the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), Democrats took a historic step towards bolstering USDA support for conservation and climate efforts. These policies empower farmers, ranchers, and foresters to adopt practices that are good for the environment and their bottom line. Farmers are at the forefront of conservation efforts and represent the best of climate-smart agriculture. The farm bill should facilitate farmers’ ability to maintain and improve their conservation efforts to protect soil health and water quality and quantity. House Democrats will not support a farm bill that takes IRA conservation funding away from its intended purpose. Instead, it should build upon the progress already being made.

Revitalize Rural America: Creating opportunity in rural communities by investing in water and clean energy infrastructure projects, increasing reliable broadband access, ensuring access to capital, and improving affordable health care and child-care options in the farm bill, will help rural America thrive.

Lower Costs for Farmers and Families: Supporting the most abundant, affordable, efficient, and diverse food supply chain in the world by investing in farm bill programs that lower input costs for farmers; improve market competition and transparency; and lower barriers to entry will decrease costs for farmers and the families they feed.

Improve Equity: Investing in the next generation of agricultural leaders and producers through scholarships and training opportunities—as well as outreach, technical assistance, and funding opportunities to small, beginning, and BIPOC farmers—expands opportunity and ensures American leadership in agriculture for generations.

Support Renewable and Bioenergy: Providing farmers and rural communities with the ability to diversify into bioenergy and renewable energy increases profits and helps operations weather cycles of low crop prices, creates jobs, and will lead to a more secure and resilient energy supply. House Democrats will protect the Inflation Reduction Act’s investment to help our local communities transition to cleaner forms of power and increase generation and transmission reliability. House Democrats will not support a farm bill that takes IRA energy funding away from its intended purpose.