

NEW MEXICO Food & Agriculture POLICY COUNCIL

Farm Bill and Child Nutrition Priorities—Working Document as of September 10, 2022

The New Mexico Food & Agriculture Policy Council is focused on the **2023 Farm Bill and Child Nutrition Reauthorization**. As we consider a wide range of Farm Bill priorities, we appreciate the opportunity to share and highlight how programs are working in New Mexico and some recommendations to consider for the upcoming Farm Bill that may provide more equitable access to programs by individuals, families, communities, farmers, ranchers, support organizations, and agencies.

We want to thank New Mexico's Congressional Delegation and staff for the opportunity to meet in person with our group of farmers and support organizations to share our Farm Bill and Child Nutrition program highlights from our specific experiences and to provide a few recommendations.

Overarching Recommendations:

- 1) Provide equitable access to Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) who may have been historically discriminated against or marginalized, to all USDA programs and resources;
- 2) Provide a sliding scale approach to USDA programs access such as decreasing required matches depending on applicants' budgets and provide "turnkey" grants (no match required) for program requests less than \$50,000 for one-year requests;
- 3) Urge set asides for specific programs NRCS & FSA (specific EQIP, CSP, & CRP Grasslands).
- 4) Make funding available within the year of an approved loan or grant contract; and,
- 5) Increase USDA staff and technical assistance to meet the needs of all people and communities;
- 6) Strengthen protocols used in the determination of minority preference.

Title II: Conservation Programs

Farming and ranching in the arid Southwest has unique needs, therefore conservation programs are very important to New Mexico. The following programs are some of the conservation programs that are important to the NMFAPC.

- It is important to have a **Targeted EQIP program in NM** so New Mexico agricultural producers can compete with agricultural producers from other western states that have targeted EQIP. This may be a State NRCS and not a Farm Bill issue.

Recommendation:

- We request USDA support for **Targeted EQUIP** programs for all states.
 - We request options to make the **Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)** more flexible. CRP pays producers to take some land out of production for conservation purposes. This program was designed for producers in the Midwest to keep land from being converted to crop lands because so much of the great plains had been converted and was some of the cause of the dust bowl in the 1920s. We request that **CRP** and **CRP Grasslands** be made available to the green belts on smaller acreages in NM, so these lands are not lost to development.
- **Conservation Technical Assistance:** NRCS, FSA, and NIFA enter into equity agreements with different organizations to help these agencies with Technical Assistance.

Recommendation:

- We request agencies be given the resources to hire additional engineers to keep up with current workload and avoid project delays.
- **Grazing Lands Conservation Program:** Grasslands CRP works similarly to regular CRP except Producers don't have to take the land out of production.

Recommendation:

- We request that **CRP** and **CRP Grasslands** be made available to the green belts on smaller acreages in NM, so these lands are not lost to development.
- **Agriculture Resilience Act:** Supports soil health programs, on-farm renewable energy, food loss and waste programs, pasture-based livestock, and farmer viability through **LAMP**.

Recommendation:

- We support the Agriculture Resilience ACT!

Title IV: Nutrition

- **Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP):** New Mexico's seniors and farmers have benefited from the Senior FMNP for close to two decades. Federal fund for the Senior and WIC FMNP leverage important federal funding. In 2020, 60,000 low-income residents purchased NM produce with federal and state dollars totaling \$408,351 (ref: NM Farmers' Marketing Association)

Recommendations:

- Make the program accessible to all states to apply based on low-income and food insecure senior populations.
 - Increase funding to \$50 million annually (currently at \$25 million)
 - Additional Admin Funds for the use of Full Time employees, as the vision for the NM Senior Program is to expand our program and have 1-2 staff in each region to assist Markets, farmers and participant with a large Outreach to all Senior Programs within their Region.
 - Advertising Funds: Facebook has been a great help, however we would love to provide our Markets, Farmers, Senior Program, Community Programs, advertisement information of the program.
 - Additional Funding for Seniors to issue more than the \$50.00 for the Season. NM WIC & Senior Program issues once per year starting In July and we have many food insecure Seniors that have been asking if there is any possibility of receiving funds on a monthly basis as it truly helps them fill their fridges and canning storages
-
- **GusNIP – Nutrition Incentive Program:** The Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program (GusNIP) provides grants on a competitive basis to projects that help low-income consumers access and purchase fresh fruits and vegetables through “cash” incentives that increase their purchasing power at locations like farmers markets. GusNIP consists of subprograms for both traditional “SNAP incentives” projects and “Produce Prescription” projects. In New Mexico: from 2019 - 2021 the GusNIP SNAP Double Up Food Bucks Program exceeded \$5,097,000 in sales of NM grown and raised foods benefiting 87,389 NM participants and more that 950 farmers through sales at 67 NM farmers' markets and 33 grocery stores. The GusNIP funded (\$500,000 for 3 years) produce prescription program FreshRx began year 2 of a 3 year project on July 1 of this year, serving 400 patients at 20 FQHCs across the state. The goals of the program include increasing nutrition access for patients with chronic health conditions and patients experiencing food insecurity by providing them with vouchers for free New Mexico grown produce throughout the growing season. Recent expansion funds (an additional \$500,000 for 3 years) have enabled the program to begin serving an additional 84 patients this season, with expansion to a total of 800 patients served across the state beginning July 1, 2023. Currently, 18 farmers' markets

participate in FreshRx, as well as La Cosecha, Anthony Youth Farm and New Mexico Harvest CSAs. GusNIP expansion funds will enable several additional farmers' markets to begin participating in 2023. This year, the state of New Mexico allocated \$166,000 to provide produce bags and boxes to 210 households feeding children across 9 tribal communities, as well as at the Indian Health Services Hospital in Santa Fe and at La Clinica de Familia in Las Cruces. These produce bags are provided by 4 CSA farms and MoGro. Nationally, evaluation of GusNIP produce prescription programs has shown an increase in the daily intake of fruits and vegetables among participants, one of the key indicators of program success.

Ref: New Mexico Farmers' Marketing Association

Recommendations:

- Increase funding for SNAP incentives and Produce Prescription projects to \$200 million/year or 1% of total SNAP spending.
 - Reduce match requirements for SNAP incentives and Produce Prescription grants to 10%.
 - More targeted technical assistance and outreach to BIPOC / socially disadvantaged communities and organizations.
 - Clarify program design, that all three redemption models (produce for produce, SNAP for produce, produce for SNAP) should be allowable.
 - Provide dedicated funding for existing, statewide programs
 - Allow states to embed incentive directly on state EBT/SNAP card
-
- **Geographic Preference for School Meals – *Kids Eat Local bill language*:** Clarifies and simplifies to improve on past efforts to increase local purchasing. Sponsored by: Senator Brown & Congresswoman Pingree

 - **USDA Farm to School Grant Program (*In the Child Nutrition Reauthorization*):** Farm to School Grant Program, administered by the Food and Nutrition Service, awards competitive grants of up to \$500,000 to schools, school districts, state and local governments, Native American tribal organizations, non-profits, and agricultural producers. This funding supports a wide range of activities that support the healthy development of children in ECE settings and students across the nation, including activities that increase diet quality and improve long-term nutrition skills. Farm to school activities help to develop partnerships, establish supply chains, create new menu items, provide nutrition education, establish school gardens, encourage increased consumption of fruits and vegetables, and organize field trips to agricultural operations. Farm to school activities have also been found to increase student and teacher meal participation. Since 2013, New Mexico organizations and agencies have received 21 grants totaling close to \$1.46 million benefitting Tribal, rural, and urban communities and regions across the state including Anthony, Taos, Penasco, Des Moines, Magdalena, Espanola, Bernalillo, Silver City, Albuquerque, Santa Fe, Corrales and

statewide initiatives. These funds have leveraged more than \$3 million state, local, private funds.

Recommendations:

- Increase funding
 - Maintain turnkey granting of \$50,000 or less
 - Decrease 1 for 1 match to a sliding scale based on applicants' annual budget
- **Produce Procurement Reform - NEW:** Learning from the pandemic, there is an opportunity to create a new fresh produce emergency distribution program prioritizing local, small & mid-sized, BIPOC producers based on the successful contracts from the **Local Food Purchase Assistance Program**. New Mexico just received a **Local Food Procurement Agreement Project** (more than \$2 million over two years), an example of what a federal program like this can do to benefit New Mexico's food insecure individuals and communities. New Mexico provides market opportunities for farmers, a partnership between the NM Department of Agriculture, NM Farmers' Marketing Association and the NM Association of Food Banks.
 - **Healthy Food Financing Initiative:** As part of the NM Food Farm and Hunger Initiative, the State has appropriated funds that can match federal dollars to support healthy food retail and food hub operations to strengthen and expand New Mexico local food systems and farming economy.

Recommendation:

- Refer to **Overarching Recommendations** on page one.
- **Community Food Project Grant Program:** has been a long-standing program that has helped many NM communities get food system initiatives off the ground including food hubs and rural grocery initiatives, increasing food access initiative in rural and underserved urban areas, farm to school programs.

Recommendation:

- Refer to **Overarching Recommendations** on page one
 - Double funding
- **Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations**
Recommendation: Provide local preference option

Title VI: Rural Development

- **Value Added Producer Grants (VAPG):** Currently and historically this has been a very important program for New Mexico producers and processors in New Mexico. Since 2001 farmers, ranchers and businesses have received more than \$3.33 million benefiting the beginning and expansion of meat and chile processing facilities, greenhouses for year round production, and chile and wine businesses as examples.

Recommendations:

- Increase funding
 - Reduce match for producers earning less than \$250, 000, AGI to 25%
 - Create new lending and loan guarantee authority for producers to purchase equipment and construction of facilities for value added products
 - Allow for loans to non-rural projects if a primary purpose is to benefit rural communities/producers
 - Priority for projects benefiting underserved communities
 - Loan and guarantee appropriations authorization of \$10 million/year
- **Rural Energy Assistance Program (REAP):** used by farmers and ranchers in NM.
 - **USDA Rural Development Guarantee Loan Program:**

Recommendation:

- Preference should be grants to communities in need (low-income demographic)
- **Emergency Loans:** Will farmers and individuals be taxed for their emergency funds?

Title X: Horticulture

- **Local Agriculture Marketing Program (LAMP):** LAMP is an umbrella program that consists of the following separate subprograms: the Farmers Market and Local Food Promotion Program (FMPP and LFPP), the Value Added Producer Grant (VAPG) Program, and the Regional Food Systems Partnership (RFSP) Program.

Recommendations:

Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMPP)

- Increase funding
- Create turnkey grants for common projects of less than \$100K with no match requirement.
- Provide AMS authority to award priority points to ensure geographic diversity.
- Reduce match to 10% for organizations with annual budgets of less than \$350K.
- Allow for a limited amount of grant funds to be used for equipment.

Local Food Promotion Program (LFPP)

- Increase funding
- Create turnkey grants for common projects of less than \$100K with no match requirement.
- Provide AMS authority to provide priority points to ensure geographic diversity.
- Reduce match to 10% for organizations with annual budgets of less than \$350,000.
- Allow for a limited amount of grant funds to be used for equipment.

Value Added Producer Grants (VAPG): Currently and historically this has been a very important program for New Mexico producers and processors in New Mexico. Since 2001 farmers, ranchers and businesses have received more than \$3.33 million benefiting the beginning and expansion of meat and chile processing facilities, greenhouses for year-round production, and chile and wine businesses as examples.

- Increase funding
- Reduce match

Regional Food Systems Projects (RFSP): New Mexico is one of the first recipients of this new program at close to \$1 million in grant funding over 4 years matched by state and private funds.

- Increase funding.
- Ensure that regional food chain coordination is a recognized activity for all programs.

Farm & Ranch Support Programs

- **Farming Opportunities Training and Outreach Program (FOTO)**, established in Section 12301 of the 2018 Farm Bill. The FOTO program merged the authorities for the **Beginning Farmer and Ranchers Development Program (BFRDP)** and the **Outreach and Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged and Veteran Farmers and Ranchers (OASDFRVP)** also known as 2501. Farmers, ranchers and communities in NM have benefitted from this program since its inception. Current OASDFRVP grantees include the NM Acequia Association, Taos County Economic Development Corporation (TCEDC) and Hispanic American Institute.

Recommendations:

- **Increase OASDFRVP funds to \$10 million.** The \$10 million funding request would meet increased needs for the effective combination of education and training models designed to support new farmers and historically underserved producers.
- **Prioritize programs that support veterans in farming and ranching.**

Recommendations:

- Continue to fund the military veteran's agricultural liaison position, and make sure the person holding that title has that role as their sole responsibility and support staff.
 - Continue to support the enhancing agricultural opportunities for military veterans (agvets) grant program.
 - Support the National Agrability Project
- **USDA Meat & Poultry Inspection Readiness Grant:** Agriculture Secretary, Tom Vilsack, announced on Nov. 22, 2021 that the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) would invest \$32 million in grants to 167 meat and poultry slaughter and processing facilities to support expanded capacity and efficiency. New Mexico awardees include C4 Enterprises Inc., award \$198,000 near Tierra Amarilla and the MGS Enterprises Award Amount: \$200,000 in the Four Corners Area.

Recommendations:

- Requesting support for the **Small and Very Small Processor Support Programs and FSIS Fees for small scale meat processing such as the** C4 Farms ranch near Tierra Amarilla.
- Strengthen protocols in determining minority determination and priority of programs.
- Allow land lessees to qualify for USDA resources.

Title XII: Miscellaneous

- **Urban Agriculture:**

Recommendations:

- Support the continuation of the **Urban Agriculture Grant Program**. Numerous NM organizations and farms have applied to this new grant program.
- **Agriculture Labor:** The Farm Bill can and must build on our efforts to promote competition in the food and agriculture sectors. Anti-competitive practices are harming small-scale farmers, workers, and consumers, and result in hollowing out rural communities and damaging our environment. The Farm Bill should commit to an anti-competitive food and agriculture marketplace, while increasing long term investments in local and regional food processing and distribution. In this way, the Farm Bill can level the playing field for farmers and offer more and better choices to consumers.

Recommendations:

We support agricultural labor standards including:

- Worker protection standards regarding wage rates, health, safety, and housing conditions to migrant, seasonal, minority and other farm laborers and for education of their children.
- A livable wage that includes all compensation (includes wages, housing...). This helps to modify the Fair Labor Standards Act (of 1938) and the National Relations Act (of 1936); We support the creation of a program, similar to the Fair Food Program, assuring a voluntary, worker-driven collaborative process between farms and workers on farms to deliver certifiable, market rewarded, and market-enforced payment of products to benefit wages, profits, and livelihoods of workers and farmers.
- We ask USDA to create incentives for participation in the program. Programs like these could allow workers to gain more market share towards wages, accountability of employers for fair standards and hearing grievances, and buy-in from food product end users to ensure that goods are not purchased at low-production cost and labor rates.

- **Forest Management**

- Recommendations:**

- We urge the implementation of the appropriate management of our forests;
 - We support appropriate and full compensation for those harmed by loss of control of management practices, whether by mismanagement or “Act of God”.

Child Nutrition Reauthorization – School Nutrition Programs:

Recommendations:

- Support **Universal School Meals**: Need higher reimbursement rates to cover all food, staff, and supplies.
- Prioritize culturally significant foods – additional grain alternatives such as starchy vegetables like corn potatoes and tubers.
- Allow protein alternative’s and increase funding.
- Make it easier to have milk/dairy alternatives.
- Increase funding for equipment.
- Prioritize locally grown preferences.
- Reduce administrative burdens.
- Prioritize funding for food and farm experiential learning programs in school classrooms and outdoors.

The **New Mexico Food & Agriculture Policy Council** continues to research and refine its **Farm Bill and Child Nutrition Reauthorization recommendations for 2022 – 2023**. We look forward to continued education and unifying our priorities to share with **Senator Ben Ray Lujan** and the New Mexico Delegation for your support and leadership.

Recommendations and suggestions as of September 10, 2022

*Contact: Pam Roy, Farm to Table and the NM Food & Agriculture Policy Council, 505-660-8403,
pam@farmtotablenm.org, <https://nmfoodpolicy.org/>*