



## RELIGIOUS GROUPS ADVOCATE FARM BILL REFORMS

### *Church leaders urge Congress: Reform Farm Bill to Reflect American Values*

As Congress begins the work of reauthorizing the U.S. farm bill, more than a dozen Churches and faith-based organizations have come together as the **Religious Working Group on the Farm Bill** to urge major changes in U.S. agricultural policy aimed at reducing hunger and poverty, and promoting the livelihood of farmers and rural communities, in the U.S. and around the world.

**“Passing a new farm bill is an important opportunity to reshape our agricultural policies to build a more just framework that better serves rural communities and vulnerable farmers in the U.S., overcomes hunger here and abroad, and helps poor farmers and their families in developing countries,”** said Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio of Brooklyn, chairman of the U.S. Catholic bishops' Domestic Policy Committee.

The [Religious Working Group on the Farm Bill](#), which includes Christian denominations and major faith-based organizations, has developed a statement of legislative principles for farm-bill reform (attached). Members of the group currently are in the process of visiting congressional offices and sharing those principles.

**“As people of faith who are also constituents, we must let our members of Congress know that we support broad reforms in the farm bill,”** said Rev. David Beckmann, president of Bread for the World. **“We are advocating for farm policy that strengthens our rural communities and better supports farmers of modest means, people trying to put food on the table in the United States, and struggling farmers in developing countries.”**

Members of the Religious Working Group support a farm bill that strengthens investment in communities in rural America; ensures all Americans an adequate and nutritious diet; provides better and more targeted support for U.S. farm families of modest means; and conserves the land for present and future generations. Group members also are urging Congress to address the negative impact current U.S. agricultural and trade policies have on people living in impoverished countries around the world.

**“Over the past decade, the U.S. government has made unprecedented, bipartisan commitments to address the deadly poverty that kills one person every three seconds in our world,”** said the Most Rev. Katharine Jefferts Schori, Presiding Bishop and Primate of the Episcopal Church. **“Reforming U.S. agricultural policy to help farmers in poor countries sell their crops is a way to follow through on that moral commitment while also improving the financial livelihoods of farmers in our own country.”**

The Religious Working Group also urges critical reforms to address poverty and human need in the United States through initiatives like the Food Stamp Program, the United States’ first line of defense against hunger.

**“Our nation’s lawmakers have a historic opportunity in 2007 to pass a farm bill. Let us work together for a bill that strengthens the livelihood of rural communities, helps lift people out of hunger and poverty, and safeguards the integrity of God’s creation for generations to come,”** said the Rev. Mark S. Hanson, Presiding Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

The faith communities represented in the group believe 2007 represents a critical moment in U.S. agricultural policy, and will be working with congregations throughout the country to carry the voice of reform to the halls of Congress.

**“Farming ought to be regarded as a sacred calling to take care of the land and to bring forth the food and fiber that sustains the community. The time is now to advocate for a dramatic reform of U.S. agricultural policy so that rural communities in the United States and in the developing world can survive and prosper,”** said the Rev. John L. McCullough, Executive Director and CEO of Church World Service.