



A Catholic Campaign Against Global Poverty



Take Action!

Support Amendments that Represent Real Reform in the 2007 Farm Bill on Thursday this Week

July 25, 2007

The U.S. House of Representatives will be voting on the 2007 Farm Bill (H.R. 2419) this Thursday (July 26). Unfortunately, HR 2419, as reported by the Agriculture Committee, does not address the plight of struggling family farmers here and abroad. It does not do enough to target farm supports to those who need it most, while continuing to provide most of the resources to those who need it least. Other improvements are needed for global food aid.

IMMEDIATE ACTION REQUIRED: Please call your Representatives in Congress (202-224-3121 to contact the Capitol Switchboard) and urge them to support amendments that promote real reform and provide help for hungry people here and abroad, (e.g. greater investments in necessary nutrition programs). Three Amendments merit your support as they move U.S. Farm policy in the right direction towards genuine reform:

- ***Fairness in Farm and Food Policy* Amendment offered by Rep. Kind that would provide \$5.6 billion for the Food Stamp program and would reform our farm supports.**
- **Payment Limits Amendment offered by Reps. Blumenauer, Ryan, Flake, Kind that would limit farm commodity payments to \$250,000 per year.**
- **Amendment by Rep. Blumenauer that would create a pilot project to allow local and regional purchase of overseas food aid. The pilot provides up to \$100 million.**

BACKGROUND:

The House Agriculture Committee approved a farm bill (HR 2419) on July 19. Although the bill contains important improvements in the areas of nutrition, food aid, rural development, and conservation, it fails to significantly reform and target farm subsidies that allow large payments to farmers that need them least while offering little support for those who need it most. For example, the approved bill caps eligibility for farm payments to individuals with an annual adjusted gross income of \$1 million (\$2 million for married couples); hardly "limits" that would help spread limited resources. The bill also falls short of providing \$3 billion needed for the Conservation Security Program, a program that supports farmers who are good stewards of the land. Nutrition programs were increased by \$4 billion by House leadership, but we are advocating for an additional \$1.6 billion to restore the purchasing power of families receiving food stamps.

While HR 2419 makes progress in some areas of concern to the Catholic community, we are deeply disappointed that it does not address the plight of struggling family farmers here and abroad. **It does not do enough to target farm supports and leaves intact inequitable subsidies that hurt farmers whose livelihoods depend on agriculture.** We urge

Congress to support an agricultural policy that addresses hunger, promotes the common good, and embraces global solidarity. This chance will not come up again for at least another five years.

On Food Aid: We also urge that the final bill allow organizations such as CRS to use Food Aid funds to buy food locally, near to the sites of overseas emergencies (the Blumenauer Amendment mentioned above). Many experts and anti-hunger organizations have called for key changes to U.S. food aid programs to make them faster, more efficient and cheaper. One of the key proposals is to permit the purchase of food in the countries where food aid is needed, or nearby. Currently, virtually all U.S. food aid must be purchased in the U.S.A. and shipped thousands of miles. The Blumenauer Amendment would permit up to \$100 million for a pilot program on local or regional purchase. This change could greatly speed the delivery of food aid, cost 50 percent less, and support markets and poor farmers in developing countries.

We support the establishment of a "safe box" to protect food aid for development purposes. We urge that \$600 million be provided for the *safe box* as well as the \$2.5 billion in overall funding for PL 480 Title II. We also urge an increase to \$60 million to reimburse the Emerson Trust for emergency food aid, not included by the Agriculture Committee.

USCCB POSITION:

The U.S. Bishops have stated that "the primary goals of agricultural policies should be providing food for all people and reducing poverty among farmers and farmworkers in this country and abroad." (*For I Was Hungry and You Gave Me Food: Catholic Reflections on Food, Farmers and Farmworkers*).

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, the National Catholic Rural Life Conference, Catholic Charities USA, and Catholic Relief Services are working together to support policies in the 2007 Farm Bill that support rural communities and family farms; strengthen and expand domestic anti-hunger programs; promote conservation and good stewardship of the land; ensure safe living and working conditions for farmworkers; promote fairness for farmers in developing countries; and provide adequate levels of food security aid in reformed programs that efficiently and effectively assist hungry people worldwide.

USCCB will support amendments that move toward real reform like the ***Fairness in Farm and Food Policy amendment and the Blumenauer Amendment***. Please contact your Members of Congress before the vote on Thursday and tell them to vote for amendments that offer real reform.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION: To read USCCB's letters and action alerts on the various priorities of the Catholic community in the 2007 Farm debate, go to:
<http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/national/agric.shtml>

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