

Background Information

The Jefferson County Food Policy Council (the Council) held its first meeting in the fall of 2015, with concerns about the limited use of the SNAP (food stamps) and WIC (Women, Infants and Children) programs and rising child obesity numbers in Jefferson County. The Council is facilitated by Jefferson County Public Health (JCPH), and membership includes farmers, non-profit organizations, health care staff, community residents, researchers and local municipalities. The vision of the Council is to influence policy to increase equitable access to healthy, local and affordable food and support a sustainable community food system.

The Council has developed a 2018 Farm Bill Platform - as the Farm Bill's policies directly affect urban farmers, our environment, and our most vulnerable populations here in Jefferson County. This platform is being shared with Colorado congressional offices and will be used by the Council for advocacy at the federal level.

The Farm Bill is a comprehensive piece of legislation that authorizes most federal policies governing food and agriculture programs, including the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as Food Stamps. Approximately every five years, Congress reauthorizes the Farm Bill. Reauthorization offers policy makers an opportunity to review the programs included in the legislation, consider programmatic changes, and address implementation barriers that may have come up since the previous reauthorization. The 2014 Farm Bill set to expire on September 30, 2018.

The Council is dedicated to seeing our urban farms thrive. Urban farms are critical to increasing local food production. Financial investments in these farms further strengthen Jefferson County's local economies and communities. Conservation is also a win-win investment that protects and enhances Jefferson County's shared natural resources, and bolsters farmers' bottom line. Many of the Council's members are urban farmers and/or work with our most vulnerable populations across Jefferson County, particularly in promoting and utilizing SNAP. The Council is dedicated to ensuring that these benefits continue to be available and sufficient to help people weather life's storms—and improve access for all to local, healthy, nutritious foods.

Resolution

Food Policy Council Farm Bill Platform - Jefferson County, Colorado

WHEREAS, the Jefferson County Food Policy Council (the Council) created a Farm Bill Platform after identifying that supporting the Farm Bill is a vital priority for our Council members, urban farmers, our environment, and our most vulnerable populations here in Jefferson County; and

WHEREAS, the platform details the Council's ideal Farm Bill, which would support and bolster the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), ensure healthy food access for all, support and properly insure our local farmers, protect and expand vital conservation programs; and

WHEREAS, the Council supports the Senate's 2018 Farm Bill draft with the exceptions stated in our Farm Bill platform attached; and

WHEREAS, the Council supports the portion of the House of Representatives' 2018 Farm Bill draft, which provides the most robust, permanent funding for fruit and vegetable incentives for the Double Up Food Bucks Program through the Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentives (FINI) grant program; and

WHEREAS, the Council asks that the 2018 Farm Bill base SNAP benefits on the Low-Cost Food Plan, which would increase benefits for families by up to 30%, allowing them to buy enough nutritious food to make it through the month¹; and

WHEREAS, the Council would also ask that the 2018 Farm Bill provide additional clarity around the procurement of local farm products in federal school meal programs. In the 2017-2018 school year 33.4% of pre-kindergarten to grade 12 students received free and reduced lunch in Jefferson County (CO Department of Education, 2017-2018). The Council finds it important that schools can serve high quality food from local sources to students who need it most²; and

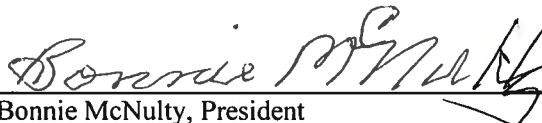
WHEREAS, the Council asks for increased funding for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) – which provides agricultural producers with financial resources and one-on-one help to plan and implement conservation practices; and

WHEREAS, the Council believes that supporting these elements of the Farm Bill will help our county's overall health, and strengthen our local food system.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Jefferson County Board of Health hereby proclaims on August 21, 2018, its support for the Jefferson County Food Policy Council's Farm Bill Platform.

ADOPTED this 21st day of August, 2018.

**BOARD OF HEALTH,
JEFFERSON COUNTY, CO**


Bonnie McNulty, President

ATTEST:


Clerk to the Board



**Jefferson County Food Policy Council
2018 FARM BILL PLATFORM**

Introduction

This Farm Bill Platform was developed by the Jefferson County Food Policy Council (the Council). We strive to approach all our local policy work with a health equity lens, seeking to confront the power imbalances at the root of health inequities in our community. It is for this reason the Council became interested in the Farm Bill, as its policies directly affect urban farmers, our environment, and our most vulnerable populations here in Jefferson County.

The Council is dedicated to seeing our urban farms thrive, as they are critical to increasing local food production. Financial investments in these farms further strengthen Jefferson County's local economies and communities. Conservation is also a win-win investment that protects and enhances Jefferson County's shared natural resources, and bolsters farmers' bottom line.

Those who participate in SNAP (food stamps) and other nutrition programs are among the most vulnerable residents in the County. The Council is dedicated to ensuring that these benefits continue to be available and sufficient to help people weather life's storms—and improve access for all to local, healthy, nutritious foods. We believe that supporting these elements of the Farm Bill will help our county's overall health, empower our residents, as well as strengthen our local food system.

Our Ideal Farm Bill Would...

Support and Bolster the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

SNAP allows families to put more food on the table, but at approximately \$1.42 per person per meal, current benefit levels are inadequate for many households. Near the end of the month, benefits often run out, leaving many Jefferson County families without adequate access to nutritious food. In 2016, approximately 60% of those eligible for SNAP were enrolled in Jefferson County – about 30,233 people. Since not all who are eligible are enrolled, Jefferson County loses an estimated \$26,857,400 in economic stimulus annually. (Hunger Free Colorado Jefferson County Report, 2016) It is in our county's best interest to improve the SNAP program and boost enrollment.

We support the Senate 2018 Farm Bill draft, which includes the following:

- Boosts SNAP benefits for older and disabled Americans.
- Offers employment and training opportunities to jobless adults before time limiting their SNAP benefits.
- Makes no further restrictions to SNAP access and/or current work requirements.

The Council also supports basing SNAP benefits on the Low-Cost Food Plan, which would increase benefits for families by up to 30%, allowing them to buy enough nutritious food to make it through the month.¹ (Not currently included in the Senate 2018 Draft Farm Bill).

Ensure Healthy Food Access for All

In 2017, more than 1 in 10 Jefferson County residents (approximately 59,110 people) were food insecure, meaning they did not have access to a reliable source of food—let alone healthy food (Feeding America: Map the Meal Gap 2017). Grant opportunities which award local communities funding to develop community specific and comprehensive responses to local food access are vital for Jefferson County’s food insecure population. We seek to improve the capacity of Jefferson County SNAP participants—as well as our general population—to purchase and consume fresh, healthy foods.

We support the Senate 2018 Farm Bill draft, which includes the following:

- Continues the Community Food Projects grant program – a USDA Community Food Projects Grant that helps communities increase their self-sufficiency and food security.
- Creates the Harvesting Health pilot program for Fruit and Vegetable Prescription Programs for low income patients.²
- Creates the Local Agriculture Market Program (LAMP), which combines the Value-Added Producer Grant (VAPG), the Farmers Market Promotion Program (FMPP), and Local Food Promotion Program (LFPP) into one. Jefferson County organizations have benefitted from this program, which funds direct-to-consumer marketing strategies, as well as local and regional food business enterprises. In 2017, local non-profit GoFarm in Jefferson County was awarded \$495,547 over three years through LFPP.²

We also support a piece of the House 2018 Farm Bill draft, which:

- Provides the most robust, permanent funding for fruit and vegetable incentives through the Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentives (FINI) grant program – which funds incentives for SNAP participants to purchase fruits and vegetables at farmers markets. In 2017, \$8,841 in FINI funding was spent in Jeffco. This funded Colorado grown fruits and vegetable incentives for SNAP participants shopping at Jeffco Farmers Markets. (Double Up Food Bucks 2017 Jefferson County Impact Report)

The Council would also like the 2018 Farm Bill to provide additional clarity around the procurement of farm products in the federal school meal programs. In the 2017-2018 school year 33.4% of pre-kindergarten to grade 12 students received free and reduced lunch in Jefferson County (CO Department of Education, 2017-2018). The Council finds it important that schools can serve high quality food from local sources to students who need it most.² (Not currently included in the Senate 2018 Draft Farm Bill).

Support and Properly Insure our Local Farmers

To keep our agricultural economy strong, the next farm bill needs to facilitate the transfer of skills, knowledge, and land between current and future generations of family farmers. Federal crop insurance is an important cornerstone of the farm safety net, but it must be improved to better serve *all* of America’s farmers equitably and to use our tax dollars more efficiently. The Farm Bill can also help level the

playing field by arming our nation's minority farmers and military veterans with the tools they need to thrive and compete in the agricultural economy.

We support the Senate 2018 Farm Bill draft, which:

- Secures permanent support for the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program. (BFRDP) – This program provides grants to organizations assisting beginning farmers and ranchers in education, outreach and technical assistance. In 2017, the Colorado Economic Development Office received \$239,970 in BFRDP funding to support local producers.
- Expands beginning farmers' access to affordable land.³
- Ensures equitable access to financial capital and federal crop insurance.³
- Expands and improves the Value-Added Producer Grants Program (VAPG) as mentioned above. VAPG program was designed to encourage independent producers of agricultural commodities to process their raw products into marketable goods, thereby increasing farm income.² Colorado has received \$333,950 from 2014-2016 to fund VAPGs.
- Requires the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Risk Management Agency (RMA) to study the barriers to accessing crop insurance, particularly by beginning and socially disadvantaged producers, and to identify options for expanding access.⁴
- Reauthorizes and provides renewed mandatory funding for the Outreach and Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged and Veteran Farmers and Ranchers Program—also known as the 2501 Program.⁵
- Increases transparency and accountability to ensure the 2501 Program remains responsive and accessible to those serving our nation's most vulnerable farming communities.⁵

Protect and Expand Vital Conservation Programs

We must ensure that federal policies incentivize, encourage, and reward conservation stewardship efforts, and that federal programs like the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), and Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) are funded to meet farmer demand for conservation assistance.

We support the Senate 2018 Farm Bill draft, which includes the following:

- Has no cuts to Conservation Title Funding in the Farm Bill.
- Increases beginning and socially disadvantaged farmer participation in working lands conservation programs by increasing funds set aside for these groups by 10% within the EQIP and CSP programs.³
- Removes barriers to obtaining crop insurance and provides crop insurance incentives for conservation activities completed.⁴
- Preserves total funding for the Rural Energy for America Program (REAP). REAP provides grants and loans to farmers and businesses for energy efficiency improvements and purchase of wind, solar or other renewable energy systems. The program also provides grants to help farmers with energy audits and renewable energy development.

However, the Council would like to see increased funding for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) – which provide agricultural producers with financial resources and one-on-one help to plan and implement conservation practices. The Senate 2018 Farm Bill draft cuts baseline funding for these two programs.

References – Key Marker Bills

1. Closing the Meal Gap Act of 2017
2. Local Food And Regional Market Supply (FARMS) Act
3. Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act
4. Crop Insurance Modernization Act
5. Assist Socially Disadvantaged and Veteran Farmers and Ranchers Act