

FACT SHEET: THE FARM BILL IS A CHILDREN'S HEALTH BILL



One-in-10 children in America doesn't have enough to eat, which can lead to poor academic performance, behavioral health challenges, obesity, tooth decay, and cardiovascular disease during childhood and later in life. The Farm Bill, which Congress reauthorizes every five years, offers a vital opportunity to strengthen federal nutrition programs that ensure America's children have enough nutrient-dense food on the table. **The Farm Bill is a children's health bill, and Congress must treat it as such.**

Roughly 75% of Farm Bill spending is dedicated to nutrition programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program (GusNIP), and the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR), which all provide food assistance to children in poverty. Children make up nearly half of all SNAP beneficiaries, and the Farm Bill gives Congress the opportunity to expand eligibility, improve benefits, and make other updates that improve their nutrition and quality of life.

The House and Senate Agriculture Committees released their initial proposals for the 2024 Farm Bill this week, and the differences between the two bills are stark. Senate Agriculture Chairwoman Debbie Stabenow's (D-MI) proposed Farm Bill takes bold steps to keep children properly nourished. The House version, proposed by Chairman Glenn Thompson (R-PA), doesn't just fall short — it makes draconian cuts that will decimate children's access to healthy food.

A Note on the Thrifty Food Plan

The Thrifty Food Plan (TFP) represents a science-based "market basket" that makes up a healthy but frugal diet for the average American. This calculation determines SNAP benefit levels, and the 2018 Farm Bill contained language requiring the USDA to update the TFP to meet science-based dietary recommendations every five years. Chairman Thompson's proposal decimates SNAP's ability to meet scientifically determined nutritional needs by eliminating any updates that are not cost-neutral. Changes in dietary science and guidelines often affect the makeup of the TFP to meet children's nutritional needs. The House proposal would block these crucial updates, creating a program that willfully ignores the needs of the impoverished children it serves.

Rep. Thompson claims that his proposal is not a cut and that this policy prevents another Administration from decreasing SNAP benefits in the future. In reality, eliminating necessary TFP updates results in a \$20-30 billion reduction in the program over the next 10 years. And future Administrations could only reduce SNAP benefits if the science-driven TFP updates showed that children would benefit from reduced benefits, a highly unlikely scenario.

Senate Agriculture Chairwoman Stabenow's proposal instead takes steps to ensure that the USDA is transparent in its TFP updates. It requires USDA to publish all data used to make TFP updates and to subject the research to peer-review by the Government Accountability Office (GAO). This language ensures that children are still able to get the science-backed nutrition they need.

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How Do the Bills Stack Up?

Below is a list of First Focus on Children's Farm Bill priorities and which proposals currently include them:

Priority	House	Senate
Protect the Thrifty Food Plan	X	✓
Eliminate time limits for Able-Bodied Adults without Dependents (ABAWDS)	X	X
Expand and Strengthen GusNIP	X	✓
Help Schools Purchase Fresh, USA-Grown Produce	X	✓
Increase Medical Deductions for SNAP Families	X	X
Lift the Lifetime SNAP Ban on Individuals with Drug Felonies	X	✓
Improve SNAP Access for College Students	X	✓
Transition Puerto Rico to SNAP	X	✓
Lift 5-Year Waiting Period that Prohibits Immigrant Families from Accessing SNAP	X	X
Allow Families to Purchase Hot Foods with SNAP Benefits	X	✓
Improve and Expand FDPIR	X	✓