

# 2012 Farm Bill Update

by Melinda Hemmelgarn

The single piece of legislation known as the Farm Bill currently contains \$90 billion in taxpayer funding and significantly affects farming, conservation, energy and the quality and price of the food on our plates. When the bill comes up for renewal every five years, the public has a chance to voice support for a greener, healthier, more sustainable food and farming system. Sign up for Farm Bill updates and action alerts from the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (website below), and talk with members of Congress about concerns.

Marydale DeBor, who works to improve food quality in Connecticut, recommends that citizens align with farm advocacy organizations. "Advocacy is the single most important need now, around the Farm Bill and state policies," she says.

## Did you know?

- Most Farm Bill dollars support food assistance programs, namely food stamps or the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), our nation's largest safety net against hunger. In 2012, SNAP is projected to consume 75 percent of the total Farm Bill budget.
- Most SNAP benefits are spent in supermarkets and convenience stores. SNAP can be used at farmers' markets, but only by those that accept electronic benefits transfer (EBT) cards. In 2011, SNAP's \$11 million of the program's total \$71 billion benefits were redeemed at farmers' markets nationwide, directly benefiting local farmers.
- Crop insurance is the second-largest Farm Bill budget item.
- The majority of subsidy payments go to large farms producing corn, cotton, wheat, rice and soybeans, which helps explain why soda is cheaper than 100 percent fruit juice, and corn-fed feedlot beef costs less than organic, grass-fed beef.
- An improved Farm Bill would provide participation incentives for conservation, beginning farmers, local food economies and organic agriculture, and better align agriculture with public health.

## Learn more about the 2012 Farm Bill at:

Environmental Working Group and EWG Action Fund  
[ewg.org](http://ewg.org)

*Food Fight: The Citizen's Guide to the Next Food and Farm Bill,*  
by Daniel Imhoff  
[WatershedMedia.org/foodfight\\_overview.html](http://WatershedMedia.org/foodfight_overview.html)

Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy  
[iatp.org](http://iatp.org)

National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition  
[SustainableAgriculture.net](http://SustainableAgriculture.net)