2023 Farm Bill Priorities

The Arizona Food Bank Network (AzFBN) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to a hunger-free Arizona. Our mission is to develop solutions to end hunger through food banking, public policy, and innovation. We support our member food banks and the statewide emergency food network with transportation and distribution, advocacy, and outreach.

The emergency food network, alongside farmers and direct service providers, and with support from Congress and state and local governments, worked tirelessly over the past few years to feed Arizonans in need. Collectively, AzFBN member food banks—Community Food Bank of Southern Arizona, HonorHealth Desert Mission Food Bank, St. Mary’s Food Bank, United Food Bank, and Yuma Community Food Bank—distributed 172 million pounds of food in 2022.

But 1 in 10 individuals and 1 in 7 children across Arizona remain food insecure.

As the country’s most effective anti-hunger program, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) helped an average of 872,000 Arizonans each month in 2022, more than two-thirds children, older adults, and people living with disabilities. SNAP also brought $2.74 million per month into Arizona’s local economy in 2022.

Despite the USDA’s much-needed update to the Thrifty Food Plan in 2021, per Congress’s direction in the 2018 Farm Bill, the average SNAP benefit in Arizona was $2.05 per person per meal in 2022. In addition to prioritizing benefit adequacy, AzFBN asks Congress to focus on benefit accessibility and equity in the 2023 Farm Bill. Our key priorities are summarized below.

Strengthen SNAP

- **Increase equitable access to SNAP for critical populations:**
- Expand the accessibility of using SNAP to purchase hot and prepared food and meals through the Hot Foods Act (H.R. 3519, Rep. Meng) to make nutritious meals easier for families with limited space, time, and physical ability.
- Promote access to healthy food for older adults and people living with disabilities through the Senior Nutrition Task Force Act (S.2361, Sen. Casey/H.R.4706, Rep. Fitzpatrick)

End Exclusionary Policies that Harm Tribal Communities
- Allow dual enrollment in the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) and SNAP through the Tribal Access to Nutrition Act (S. 2563, Sen. Murray).
- Expand the FDPIR Self-Determination pilots that support local food procurement through the FDPIR Food Sovereignty Act (S. 2489, Sen. Smith).
- Give Tribal governments the full authority to function as government agencies in administering federal nutrition programs, including TEFAP, CSFP, and SNAP.

Fully Resource the Emergency Food System and Build on Recent Innovations
- Improve the Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) so that food bank shoppers can access more nutritious, culturally responsive food with dignity by increasing funding to $960M in TEFAP food purchasing and authorizing $200M annually for TEFAP storage and distribution through the Farmers Feeding America Act (S. 2713, Sen. Casey).
  - Streamline the income eligibility threshold across emergency food assistance programs in order to maximize participation by low-income populations with regards to local needs and costs of living.
  - Make TEFAP flexibilities permanent: waive the requirement to collect personal information and allow other food distribution models like “drive-throughs” and home-delivery by proxies.
- Continue funding programs to support the distribution of food purchased from local and Black, Indigenous, and other socially disadvantaged farmers to secure food that meet local needs and invest in local food economies.
- Enhance the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP), including:
  - Increase the income guidelines beyond the current 130% of the federal poverty level.
  - Expand commodities product selection and pilot strategies to include additional food options such as fresh or frozen alternatives.

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