



# THE HEALTHY FARMS, FOOD, AND COMMUNITIES ACT

*Policy Initiatives for the 2002 Farm Bill and the First Decade of the 21st Century*

**Community Food Security Coalition**

**Prepared By**

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*Black & white photographs by Cynthia Bagnetti.*



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Healthy Farms, Food and Communities Act (HFFCA) renews and expands the policies and approaches first outlined in the Community Food Security Coalition's 1995 Community Food Security Empowerment Act document. The HFFCA includes a legislative initiative to be incorporated into the 2002 Farm Bill, and a broader set of policy principles and legislation that we endorse. Both of these policy platforms—the Farm Bill initiative and an overarching policy approach create the basis for furthering the goals of healthy farms, healthy food, and, ultimately, healthy communities.

### Farm Bill Summary

As part of the 2002 Farm Bill, we propose a five-part legislative initiative that expands on the Community Food Projects (CFP) program. Since the program's inception, CFP grants have helped generate a number of creative and successful projects that have enabled communities to reduce hunger, improve residents' nutrition, and support family farmers. The proposals contained in this initiative represent a budget request of \$70 million per year, a modest and reasonable investment considering the enormous pressures for alternative strategies and creativity in adapting the present food system to meet the needs of vulnerable populations such as low-income residents and struggling family farmers. The provisions include:

- 1] Reauthorizing and increasing mandatory annual funding to \$7.5 million for the core **Community Food Projects Program** and provide an additional \$2.5 million for a new mini-grants component for smaller single focus projects such as community kitchens or garden projects (\$10 million).
- 2] Incorporating a **Planning Grant** component to the Community Food Projects Program to fund program and business planning and community food assessments to guide successful project development (\$5 million).
- 3] Establishing a **Local Food Bonus Account** to increase the purchase of locally or regionally produced food by institutions serving low and moderate-income households (\$25 million).
- 4] Launching a USDA **Healthy Farms, Healthy Kids Initiative** to integrate a general policy to purchase locally with a Farm-to-School Seed Grant Fund and expansion of the current Small Farms/School Meals Program (\$15 million).
- 5] Creating a **Community Food Security Research, Training, and Education program** to link and develop research programs to support community food security assessments, new model strategies and a new generation of scholars in this field (\$5million).

The Community Food Security Coalition's "Healthy Farms, Food, and Communities" legislative package for the 2002 Farm Bill provides one important route for beginning to develop a healthy food system. The task of restructuring the nation's food and farm policies is massive, and one requiring broad and deep

changes in a number of sectors. The CFSC is supportive of many of these efforts, as we see ourselves as part of a larger set of organizations and movements seeking to transform what has become an unjust, undemocratic, and unsustainable food system.

We support **farm policies** that provide farmers with a greater share of the food dollar, encourage conservation, reduce the monopoly power of agri-businesses, preserve farmland, and support the ability of minority farmers and farmworkers to earn a fair wage and stay on their land. We support **nutrition policies** that increase the minimum wage to a living wage, expand food stamps and the WIC program, improve the quality of meals through the Child Nutrition Programs, and build connections between low income families and local agriculture. We support **transportation policies** that improve access to healthy foods for the transit dependent, and that foster redevelopment of inner city communities rather than sprawl.

Federal policy changes, including those associated with the upcoming 2002 Farm Bill, can play a critical role in reversing decades of concentration in the food system, protracted community food *insecurity*, including lack of access to fresh and nutritious food, decline of family farms and rural communities, and environmental degradation.

To take back the food system for communities, farmers, and consumers, and create a more just, democratic, and sustainable food policy requires action at all levels—from Congress to neighborhoods. Change begins to happen when people are able to act in concert and identify the kinds of coalitions that can make change possible.

*For the food system, the process for making change has begun. Join us!*



## PART I

### *The Healthy Farms, Food and Communities Legislative Initiative for the 2002 Farm Bill*

#### **Background**

In January 1995, an emerging network of anti-hunger, family farm, environmental, economic development, and community-based organizations released a policy platform entitled the *Community Food Security Empowerment Act*. This document addressed such core food issues as lack of access to fresh food, high rates of diet-related diseases, the family farm crisis, negative environmental impacts in food production and distribution, and dis-empowered neighborhoods and communities, as well as the stubbornly high rates of food insecurity even in periods of economic growth.

This policy platform and the growing community food security movements that have since emerged have been able to influence the shape and direction of federal and local food policy. Major policy changes that have been initiated include:

- 1. *The Community Food Projects Legislation.*** This legislation, directly influenced by the 1995 policy platform, was incorporated into the 1996 Farm Bill. Administered by USDA CSREES, the Community Food Projects program has helped stimulate important, innovative programs in such areas as youth training in food production, farmers' market and community garden projects in low-income communities, and building self-reliance strategies, such as urban agriculture projects, among food insecure populations. While the funding amounts have been modest (\$2.5 million annually for all projects), the impacts of the projects have been substantial, establishing new constituencies, policies, and programs in more than 30 states.
- 2. *USDA's Community Food Security Initiative.*** In 1999, USDA established an inter-agency initiative that highlighted community food security as an agency goal. For the first time, key aspects of USDA policy, such as nutrition objectives, anti-hunger programs, and small farm support, came to be seen as linked objectives. By coordinating resources among its own agencies and state liaisons, USDA began to identify community food security as an integrated, prevention-oriented approach linking community and consumer food needs to support for local farmers.



**COMMUNITY FOOD SECURITY ACT LEGISLATIVE LANGUAGE.** In this section, the term "community food project" means a community-based project that requires a 1- time infusion of Federal assistance to become self-sustaining and that is designed to: (1) meet the food needs of low-income people; (2) increase the self reliance of communities in providing for their own food needs; and (3) promote comprehensive responses to local food, farm and nutrition issues.

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3. **Farm-to-School Programs.** In 1997, the Food and Nutrition Service, in conjunction with the Agricultural Marketing Service, established pilot programs in Florida and North Carolina for local farmers to sell directly to school districts for school lunch programs. At the same time, the Community Food Projects program funded important new farm-to-school project and policy initiatives that have since stimulated a groundswell of farm-to-school programs in about ten states, including an award-winning (from the School Board Association) farmers' market fruit and salad bar program.

4. **The Farmers' Market Nutrition Program for Seniors.** Established in 2000, the Seniors' Farmers' Market Nutrition Program is emblematic of the community food security "win-win" approach, providing greater access to healthy food options for seniors and new market opportunities for family farmers. Fifteen million dollars in vouchers will be distributed in 2001.

Despite these important advances, the problems targeted by the Community Food Security

Empowerment Act remain and, in some instances, have become even more protracted. This includes the worst family farm crisis since the 1980s, persistent poverty and hunger rates, loss of farmland, and poor access to fresh and healthy foods in low-income communities. New issues, such as rising rates of childhood obesity and diabetes, have also become more visible and prominent.

The emergence of these new community food security policies and innovative community-based efforts provide an important building block. New approaches that link farm concerns to community food problems identify the possibility of important future breakthroughs. The document described below provides a number of proposals that can further this paradigm shift in farm and food policy.

### **The Healthy Farms, Food and Communities Act**

We are proposing a new policy initiative, the Healthy Farms, Food and Communities Act. This policy document renews and expands the policies and approaches first outlined in the 1995 Community Food Security Empowerment Act document. This document includes a legislative initiative to be incorporated into the 2002 Farm Bill, and a broader set of policy principles and legislation that we endorse. Both of these policy platforms—the Farm Bill initiative and an overarching policy approach create the basis for furthering the goals of healthy farms, healthy food, and, ultimately, healthy communities.



#### **What is the Community Food Security Coalition?**

The Community Food Security Coalition is a North American organization of social and economic justice, environmental, nutrition, sustainable agriculture, community development, labor, and anti-poverty and anti-hunger groups. We have 265 organizational members in 41 states and the District of Columbia. We are dedicated to building strong, sustainable, local and regional food systems that ensure access to affordable, nutritious, and culturally appropriate food to all people at all times. We seek to develop self-reliance among all communities in obtaining their food and to create a system of growing, manufacturing, processing, making available, and selling food that is regionally based and grounded in the principles of justice, democracy, and sustainability.

The Coalition achieves its goals through a comprehensive blend of training, networking, and advocacy to further the efforts of grassroots groups to create effective solutions from the ground up. We operate a training and technical assistance program for Community Food Projects grantees and applicants; programs to connect school and college food services with local farmers; networking and educational initiatives including an annual conference, listserve, and quarterly newsletter; and an emerging effort to establish field organizers in various regions of the country.



As part of the 2002 Farm Bill, the CFS Coalition proposes a five-part legislative initiative that expands on the Community Food Projects (CFP) program. Since the program's inception, CFP grants have helped generate a number of creative and successful projects that have enabled communities to reduce hunger, improve residents' nutrition, and support family farmers. The federal investment to date in the Community Food Program has been very modest, a total of \$11.5 million over the past five years. The proposals contained in this initiative represent a budget request of \$60 million per year, a modest and reasonable investment considering the enormous pressures for alternative strategies and creativity in adapting the present food system to meet the needs of vulnerable populations such as low-income residents or struggling family farmers.

These legislative proposals presented below seek to expand the current Community Food Projects Competitive Grants program (CFP) by enhancing a community's planning and program development capacity in order to meet essential community food security objectives. As a multi-faceted program, this renewed and more dynamic CFP program would serve as a model for comprehensive approaches to supporting local food systems and building community food self-reliance.



**Proposed Annual Budget for Healthy Farms, Food, and Communities Act**

1. Community Food Projects expansion and mini-grants \$10 million
2. Community Food Project Planning Grants \$5 million
3. Local Food Bonus Account \$25 million
4. Healthy Farms, Healthy Kids \$15 million
5. Community Food Security Research, Training and Education \$5 million



**Six Basic Principles of Community Food Security**

Community food security represents a comprehensive strategy to address many of the ills affecting our society and environment due to an unsustainable and unjust food system. Following are six basic principles of community food security:

• **Low Income Food Needs**

Like the anti-hunger movement, CFS is focused on meeting the food needs of low income communities, reducing hunger and improving individual health.

• **Broad Goals**

CFS addresses a broad range of problems affecting the food system, community development, and the environment such as increasing poverty and hunger, disappearing farmland and family farms, inner city supermarket redlining, rural community disintegration, rampant suburban sprawl, and air and water pollution from unsustainable food production and distribution patterns.

• **Community focus**

A CFS approach seeks to build up a community's food resources to meet its own needs. These resources may include supermarkets, farmers' markets, gardens, transportation, community-based food processing ventures, and urban farms to name a few.

• **Self-reliance/empowerment**

Community food security projects emphasize the need to build individuals' abilities to provide for their food needs. Community food security seeks to build upon community and individual assets, rather than focus on their deficiencies. CFS projects seek to engage community residents in all phases of project planning, implementation, and evaluation.

• **Local agriculture**

A stable local agricultural base is key to a community-responsive food system. Farmers need increased access to markets that pay them a decent wage for their labor, and farmland needs planning protection from suburban development. By building stronger ties between farmers and consumers, consumers gain a greater knowledge and appreciation for their food source.

• **Systems-oriented**

CFS projects typically are "inter-disciplinary," crossing many boundaries and incorporating collaborations with multiple agencies.

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**PROPOSAL #1: Increase funding to \$7.5 million annually for the core Community Food Projects Program and provide an additional \$2.5 million for a new mini-grants component.**

Funding for the core Community Food Projects Competitive Grants Program should be tripled to \$7.5 million per year from the current \$2.5 million. These funds should be maintained as mandatory expenditures, linked to food stamp training funds, as the current program provides.

In addition, a new mini-grants program for “single-focus” community-based food and farming projects (as opposed to the comprehensive systems-oriented guidelines of the current CFP), such as farmers’ markets or community kitchens should be enacted with a \$2.5 million authorization and appropriation. A partial list of projects eligible for mini-grants (but not eligible currently by themselves for CFP funding) might include: *Community and school gardens • Land trusts for community food production • Community supported agriculture projects • Farmers’ markets • public markets • community farmstands, and other direct marketing initiatives • Micro-enterprise food-related businesses and business training • Community kitchens and kitchen incubator programs • Nutrition education campaigns linked to local foods • Institutional purchasing of locally grown or processed foods • Consumer food cooperatives, buying clubs, and other community-based grocery stores • Producer cooperatives.*

An administrative review of the CFP program by USDA CSREES (the current administrators) should also take place to allow for smoother administration and easier access to funds by grantees.

***Why CFP Expansion:***

Expanding the CFP Program will accelerate the growth in community-based solutions to local food problems. Over the past five years, requests for CFP funds have averaged about \$20 million per year, about eight to ten times more than available funds. This amount does not reflect the pent-up demand for federal funds for projects not eligible for CFP funds and which have not applied. For these projects, such as community or school gardens, there does not exist a single easily accessible source of federal funds, despite their obvious popularity and impacts in their communities. Mini-grants of \$5,000 to \$15,000 could greatly expand the number of successful projects, reduce hunger and improve the diets of low-income consumers, as well as support family farmers.

**PROPOSAL #2: Incorporate a planning grant component to the Community Food Projects Program**

The Community Food Projects program should incorporate a planning grant component. This funding stream should provide grants to community groups for program and business planning, community food assessments and other similar ventures that will assist in the development of successful, community-based food and farming projects.

It should also provide grants for the purpose of developing and operating entities that provide comprehensive food systems planning. These entities may operate at a variety of jurisdictions, including state, tribal, county, municipal, regional, or neighborhood. They should be public-private partnerships, incorporate multiple stakeholders from a wide variety of activities associated with food production, consumption, and distribution, and to the extent possible connect with existing institutions such as Food Policy Councils, Resource Development Councils, Cooperative Extension, Economic Development Councils, or other commissions and councils. They would be formally authorized by USDA and local authorities to provide an on-going focus on the development and performance of their local food system.



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Links between urban and rural areas would be encouraged. Sample eligible activities include: *Map community grocery stores with the goal of targeting economic development resources or affecting zoning decisions* • *Monitor and report hunger levels on an annual basis* • *Organize public education campaigns on the benefits of purchasing locally grown food* • *Collaborate with transit authorities to improve bus service to improve food access* • *Formulate municipal food security policies and objectives* • *Develop a comprehensive plan to reduce the incidence of childhood diabetes within a school district.*

### **Why Planning Grants:**

Food system planning—at both the project and community level—is far too infrequent, due in part to a lack of financial and political support. By way of example, no city in the USA has a department of food, despite the fact that it is a basic need on the par with housing, water, power, and transportation—all of which are supported through a local government agency or policy-making entity. Public sector agencies at all levels of government, as well as the private non-profit sector, can influence local food system performance by addressing market gaps, especially those that adversely affect lower income and at-risk consumers, family farmers, and the environment. Collectively, these agencies would be able to address food insecurity, inadequate markets for farm goods, unsustainable farming and land use practices, and nutrition-related health problems, for example. Yet with so much at stake and with so many involved, there is virtually no attempt made to coordinate these efforts, establish common goals, involve those most directly affected by food problems, e.g. clients, or create a comprehensive framework to address food system problems. With limited funding dedicated to resolving problems with our nation’s food system, community food planning makes sense as an investment that can maximize the efficiency of existing resources.

These proposed changes seek to increase the participation of stakeholders—and most importantly community members—in designing and implementing solutions tailored to community needs. By doing so, the quality and sustainability of resulting projects and plans will be improved significantly.

### **PROPOSAL # 3: Local Food Bonus Account**

Funds should be made available through a “bonus account” to increase the purchase of locally produced food by institutions serving low and moderate-income households, or by these households themselves. Such funds would be used either for the direct purchase of locally produced food, reducing matching requirements, or altering restrictions to encourage local purchases in existing food assistance programs. Institutions creating such programs for the first time may apply for small start-up grants to meet their planning and development expenses. Eligible programs would include the following: *WIC Farmers’ Market Nutrition Programs that want to expand their program to other socially and economically disadvantaged or nutritionally at-risk populations* • *CSA farms that want to assist food stamp recipients or other nutritionally at-risk groups to become members* • *Farmers’ markets unable to develop technologically and economically feasible EBT systems capable of accepting food stamps* • *Institutions that want to increase their purchase of locally produced food. (Such institutions may include: Food banks for the direct purchase of food from farmers; Public institutions such as schools, hospitals, nursing homes, and corrections facilities that can not afford to purchase locally grown food due to higher prices or transaction costs).*

Bonus account funds would be distributed to states based on a formula that takes into account population and need as well as the existence of similar programs and policies that favor purchasing of locally

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produced foods. CFP-funded entities undertaking food system planning could also play a role in recommending potential participants for such a bonus account. USDA Food and Nutrition Service would administer this program. While the demand for a bonus account program far exceeds the funding proposed herein, this program would nevertheless represent a significant starting point and could leverage other private, state and federal resources.

***Why a Bonus Account:***

Providing access to fresh, nutritious and locally grown food is not only a form of economic support for low-income families, but can also be an important avenue toward improving dietary practices and preventing diet-related diseases. By way of example, the WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) has been remarkably successful as a nutrition education program for low-income women and children. Yet, efforts to develop incentives for the purchase of locally produced food often confront bureaucratic, regulatory, and economic obstacles. These barriers make it difficult to introduce innovations that may expand the benefits of a program. While these obstacles will also need to be addressed, establishing a modest bonus account above and beyond current food assistance program appropriations, represents an important step toward demonstrating the benefits of innovative approaches that link local food producers with disadvantaged populations.

**PROPOSAL #4: Healthy Farms, Healthy Kids Initiative**

Similar to the bonus account program, Congress should pass three linked proposals that encourage schools to purchase locally produced foods for school meals programs. First, a formal policy statement that explicitly authorizes and encourages schools to give preference to locally produced food should be passed. This statement will supercede existing USDA policy that prohibits schools from establishing geographical preferences in their procurement processes. At no cost, this measure will remove many of the barriers that school food service directors have in sourcing local food.

Second, Congress should enact a Farm-to-School Seed Grant Fund with two separate funding avenues: one for costs incurred by school districts, and the other for community groups to initiate new farm-to-school programs. The former will cover the initial outlay required for equipment, labor, and materials required to transition to local food purchasing. School districts purchasing locally produced food and in need of such items to adequately store and prepare nutritious meals such as salad bars, walk-in coolers, and culinary equipment would be eligible for grants up to \$50,000 per year. Administered by USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), this program would complement the Bonus Account Program in removing the barriers to schools utilizing locally grown foods in their meals. The latter funding stream recognizes the key role community groups have in making connections between local producers and school districts, and ensuring the sustainability of subsequent farm to school programs. The direct participation of students in project planning and management should also be encouraged.

Finally, the current Small Farms/School Meals Program should be expanded beyond the four states (IA, KY, NC, WV) in which it currently operates. This program, administered by FNS, facilitates connections between school food service officials, state departments of agriculture, Cooperative Extension, and the Department of Defense's produce procurement program with the goal of increasing the sales of locally grown foods to school meals programs. While this expansion may occur by administrative action, Congressional encouragement of such an initiative would go a long way toward ensuring its success.

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***Why Farm-to-School Programs:***

Schools present an important opportunity to meet many community food security goals, most notably improving the diets of schoolchildren through an integrated approach that links agricultural education with nutritional benefits, and serving as a new market for local family farmers. Grassroots efforts to make connections between school food service and local farms are sprouting up across the nation, yet are finding numerous policy barriers as well as the need for seed funding to get such programs underway. The Healthy Farms, Healthy Kids Initiative would address both of these needs, as well as assure an important role for the Department of Agriculture in making these linkages.

**PROPOSAL #5: Community Food Security Research, Training, and Education**

Institutions such as Cooperative Extension and land grant universities should be encouraged through a variety of mechanisms to fund and support professionals conducting CFS-related applied research projects. Existing USDA research programs, such as the National Research Initiative (NRI) and the Integrated Food and Farming Systems Initiative (IFAFS) should incorporate community food security into their funding streams. Similarly, research programs developed in the future should incorporate community food security as a priority area. In all cases, applied research should take priority status. Local entities engaged in food system planning, such as those funded under the Community Food Projects Program, should also be consulted to help identify research priorities.

Graduate students interested in CFS often have problems accessing resources to focus their studies in this new and emerging field. To support the development of a new generation of scholars trained in this area, a Community Food Security Fellowship Program should also be established through this legislative initiative. Funds would be used to support graduate and post-graduate research and study in the community food security field.

***Why a Research, Education, and Training Program:***

To date extremely few dollars have been dedicated to community food security research projects. As CFS becomes an increasingly vital arena for action and policy development, additional research into developing new model strategies, the effectiveness and impact of various programs, indicators of healthy food systems (among other topics) will need to be conducted. To facilitate this occurrence, USDA should direct additional resources for this purpose.

Additionally, incorporating community food security into existing institutions and funding programs through USDA would elevate the importance of this work among university researchers, encouraging their involvement with local authorities, community groups and public institutions. Faculty, extension staff, and federal agency staff would gain new knowledge that would inform their work as well as the work of practitioners around the country. Such an initiative could support community food partnerships, research on the potential and value of urban agriculture, public education concerning food security and food system issues through public forums, video productions and presentations, professional development seminars, and state conferences. It could also bring significant benefits to on-the-ground community food projects, improving their effectiveness and sustainability as research results from other communities are shared nationwide.



## PART II:

### *Creating a Just, Democratic, and Sustainable Food System: Linking with Other Legislative and Policy Initiatives*

#### **Building Coalitions and Broader Movements for Food System Changes**

The Community Food Security Coalition’s “Healthy Farms, Food, and Communities” legislative package for the 2002 Farm Bill provides one important route for beginning to develop a healthy food system. The task of restructuring the nation’s food and farm policies is massive, requiring broad and deep changes in a number of sectors. The CFSC, with its food system focus, is supportive of many of these efforts, as we see ourselves as part of a larger set of organizations and movements seeking to transform what has become an unjust, undemocratic, and unsustainable food system. Collectively, these groups and campaigns, particularly those that have a sustainable agriculture, anti-hunger and nutrition, food access, and sustainability focus can constitute the basis for a coordinated and strategic approach to redirecting the Farm Bill (as well as other legislative and policy initiatives) and create the basis for food system change.

What follows below are basic policy goals and principles as well as specific policy initiatives that the CFSC supports. Many of these are attached to the 2002 Farm Bill, while others extend beyond this crucial piece of legislation. We see this document as a *living document for food policy change*, subject to updates, additions, and changes as the political and social context evolves.

#### **Farm Policy Initiatives**

It is now a decades old truism that the family farm – and beyond that farming as a way of life– is in serious trouble. It is well established that domestic farm policies, including those embedded in previous Farm Bills, have become heavily weighted towards exports and agri-business, contributing to the demise of family farmers. Global trade has hurt many farm sectors; Freedom-to-Farm (the euphemistic title of the 1996 Farm Bill), in eliminating price supports, pulled the rug out from under many commodity crop farmers; emergency (AMTA) payments have proven to be a subsidy for agri-business; USDA has stood idly by while a few companies hold monopoly powers over key sectors; and mergers and buy-outs continue at a phenomenal rate, creating centralized, consolidated, and globally-oriented sectors of the food system in a matter of years rather than decades.

Ultimately, food and farm policies can help undo what they have also wrought. Along those lines, the Community Food Security Coalition supports policies that:

- 1] Provide independent family farmers with a larger share of the food dollar; enable farmers to earn a fair price—one that covers their costs of production and a return on investment—from the marketplace; and open new domestic markets;
- 2] Encourage on-farm conservation practices and reduced agri-chemical usage;
- 3] Increase competition among and reduce the monopoly power of agri-businesses;

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- 4] Provide support to minority and family farmers to gain fair access to government services and programs;
  - 5] Preserve farmland from development and reduce sprawl;
  - 6] Support the ability of farmworkers to earn a fair wage, and safe and dignified working and living conditions.

Specifically, the CFSC supports the following legislative packages that have been initiated at the time of publication of this document (July 2001):

*Food from Family Farms Initiative*

Advocated by the National Family Farm Coalition, this proposal addresses the economic crisis affecting America's family farmers by ensuring that farmers are paid a fair price from the companies and processors who buy their commodities, not from taxpayers. This farm program limits economically and environmentally damaging overproduction through a supply management program.

*Agricultural Communities Revitalization and Enterprise Initiative*

Since concentration and vertical integration among processors have increased to such an extent that farmers and ranchers have very few market access options, a key component to the development of a more sustainable food and agriculture system is the empowerment of farmers and ranchers to retain control of their product longer, improve their access to consumers, and increase their share of food system profit. Towards that end, the Agricultural Community Revitalization and Enterprise (ACRE) Initiative would create a \$500 million per year federal program to provide competitive grants to support research, education, market development, and farm innovation that increases the farm and ranch share of food system profit; and supports entrepreneurship, value-adding enterprises, new production systems, and alternative marketing channels.

*Conservation Security Act*

The Conservation Security Act (CSA) of 2001 promotes *farmland in active production* practices that improve environmental quality. Farmers would get support for their long-term commitment to sustainable production methods. As such, the Conservation Security Act would be an important complement to set aside programs by addressing farming-related environmental problems at their source: the way crops and livestock are actually produced.

*Competition Title*

Many of the nation's agricultural sectors are characterized by a few giant purchasers of raw commodities, and a few giant providers of inputs (seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, etc.). This concentration has serious impacts on the economic viability of the independent family farmer, and consequently on the sustainability of rural communities. While there is no comprehensive legislation currently proposed to address the lack of competition in much of agriculture, the key elements of a Competition Title in the 2002 Farm Bill have been identified in a sign-on letter organized by the National Campaign for Sustainable Agriculture, and endorsed by 60 organizations, including the CFSC. A collaborative effort organized by the National Campaign to draft a Competition Title has thus far identified improvement in, and better enforcement of, the Packers and Stockyards Act, and provisions to ensure fair contract bargaining rights for farmers and ranchers, as priority concerns. Contract agriculture is growing rapidly in virtually all sectors of agriculture and is an issue about which consumers and producers should be much more aware.

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### *Campaign for Food n' Justice*

The CFSC supports the Campaign for Food n' Justice, which presents a particularly comprehensive approach to agricultural policy and rural development. Of particular interest are provisions that increase funding for outreach programs to minority farmers; establish extension offices in Indian reservations; and increase support for rural and cooperative development.

### *Farmworkers*

While there is no comprehensive legislation supporting farmworker rights currently, the CFSC supports the rights of farmworkers to earn a fair wage and live and work in safe and dignified conditions. Current health and safety laws to protect farmworkers should be fully enforced. Farmworkers should also be granted equal protection under the law as other non-agricultural workers. Most importantly, farmworkers need to be extended the right to bargain collectively. In addition, agriculture guestworker proposals that have been proposed which further abridge farmworkers rights should be opposed.

### *Farmland Protection Program*

Much of the nation's prime farmland is under threat of development. The Farmland Protection Program (FPP) is a voluntary program run by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service to help farmers keep their land in agricultural production instead of converting it to other uses. To keep pace with the rapid development of our best farm and ranch land, at least \$500 million annually should be dedicated to an expanded Farmland Protection Program.

## **Anti-Hunger and Nutrition Initiatives**

Historically, the food stamps program was an outgrowth of the Depression-era focus on feeding the hungry by using agricultural surpluses, and, in the process, maintaining price supports for farmers. The country's hunger and nutrition policies can be seen in part as an outgrowth of farm policy, and, at the same time, as a piecemeal substitute for a comprehensive policy addressing economic inequality. Funding for nutrition-related programs has generally been inadequate to eliminate household food insecurity, and was severely cut back with the passage of welfare reform in 1996. While food stamp benefits in particular remain too low to supply a nutritionally adequate diet, many eligible persons do not participate in such programs as WIC and Food stamps because of limited funding, stigmas, and application barriers. Seen in the context of a minimum wage that is below poverty level for a family of four, then we begin to see the dimensions of the problems of hunger, food insecurity, and poor nutrition. These problems, especially since the Reagan administration's revamping of many of these programs in the early 1980s, have become endemic, even during economic upturns such as during the mid and late 1990s when, for example, food banks reported increased patronage.

Similar to the need to restructure the way we address the problems of farmers and farmworkers, we need a new approach to the issues of hunger, nutrition, and food security. The CFSC believes that access to sufficient nutritious food for a healthy diet is a human right. We support policies that:

- Expand the capacity of food stamps to meet families' dietary needs;
- Provide full funding for the Women, Infants and Children Program to allow for growing participation;
- Increase the minimum wage to the level in which a full time salary lifts a family of four out of poverty;
- Provide healthy food and nutrition education to schoolchildren through the Child Nutrition Programs;
- Build connections between low income families and local agriculture.

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Specifically, the CFSC supports the following legislative initiatives that have been introduced at the time of publication of this document (July 2001):

*The Nutrition Assistance for Working Families and Seniors Act  
(S. 583, H.R. 2142)*

This legislation will restore food stamp eligibility for needy legal immigrants, increase benefit allotment for families with children, and raise the minimum food stamp benefit to \$25. It will also enhance food stamp access by providing \$50 million over five years for projects and partnerships to better connect eligible persons with Food Stamp benefits.

*WIC Appropriations*

The CFSC supports efforts to back WIC funding to maintain current services and support growing participation levels.

*Fair Minimum Wage Act of 2001 (S. 277, H.R. 665) and Living Wage Ordinances*

This bill would increase the current \$5.15/hour minimum wage to \$6.65 in three yearly steps. We are also strongly supportive of initiatives in cities and states around the country to support a *living wage* that extends beyond the minimum wage and creates a more effective policy for meeting an individual—and a community's—food security needs.

*Child Nutrition Programs*

While there is no comprehensive legislation pending in this area, the Coalition supports continuing the entitlement status of the School Meals programs, and increasing reimbursement rates to allow for the preparation of nutritious food. In addition, we support efforts to provide USDA with control over all foods sold on school grounds during school hours as a means of controlling the sale of junk foods on campus. We support federal policies to improve the quality of school meals, given the recent epidemic in childhood obesity ravaging the country. We also support the recommendation of the American School Food Service Association that USDA be directed to design and implement a unified approach to nutrition education, with a \$50 million authorization.

*Farmers Market Nutrition Program*

The FMNP provides coupons redeemable for fruits and vegetables at farmers' markets to low income women, infants and children. This program has helped to introduce millions of person to healthy eating and farmers' markets while providing a livelihood for thousands of farmers nationwide. In 2000, the FMNP was in 39 jurisdictions, serving over 1.9 million women and children at 2000 markets with over \$17 million of produce. The FMNP should be expanded to all 50 states, decoupled from the WIC program funding, state match reduced, and appropriations increased to \$50 million.

*Seniors FMNP*

Established in 2000 by administrative action, similar to the FMNP, the Seniors' Farmers' Market Nutrition Program provides greater access to healthy food options for seniors and new market opportunities for family farmers. As the Bush administration has stated that it will not renew this program administratively, Congressional action is needed to provide an authorization and appropriation at \$20 million for 2002.



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## Transportation and Access

A core concern for community food security is access to affordable, nutritious and fresh food. Within the world of transportation planning, the focus on food access has been, at best, a stepchild to the larger emphasis on commuting and highways. Where available, food access-related transit services are ad hoc in nature, largely uncoordinated. There exists a lack of policies - and a lack of federal dollars—to enhance a community’s ability to access healthy food from various retail outlets. This is true despite the fact that food shopping constitutes the second most significant transportation need, outside of commuting to work. In the Transportation Enhancement Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21), transportation policy’s equivalent of the Farm Bill, a funding stream was created to provide transportation assistance for ex-welfare recipients commuting to their new jobs. Efforts to modify this bill to include food access related purposes in the funding criteria were unsuccessful and thus a food access transportation approach was never implemented through this legislative venue.

Even as it failed to address poor food access in inner city communities, federal transportation policy has itself become a factor in extending such lack of access. Massive expenditures in infrastructure such as the interstate highway system facilitated sprawl and the migration of the middle class to the suburbs. Supermarkets soon followed- and even influenced these prevailing migration patterns, abandoning urban centers and compounding the lack of access to fresh and less expensive food and other needed services. Further destroying the basis for local food systems, highway-facilitated sprawl has been a prime cause of farmland loss in the nation’s metropolitan areas.

- 1] The CFSC supports revamped transportation and smart growth policies to create a more sustainable and socially just food system, including those that:
- 2] Reprioritize domestic transportation goals to foster redevelopment of inner city communities in lieu of expanding new developments on existing farmland;
- 3] Improve access to healthy and affordable foods for the transit dependent in rural, suburban and urban communities.

While there are no current legislative proposals on these topics, the reauthorization of TEA-21 in 2003 will provide an important opportunity to address these issues. The CFSC will be working with other sustainable transportation and social justice coalitions to ultimately establish a food access funding stream and policy orientation through this legislation.

## TAKING BACK THE FOOD SYSTEM: A CONCLUSION

Federal policy changes, including those associated with the upcoming 2002 Farm Bill, can play a critical role in reversing decades of concentration in the food system, protracted community food *insecurity*, including lack of access to fresh and nutritious food, decline of family farms and rural communities, and environmental degradation.

To take back the food system for communities, farmers, and consumers, and create a more just, democratic, and sustainable food policy requires action at all levels—from Congress to neighborhoods. Change begins to happen when people are able to act in concert and build the kinds of partnerships that make change possible.

***For the food system, the process for making change has begun. Join us!***



**YES! Our organization endorses the Community Food Security Coalition's Healthy Farms, Food and Communities Act. Please list us as an endorsing organization.**

Contact Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_

Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Please fax or mail this page to CFSC, PO Box 209, Venice CA 90294, 310-822-1440. Or e-mail it to [cfsc@foodsecurity.org](mailto:cfsc@foodsecurity.org). There is no deadline for submission of endorsements, but please send yours in as soon as possible, to leverage your support in the 2002 Farm Bill proceedings.