



Statement by the Community Food Security Coalition On FY11 Spending Plan and House FY12 Budget Proposal

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CONTACT:

Kathy Mulvey, 202-543-8602

WASHINGTON, DC—On the heels of yesterday's approval of a federal spending plan for the current fiscal year ([H.R. 1473](#)), the U.S. House of Representatives today endorsed a budget for the fiscal year that begins on October 1, 2011 ([H. Con Res. 34](#)). These bills slash spending on human needs programs and conservation, and the FY12 budget put forth by House Budget Committee Chair Paul Ryan includes a radical restructuring of the social safety net.

The Community Food Security Coalition (CFSC) condemned these dangerous cuts to federal programs that have fostered economic progress, protected our environment and provided security for all Americans. CFSC pledges to work with allies in the [SAVE \(Strengthening America's Values and Economy\) for All Campaign](#), the anti-hunger community, and the sustainable agriculture movement to oppose the radical House budget and stand up for the rights and economic security of low-income people, children, seniors, and small farmers.

The FY11 spending resolution was also approved by the Senate, and will be signed by President Obama. Although less draconian than the spending plan that passed the House in February ([H.R. 1](#)), these spending cuts have been described as the largest in our history.

Among this year's cuts are:

- More than \$500 million from the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program;
- More than \$500 million from USDA conservation programs, including the Conservation Stewardship Program (CRP) and the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP);
- More than \$100 million from the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), affecting research and education, extension, water quality, food safety, and organic transitions;
- Zeroing out of small but important programs such as the Congressional Hunger Center (\$3 million), Hunger Free Communities Grants (\$5 million), and the National Sustainable Ag Info Service (ATTRA—\$3 million);
- Significant reductions for Community Development Block Grants (16%), the USDA Office of Advocacy and Outreach (16%), and the USDA Office of Tribal Relations (50%).

The House budget for FY12, meanwhile, proposes to convert both the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Medicaid to block grants to the states, ending these programs' status as entitlements for anyone who meets the income qualifications. According to CFSC Executive Director Andy Fisher, "SNAP has kept millions of people from



going hungry during this economic downturn. Block-granting SNAP would decrease our country's ability to respond to food insecurity during tough economic times, and allow states to shift funding from food assistance to other purposes for budgetary or political reasons.”

An analysis by the [Center on Budget and Policy Priorities](#) found that cuts in low-income programs amount to two-thirds of the total savings in the House FY12 plan. The plan includes privatizing Medicare, which would mean that seniors would no longer be able to depend on a set of health services—but instead would be left on their own with a fixed amount of money, to buy the best deal they could from private insurance companies.

Environmental and natural resource conservation would also suffer under the House plan. According to the [National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition](#), the resolution would slash \$18 billion over ten years from farm bill conservation spending as well as funding for EPA, Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, Forest Service, and other government natural resource agencies.

As Congress continues to struggle over short-term spending, it will also be deciding whether to raise the federal debt ceiling. Economists warn that failure to do so could spark a global financial crisis and derail the recovery. CFSC and its allies are deeply concerned about efforts to pay down the debt that rely primarily on cuts to or caps on domestic discretionary spending. “Forcing structural changes to vital social programs through spending caps is bad policy that would harm low-income people, devastate communities, and cost all of us dearly in the long run,” observed Fisher.

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The Community Food Security Coalition catalyzes food systems that are healthy, sustainable, just, and democratic by building community voice and capacity for change. The coalition's diverse membership includes more than 500 social and economic justice, anti-hunger, environmental, community development, sustainable agriculture, community gardening, and other organizations.