

**Food Research & Action Center's Analysis
of the Senate Farm Bill
Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (S. 3042)**

On Wednesday, June 13, on a vote of 20-1, the Senate Agriculture Committee approved a Senate Farm Bill (S. 3042) that protects SNAP benefit levels and eligibility, keeps food on the table for struggling low-income people, preserves important state options, and makes modest changes to program operations. A number of the provisions build on SNAP's many strengths and overall the bill avoids the very harmful SNAP changes that are contained in the House Farm Bill (H.R. 2).

S. 3042's SNAP provisions aim to:

- **Reduce SNAP participation barriers for older adults and persons with disabilities** by allowing states to have certification periods of up to 36 months for elderly persons and persons with disabilities without earned income.
- **Modify SNAP Employment and Training (SNAP E&T) operations** by increasing partnerships with state and local workforce entities, requiring state agencies to have an additional E&T component beyond job search, increasing SNAP E&T opportunities that count toward work requirements, allowing states to use effective employment and training components under the SNAP E&T pilots authorized in the 2014 Farm Bill, and providing \$185 million for additional SNAP E&T pilots to serve individuals with substantial barriers to employment.
- **Address challenges in the Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) system** through which SNAP participants redeem benefits at authorized food retailers by addressing systems outages, routing fees, and EBT access for farmers' markets serving multiple locations.
- **Make greater use of technology tools** by requiring states to contact SNAP households to clarify information received from data matches and conduct pilot projects to test methods that verify earned income at SNAP certification and recertification.
- **Roll out the National Accuracy Clearinghouse (NAC)**, a nationwide interstate data matching system to prevent dual SNAP participation in multiple states. S. 3042 includes safeguards to ensure client protections and privacy in this process.
- **Allow retail food stores to offer incentives to SNAP customers** to purchase certain foods recommended for increased consumption by the Dietary Guidelines for Americans (such as fruits, vegetables, low-fat dairy, and whole grains).
- **Maintain state performance bonuses for timeliness in SNAP application processing, but cut \$42 million for existing bonuses** for best or most-improved performance on payment accuracy and program participation. The cut in bonuses is an unfortunate change, as many states have responded to the incentives and also reinvested their bonus awards to strengthen and support SNAP operations, integrity, and effectiveness.

S. 3042 would make some changes to other nutrition programs:

- **Strengthen the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR)** by requiring the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to pay at least 90 percent of FDPIR administrative and distribution costs and including a waiver if the tribal organization is financially unable to provide a share of costs; and authorizing \$5 million for a demonstration project for tribal organizations to enter into self-determination contracts to purchase

agricultural commodities under FDPIR. The bill also would reauthorize the Traditional and Locally-Grown Food Fund at \$5 million per year through fiscal year (FY) 2023.

- **Maintain SNAP Nutrition Education (SNAP-Ed)** with some modifications. S. 3042 would require SNAP-Ed programs to use an electronic reporting system to measure and evaluate projects, direct the Administrator of USDA's Food and Nutrition Service to consult with the Director of the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) on SNAP-Ed, and allow SNAP-Ed projects to be coordinated with the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP).
- **Reauthorize The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)** mandatory food purchases at \$250 million. S. 3042 provides an additional \$5 million for TEFAP food purchases for FY 2019 and each subsequent FY (added to the \$15 million baseline increase already in law from the 2014 Farm Bill). It also reauthorizes discretionary storage and distribution grants at \$100 million per year through FY 2023 and provides \$10 million a year through FY 2023 for farm-to-food bank programs.
- **Reauthorize the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP)** that serves food-insecure seniors through FY 2023, and sets minimum and maximum lengths for CSFP household certification periods of one and three years, respectively.
- **Provide permanent mandatory funding for the Gus Schumacher Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive Program** (formerly the Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive Program – FINI) at \$50 million annually. The bill also would establish one or more FINI Program Training and Technical Assistance Centers and FINI Program Information and Evaluation Centers and require the USDA Secretary to conduct an evaluation of the projects.
- **Establish Harvesting Health Pilot Projects** by providing \$4 million annually for FY 2019 through FY 2023 for a pilot fruit and vegetable prescription program for low-income individuals who receive SNAP benefits or medical assistance under Medicaid and suffer from or are at risk of developing a diet-related health condition.
- **Extend/reauthorize additional programs** at current levels through FY 2023: Commodity Distribution Program, Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program, distribution of surplus commodities to special nutrition projects, purchase of specialty crops, Food for Peace, McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program, and the Congressional Hunger Center's Leland/Emerson Fellows Program.

Resources:

1. U.S. Senate. (2018). The Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018. Available at: <https://www.agriculture.senate.gov/download/farm-bill/agriculture-improvement-act-of-2018>. Accessed on June 8, 2018.
2. U.S. Senate. (2018). Senate Agriculture Committee section-by-section summary of the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018. Available at: <https://www.agriculture.senate.gov/section-by-section>. Accessed on June 8, 2018.
3. Food Research & Action Center. (2018). SNAP Maps: Overview of SNAP Participation at National, State, and County Levels. Available at: <http://www.frac.org/wp-content/uploads/SNAP-Maps-analysis-2012-2016.pdf>. Accessed on June 13, 2018.
4. Food Research & Action Center. (2018). Analysis of Title IV of H.R. 2. Available at: <http://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/frac-analysis-hr2-agriculture-and-nutrition-act-2018.pdf>. Accessed on June 13, 2018.