



Federal policy on agriculture and food, 2017-2018

DONALD TRUMP ▾ CABINET ▾ EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENTS ▾ FEDERAL POLICIES ▾

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS ▾ PAST ISSUES ▾

On December 20, 2018, President Donald Trump signed an \$867 billion farm bill (H.R.2) into law. The House passed the final version of the bill by a vote of 369-47 on December 12, 2018. The Senate passed the bill by a vote of 87-13 on December 11, 2018.^{[1][2]}

The bill included funding for commodity support, conservation, trade and international food aid, nutrition assistance, farm credit, rural development, research and extension activities, forestry, horticulture, and crop insurance. It did not include a proposal from House Republicans to modify the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), also known as food stamps, to require most able-bodied adults between the ages of 18 and 59 without young children to work at least 20 hours a week to receive SNAP benefits. It did include a system to prevent SNAP fraud by ensuring that multiple states did not simultaneously provide SNAP benefits to the same person.^[3]

This page tracked major events and policy positions of the Trump administration and the 115th United States Congress on agriculture and food from 2017 and 2018. This page was updated through 2018. Think something is missing? Please email us at editor@ballotpedia.org.

Click on the timeline below to learn more about each headline.

- **December 20, 2018:** President trump signs the farm bill into law
- **December 12, 2018:** Congress passes final version of farm bill
- **June 28, 2018:** Senate passes farm bill
- **June 21, 2018:** House passes farm bill
- **May 18, 2018:** House rejects farm bill
- **July 24, 2018:** USDA announces \$12 billion aid package for farmers

Trump Administration



President Donald Trump
Vice President Mike Pence

Cabinet • Transition team

- **March 12, 2018:** USDA withdraws Obama-era standards for organic certification
- **February 12, 2018:** Trump administration releases proposed 2019 budget
- **January 24, 2018:** Perdue releases USDA's farm bill and legislative priorities for 2018
- **May 23, 2017:** Trump administration releases proposed 2018 budget
- **April 25, 2017:** Trump signs executive order to review agriculture-related regulations

Policy positions

Domestic affairs:

Abortion • Crime and justice • Education • Energy and the environment • Federal courts • Firearms policy • First Amendment • Healthcare • Immigration • Infrastructure • LGBTQ issues • Marijuana • Puerto Rico • Social welfare programs • Veterans • Voting issues

Economic affairs and regulations: Agriculture and food policy • Budget • Financial regulation • Jobs • Social Security • Taxes • Trade

Foreign affairs and national security:

Afghanistan • Arab states of the Persian Gulf • China • Cuba • Iran • Iran nuclear deal • Islamic State and terrorism • Israel and Palestine • Latin America • Military • NATO • North Korea • Puerto Rico • Russia • Syria • Syrian refugees • Technology, privacy, and cybersecurity

Polling indexes:

Presidential approval • Direction of country

December 20, 2018: President Trump signs farm bill into law

On December 20, 2018, President Donald Trump signed the farm bill into law. "We have to take care of our farmers and ranchers, and we will take care of them," Trump said at the signing event.^[4]

December 12, 2018: Congress passes final version of farm bill

On December 12, 2018, Congress sent an \$867 billion farm bill to President Donald Trump's desk for his signature. The House passed the final version of the bill by a vote of 369-47 on December 12, 2018. The Senate passed the bill by a vote of 87-13 on December 11, 2018.^{[1][2]}

The bill included funding for commodity support, conservation, trade and international food aid, nutrition assistance, farm credit, rural development, research and extension activities, forestry, horticulture, and crop insurance. It did not include a proposal from House Republicans to modify the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), also known as food stamps, to require most able-bodied adults between the ages of 18 and 59 without young children to work at least 20 hours a week to receive SNAP benefits. It did, however, make minor changes to the SNAP program by creating a system to prevent SNAP fraud. The program would ensure that multiple states do not simultaneously provide SNAP benefits to the same person.^[3]

Funding allocated under the 2014 Farm bill expired on October 1, 2018, but the House left for recess until after the midterm elections before a compromise with the Senate could be reached.^[5]

Speaking about the process to pass a final bill, House Agriculture ranking member Collin Peterson (D-Minn.) said, "After a rocky start, I'm just proud to turn a partisan bill into a bipartisan bill. That's the way Congress is supposed to work."^[6]

House Agriculture Chairman Mike Conaway (R-Texas) agreed and called the passage of the bill a team effort. He said, "Collin [Peterson] and his team delivered across the board. Team effort. Both parties, both sides, I think, are happy with it."^[6]

When asked why he agreed to drop the work requirements to receive SNAP benefits from the bill, Conaway said, "Well, we lost the House of Representatives in November. That was the final nail on the coffin in terms of leverage that I got."^[6]

June 28, 2018: Senate passes farm bill

On June 28, 2018, the Senate passed the \$867 billion farm bill by a vote of 86-11. The five-year bill proposed providing funding for commodity support, conservation, trade and international food aid, nutrition assistance, farm credit, rural development, research and extension activities, forestry, horticulture, and crop insurance. The main difference between the Senate and House versions of the bill was that the Senate version did not include a proposal to modify the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), also known as food stamps, to require most able-bodied adults between the ages of 18 and 59 without young children to work at least 20 hours a week to receive SNAP benefits. The Senate bill also proposed making administrative changes to the SNAP program to prevent fraud. The bill was then sent to a conference committee where legislators worked to develop a compromise bill. Senate Agriculture Committee ranking member Sen. Debbie Stabenow (D-Mich.) said, "We know conference committee is going to be a wild and woolly debate as we go forward on a number of things."^[7]

GOP Sens. Richard Burr (N.C.), Bob Corker (Tenn.), Tom Cotton (Ark.), Jeff Flake (Ariz.), Dean Heller (Nev.), James Inhofe (Okla.), Ron Johnson (Wis.), James Lankford (Okla.), Mike Lee (Utah), Rand Paul (Ky.), and Pat Toomey (Pa.) voted against the bill.^[8]

June 21, 2018: House passes farm bill

On June 21, 2018, the House voted 213-211 to approve HR 2—the Agriculture and Nutrition Act of 2018. No Democrats voted in favor of the five-year farm bill. Twenty Republicans joined Democrats in opposition to the bill. The legislation proposed reauthorizing U.S. Department of Agriculture programs dealing with commodity support, conservation, farm credit, and crop insurance, among other things. The bill also included provisions expanding work requirements and eligibility rules for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, previously known as the food stamp program. These provisions proposed requiring non-disabled adults who were not responsible for children aged six or younger to work at least 20 hours per week in order to retain eligibility.^[3]

Rep. Mike Conaway (R-Tex.), chair of the House Agriculture Committee, said, "Today's vote was about keeping faith with the men and women of rural American and about the enduring promise of the dignity of a day's work. It was about providing certainty to farmers and ranchers who have been struggling under the weight of a five-year recession and about providing our neighbors in need with more than just a handout, but a hand up."^[9]

Rep. Collin Peterson (D-Minn.), ranking member of the House Agriculture Committee said, "The only upside to its passage is that we're one step closer to conference, where it's my hope that cooler heads can and will prevail. The Senate's version isn't perfect, but it avoids the hardline

partisan approach that House Republicans have taken here today, and if it passes, I look forward to working with conferees to produce a conference report both parties can support, which is the only way to get a farm bill enacted."^[10]

On June 28, 2018, the Senate voted 86-11 to approve an amended version of the legislation, which removed House provisions expanding work requirements and eligibility rules for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. On July 18, 2018, the House voted to go to conference with the Senate in an attempt to reconcile the differences between the two bills.^{[10][11]}

May 18, 2018: House rejects farm bill

On May 18, 2018, by a vote of 198-213, the House rejected a five-year, \$867 billion farm bill that included agricultural subsidies for farmers and funding for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), also known as food stamps, among other things.^{[12][13][14][3][15]}

Thirty Republicans, mostly members of the conservative House Freedom Caucus and some moderate Republicans, joined every Democrat to oppose the bill. Freedom Caucus members voted against the bill because of a disagreement over immigration reform legislation with GOP leadership. The Freedom Caucus wanted leadership to schedule a vote on an immigration bill put forward by Rep. Bob Goodlatte (R-Va.) before they gave their support to the farm bill. Democrats opposed the bill because it proposed requiring most able-bodied adults between the ages of 18 and 59 without young children to work at least 20 hours a week to receive SNAP benefits.^{[15][12]}

After the vote, Freedom Caucus leader Mark Meadows (R-N.C.) said that he would continue to work with GOP leadership to find a way forward on immigration and the farm bill. He said, "It's not a fatal blow, it's just a reorganize. I think at this point we just really need to deal with immigration in an effective way."^[12]

Rep. Patrick McHenry (R-N.C.), a chief deputy whip, criticized Republicans who voted against the bill, saying, "Look the farm bill got sidetracked by the immigration debate, just like America is getting sidetracked for the immigration debate. We had enough members that were willing to vote for the farm bill, that liked the farm bill, but a small group that wanted to extract some direct pledge on immigration that we could not simply fulfill under their time frame. Which is really a great disappointment that they would vote against a policy that they profess to support in order to get something immediate that was not in our legislative capacity."^[14]

Although he supported the bill, Speaker of the House Paul Ryan voted "no" on it as a procedural formality so that he could bring the bill up for a vote in the future. The previous farm bill expired on September 30, 2018.^[15]

The bill proposed reauthorizing through fiscal year 2023 U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) programs that addressed commodity support, conservation, trade and international food aid, nutrition assistance, farm credit, rural development, research and extension activities, forestry, horticulture, and crop insurance. It also proposed modifying agriculture and nutrition policies to:^[3]

- "Expand the work requirements and modify the eligibility rules for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program";
- "Repeal the Conservation Stewardship Program and incorporate parts of the program into the Environmental Quality Incentives Program";

- "Revise the requirements and process for the Environmental Protection Agency pesticide registration program";
- "Require farmers to make a one-time election to obtain either price loss coverage or agricultural risk coverage for the 2019-2023 crop years";
- "Allow payment yields used for price loss coverage payments to be updated once in counties affected by drought";
- "Rename the Margin Protection Program for dairy producers as the Dairy Risk Management Program and modify coverage levels and premiums";
- "Combine several trade programs into a single International Market Development Program";
- "Increase the loan limits for guaranteed farm ownership and operating loans";
- "Establish new broadband standards for projects financed through USDA"; and
- "Expand the categorical exclusions that exempt certain forest management activities from requirements under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to prepare an environmental assessment or an environmental impact statement."

July 24, 2018: USDA announces \$12 billion aid package for farmers

On July 24, 2018, Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue announced a \$12 billion aid package for farmers affected by tariffs imposed by other nations in response to those imposed by the Trump administration. The aid would be distributed via the following programs:^[16]

- **Market Facilitation Program:** Under this program, the United States Department of Agriculture would "provide payments incrementally to producers of soybeans, sorghum, corn, wheat, cotton, dairy, and hogs."
- **Food Purchase and Distribution Program:** Under this program, the agriculture department would "purchase unexpected surplus of affected commodities such as fruits, nuts, rice, legumes, beef, pork, and mil for distribution to food banks and other nutrition programs."
- **Trade Promotion Program:** Under this program, the agriculture department, in coordination with private sector entities, would "assist in developing new export markets" for farm products.

Perdue said, "This is a short-term solution to allow President Trump time to work on long-term trade deals to benefit agriculture and the entire U.S. economy. The President promised to have the back of every American farmer and rancher, and he knows the importance of keeping our rural economy strong. Unfortunately, America's hard-working agricultural producers have been treated unfairly by China's illegal trading practices and have taken a disproportionate hit when it comes illegal retaliatory tariffs. USDA will not stand by while our hard-working agricultural producers bear the brunt of unfriendly tariffs enacted by foreign nations. The programs we are announcing today help ensure our nation's agriculture continues to feed the world and innovate to meet the demand."^[16]

Sen. Ben Sasse (R-Neb.) criticized the aid package: "America's farmers don't want to be paid to lose — they want to win by feeding the world. This administration's tariffs and bailouts aren't going to make America great again, they're just going to make it 1929 again." Sen. John Kennedy (R-La.) argued that the aid package failed to account for other industries affected by tariffs: "I want to know what we're going to say to the automobile manufacturers and the petrochemical manufacturers and all the other people who are being hurt by tariffs. You've got to treat everybody the same."^[17]

Zippy Duvall, president of the American Farm Bureau Federation, voiced support for the plan: "We are grateful for the administration's recognition that farmers and ranchers needed positive news now, and this will buy us some time. This announcement is substantial, but we cannot overstate the dire consequences that farmers and ranchers are facing." Brian Kuehl, executive director of Farmers for Free Trade, argued that the plan was insufficient to address the situation: "The best relief for the president's trade war would be ending the trade war. This proposed action would only be a short-term attempt at masking the long-term damage caused by tariffs."^[18]

March 12, 2018: USDA withdraws Obama-era standards for organic certification

On March 12, 2018, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced its withdrawal of the Organic Livestock and Poultry Practices (OLPP), an Obama-era regulation requiring participants in the National Organic Program to implement certain standards pertaining to the care of poultry and livestock in order to maintain their organic certification. The regulation was published in the *Federal Register* as a final rule on January 19, 2017—the day before President Trump was sworn into office. The Trump administration had delayed the implementation of OLPP three times prior to its withdrawal.^[19]

Though the USDA received 63,000 public comments (out of roughly 72,000 total public comments) in opposition to the withdrawal, the agency rescinded the rule on the grounds that it exceeded the agency's statutory authority. The USDA also argued that the OLPP qualified as an economically significant rule but did not address a market failure. Therefore, the agency had failed to demonstrate a need for implementing the OLPP.^[19]

Greg Ibach, under secretary of agriculture for marketing and regulatory programs, commented on the decision, saying, "The existing robust organic livestock and poultry regulations are effective. The organic industry's continued growth domestically and globally shows that consumers trust the current approach that balances consumer expectations and the needs of organic producers and handlers."^[19]

February 12, 2018: Trump administration releases proposed 2019 budget

On February 12, 2018, the Trump administration released its 2019 budget request. It included \$19 billion for the U.S. Department of Agriculture (excluding changes in mandatory programs), a \$3.7 billion or 16-percent decrease from the 2017 enacted level.^[20]

January 24, 2018: Perdue releases USDA's farm bill and legislative priorities for 2018

On January 24, 2018, Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue released the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) farm bill and legislative priorities for 2018. Speaking about the farm bill and the priorities of the USDA, Perdue said, "Since my first day as the Secretary of Agriculture, I've traveled to 30 states, listening to the people of American agriculture about what is working and what is not. The conversations we had and the people we came across helped us craft USDA's Farm Bill and Legislative Principles for 2018. These principles will be used as a road map – they are our way of letting Congress know what we've heard from the hard-working men and women of American agriculture. While we understand it's the legislature's job to write the Farm Bill, USDA will be right there providing whatever counsel Congress may request or require."^[21]

The USDA's 2018 legislative priorities for 2018 appear below.^[21]

FARM PRODUCTION & CONSERVATION

- “
- Provide a farm safety net that helps American farmers weather times of economic stress without distorting markets or increasing shallow loss payments.
 - Promote a variety of innovative crop insurance products and changes, enabling farmers to make sound production decisions and to manage operational risk.
 - Encourage entry into farming through increased access to land and capital for young, beginning, veteran and underrepresented farmers.
 - Ensure that voluntary conservation programs balance farm productivity with conservation benefits so the most fertile and productive lands remain in production while land retired for conservation purposes favors more environmentally sensitive acres.
 - Support conservation programs that ensure cost-effective financial assistance for improved soil health, water and air quality and other natural resource benefits.
- ”

TRADE & FOREIGN AGRICULTURAL AFFAIRS

- Improve U.S. market competitiveness by expanding investments, strengthening accountability of export promotion programs, and incentivizing stronger financial partnerships.
- Ensure the Farm Bill is consistent with U.S. international trade laws and obligations.
- Open foreign markets by increasing USDA expertise in scientific and technical areas to more effectively monitor foreign practices that impede U.S. agricultural exports and engage with foreign partners to address them.

FOOD, NUTRITION, AND CONSUMER SERVICES

- Harness America's agricultural abundance to support nutrition assistance for those truly in need.

- Support work as the pathway to self-sufficiency, well-being, and economic mobility for individuals and families receiving supplemental nutrition assistance.
- Strengthen the integrity and efficiency of food and nutrition programs to better serve our participants and protect American taxpayers by reducing waste, fraud and abuse through shared data, innovation, and technology modernization.
- Encourage state and local innovations in training, case management, and program design that promote self-sufficiency and achieve long-term, stability in employment.
- Assure the scientific integrity of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans process through greater transparency and reliance on the most robust body of scientific evidence.
- Support nutrition policies and programs that are science based and data driven with clear and measurable outcomes for policies and programs.

MARKETING & REGULATORY PROGRAMS

- Enhance our partnerships and the scientific tools necessary to prevent, mitigate, and where appropriate, eradicate harmful plant and animal pests and diseases impacting agriculture.
- Safeguard our domestic food supply and protect animal health through modernization of the tools necessary to bolster biosecurity, prevention, surveillance, emergency response, and border security.
- Protect the integrity of the USDA organic certified seal and deliver efficient, effective oversight of organic production practices to ensure organic products meet consistent standards for all producers, domestic and foreign.
- Ensure USDA is positioned appropriately to review production technologies if scientifically required to ensure safety, while reducing regulatory burdens.
- Foster market and growth opportunities for specialty crop growers while reducing regulatory burdens that limit their ability to be successful.

FOOD SAFETY & INSPECTION SERVICES

- Protect public health and prevent foodborne illness by committing the necessary resources to ensure the highest standards of inspection, with the most modern tools and scientific methods available.
- Support and enhance FSIS programs to ensure efficient regulation and the safety of meat, poultry and processed egg products, including improved coordination and clarity on execution of food safety responsibilities.
- Continue to focus USDA resources on products and processes that pose the greatest public health risk.

RESEARCH, EDUCATION & ECONOMICS

- Commit to a public research agenda that places the United States at the forefront of food and agriculture scientific development.

- Develop an impact evaluation approach, including the use of industry panels, to align research priorities to invest in high priority innovation, technology, and education networks.
- Empower public-private partnerships to leverage federal dollars, increase capacity, and investments in infrastructure for modern food and agricultural science.
- Prioritize investments in education, training and the development of human capital to ensure a workforce capable of meeting the growing demands of food and agriculture science.
- Develop and apply integrated advancement in technology needed to feed a growing and hungry world.

RURAL DEVELOPMENT

- Create consistency and flexibility in programs that will foster collaboration and assist communities in creating a quality of life that attracts and retains the next generation.
- Expand and enhance the effectiveness of tools available to further connect rural American communities, homes, farms, businesses, first responders, educational facilities, and healthcare facilities to reliable and affordable high-speed internet services.
- Partner with states and local communities to invest in infrastructure to support rural prosperity, innovation and entrepreneurial activity.
- Provide the resources and tools that foster greater integration among programs, partners and the rural development customer.

NATURAL RESOURCES & ENVIRONMENT

- Make America's forests work again through proactive cost-effective management based on data and sound science.
- Expand Good Neighbor Authority and increase coordination with states to promote job creation and improve forest health through shared stewardship and stakeholder input.
- Reduce litigative risk and regulatory impediments to timely environmental review, sound harvesting, fire management and habitat protection to *improve forest health while providing jobs and prosperity to rural communities.
- Offer the tools and resources that incentivize private stewardship and retention of forest land.

MANAGEMENT

- Provide a fiscally responsible Farm Bill that reflects the Administration's budget goals.
- Enhance customer service and compliance by reducing regulatory burdens on USDA customers.
- Modernize internal and external IT solutions to support the delivery of efficient, effective service to USDA customers.

- Provide USDA full authority to responsibly manage properties and facilities under its jurisdiction.
- Increase the effectiveness of tools and resources necessary to attract and retain a strong USDA workforce that reflects the citizens we serve.
- Recognize the unique labor needs of agriculture and leverage USDA's expertise to allow the Department to play an integral role in developing *workforce policy to ensure farmers have access to a legal and stable workforce.
- Grow and intensify program availability to increase opportunities for new, beginning, veteran, and underrepresented producers.^[22]

May 23, 2017: Trump administration releases proposed 2018 budget

On May 23, 2017, President Donald Trump submitted his budget request—"A New Foundation For American Greatness, Fiscal Year 2018"—to Congress.^[23]

Trump proposed reducing the U.S. Department of Agriculture's budget by approximately \$12 billion in 2018—from \$149 billion in fiscal year 2017 to \$137 billion in 2018. The budget request proposed reducing mandatory spending by approximately \$7 billion—from \$123 billion in 2017 to \$116 billion. Mandatory spending goes toward crop insurance, nutrition assistance programs, farm commodity subsidies, and various conservation programs. The request proposed reducing discretionary spending by \$5 billion—from \$26 billion to \$21 billion. Discretionary funding goes toward the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), rural development programs, the U.S. Forest Service, research, and conservation activities.^[24]

April 25, 2017: Trump signs executive order to review agriculture-related regulations

On April 25, 2017, President Trump signed an executive order requiring Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue to lead a task force to review federal laws and regulations that may inhibit agricultural activities and economic growth. The executive order stated that the task force had

The First 100 Days

In its first 100 days, the Trump administration made the following executive and legislative actions on agriculture and food policy:

- President Trump signed an **executive order** requiring Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue to lead a task force to review federal laws and regulations that may inhibit agricultural activities and economic growth. For example, the order requires the task force to recommend policies for advancing increased technological innovation in agriculture and repealing regulations that may inhibit economic growth in rural areas.

to recommend policy changes that "remove barriers to economic prosperity and quality of life in rural America; advance the adoption of innovations and technology for agricultural production and long-term, sustainable rural development; empower the State, local, and tribal agencies that implement rural economic development, agricultural, and environmental programs to tailor those programs to relevant regional circumstances," among other directives. At the signing ceremony, Trump was joined by Zippy Duvall, the president of the American Farm Bureau, Iowa Secretary of Agriculture Bill Northey, and former Oklahoma Rep. Lisa Johnson Billy.^{[25][26]}

See also

- Federal policy on social welfare programs, 2017-2020

External links

- Search Google News for this topic

Footnotes

1. *Clerk.House.gov*, "Final Vote Results for Roll Call 434," accessed December 13, 2018
2. *Senate.gov*, "On the Conference Report (Conference Report to Accompany H.R. 2)," December 11, 2018
3. *Congress.gov*, "H.R.2 - Agriculture and Nutrition Act of 2018," accessed June 22, 2018

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