

## 2023 FARM BILL REAUTHORIZATION - INVITATION TO ACTION

Policies impact how we live our lives, and our actions in the public sphere can impact those policies as citizens and concerned Christians on priorities shaped by our values. This year, 2023, the Farm Bill is in a reauthorization process that has far-reaching impact in our communities, locally and globally, now and for generations to come. Consider writing to your federal elected official to express your priorities as that policy takes shape.

### WHAT IS THE FARM BILL

The farm bill is omnibus (meaning several different parts all joined together) legislation that is critical to addressing hunger in the United States and globally. It covers federal nutrition programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), environment, trade, foreign aid and rural development. The bill impacts the lives of Lutherans and their communities – among us are farmers and ranchers and Indigenous communities and global partners and low-income Americans.

To get a better picture of what the Farm Bill entails and how it becomes policy, consider this 5-minute video from the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service made in 2019.

*“What is the Farm Bill?”* - <https://youtu.be/D5iZozUzwsc>

Also helpful from the National Sustainable Agriculture Association is a video in 4-minutes that describes how the farm bill “connects the food on our plates, the farmers and ranchers who produce that food, and the natural resources – our soil, air and water – that make growing food possible.”

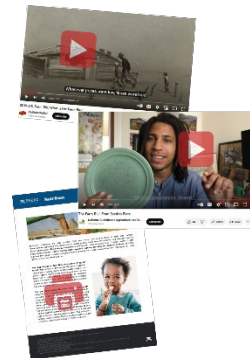
*“The Farm Bill: From Seed to Plate”* - <https://youtu.be/SHGad3uzV0c>

With our faith-informed goal of a just world where all are fed, check out these printable overviews prepared by Bread for the World, with which the ELCA is in partnership.

*“Nutrition: Building a Healthy, Equitable, and Sustainable Food System via the Farm Bill”*

<https://bit.ly/BreadfortheWorldFBNutrition>

*“Fact sheet: Farm Bill International”* <https://bit.ly/BreadfortheWorldFBInternational>



### WHAT SHOULD I WRITE

There's a very basic template to get you started, but it does not have much information on it – on purpose. What you know about your location and in your experience carries the most weight when reaching out to your elected officials. Themes to reflect in your letter could focus on: **Hunger & Nutrition (local and global); Environment and Creation Care; Agricultural Connections;** among other themes.

#### Incorporating your Experience and Convictions

##### PERSONAL STORIES

- Are you a farmer, grocery, truck driver, school cafeteria staff member, farmer's market shopper, SNAP user... These are a few of the experiences that may give you a special appreciation of things

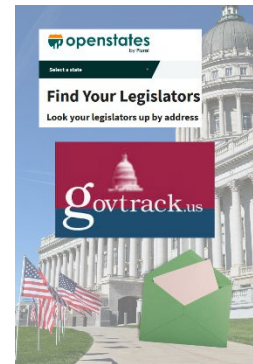
touched on by the Farm Bill. John Johnson, ELCA Program Director for Domestic Policy, shares this encouragement for stepping into your letter-writing: “You don’t have to be an expert to do advocacy, you just need to care.”

#### CONGREGATION/MINISTRY STORIES including coalition actions

- Does your congregation run a food pantry, do you volunteer in a related social ministry organization, or do you with others partner to draw attention to the needs of your community related to hunger, the environment, rural development, the care of creation or other initiative? Has a Companion Synod or Companion Congregation in another part of the world raised your awareness of global hunger? The knowledge gained by acting on your convictions is worth sharing.

#### LOCAL COMMUNITY IMPACTS

- At a recent “Listening Session to Impact ELCA Farm Bill Advocacy,” a pastor relayed that he increasingly saw billowing dust in the fields astride his town, which he said were reminiscent of the Dust Bowl that first led to Farm Bill protections being drafted. Statistics and observations from your locality represented by your elected official have impact.



#### WHO SHOULD I WRITE TO

Start by identifying elected officials in your area. Use [govtrack.us](https://govtrack.us) to find federal officials or [openstates.org](https://openstates.org) among other lookup tools. It may be of interest to go to the website of that lawmaker. Spend some time to explore which committees the person serves on or legislative areas the person particularly cares about, and maybe even reference what you find in your letter.

“Hey you!” may get attention of a friend, but for best results in your letter use guidelines for addressing a U.S. Senator and U.S. Representative (see [formsofaddress.info/senator\\_united\\_states/](https://formsofaddress.info/senator_united_states/) and [formsofaddress.info/representative-us/](https://formsofaddress.info/representative-us/)).

#### WHAT MORE CAN I DO

Similar themes began to surface from opinions and experiences expressed during April and May 2023 ELCA Listening Sessions to Inform ELCA Farm Bill Advocacy, arranged with the assistance of ELCA bishops and synod communicators to connect with ministry leaders, members of congregations, and those with valuable lived experiences relative to Farm Bill reauthorization. Monitor the **ELCA Advocacy Blog** ([blogs.elca.org/advocacy/](https://blogs.elca.org/advocacy/)) for an anticipated post on these themes informed by faith values on stewardship, justice and serving our neighbor. In addition, the priorities that these listening sessions advance will be shaped for an **Action Alert** you can use later.



Availability of these tools as well as updates on Farm Bill activity and more are shared through the ELCA Advocacy Network. To receive our enews and Action Alerts for your consideration, sign up for the ELCA Advocacy Network from [ELCA.org/advocacy/signup](https://ELCA.org/advocacy/signup).

*Thank you for your advocacy!*

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

TO: \_\_\_\_\_

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Dear \_\_\_\_\_

As a Christian and your constituent, I am writing to you about the Farm Bill. As Congress works to renew our food and farm programs through the farm bill reauthorization process, I urge you to support legislation that builds healthy, equitable and sustainable food systems. Faith communities and the social ministries we engage passionately work to meet needs, but we cannot address food insecurity and intertwining realities for our agricultural communities on a broad scale. Reauthorization is an opportunity to advance significant common good for all of us, including those of us who need basic nutritional support for healthy lives. Specifically, I ask you to protect and strengthen the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and other essential federal nutrition assistance programs in the United States and globally that are shaped by this bill.

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Food is a basic human right and ensuring that those who are hungry are fed is a moral obligation. Our agricultural community is vital to each of our daily lives, and this Farm Bill reauthorization can support their vocations and the related factors that are a foothold to the health of our communities now and in years to come.

Thank you for your service, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

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