



NATIONAL BLACK FOOD & JUSTICE ALLIANCE

2023 FARM BILL POLICY DEMANDS

INTRODUCTION

The National Black Food & Justice Alliance (NBFJA) is a coalition of Black-led organizations aimed at developing Black leadership, supporting Black communities, organizing for Black self-determination, and building institutions for Black food sovereignty & liberation. We understand policy interventions as a necessary strategy to engage in areas that have real, concrete implications for the material conditions of our communities. The Farm Bill is undoubtedly one of the largest and most important pieces of legislation that impacts the ways our communities are able to access and feed ourselves.

With this in mind, the National Black Food & Justice Alliance has identified 4 key demands for the 2023 Farm Bill that are aligned with our goals of Black food sovereignty and liberation.

The 2018 Farm Bill projected 5-year budget was \$428 billion to establish policy for a broad array of agriculture and nutrition assistance programs. Yet today, on the heel of Farm Bill 2023, our communities are suffering from food insecurity now more than ever before. The upcoming Farm Bill has the potential to be transformative and make significant headway towards a just and equitable food system. To realize this, we must be bold, brave, fearless and ready to lean into some transformative shifts, for that to happen.

Our current food, economic, and political systems have caused food workers, Black mothers, and other adversely impacted populations to constantly face inhumane decisions of choosing food over other basic necessities. It is difficult for food workers with irregular or seasonal work schedules to meet the paperwork eligibility requirements for SNAP benefits despite their low wages and high risk of food insecurity. It is a priority to add a new labor title to the 2023 Farm Bill that supports and protects all food workers and their families.

In 2018, the USDA changed the way it calculated the standard deduction for SNAP participants from a fixed dollar amount based on household size to now be based on a percentage of the maximum benefit amount for household size. This change resulted in an overall reduction of benefits which had the greatest impact on larger households with lower incomes. The attacks on SNAP over the decades have been unconscionable. It is imperative to ensure that policies are designed in a way that does not exacerbate existing inequalities. Black mothers, their children, and others who are already more likely to experience food insecurity deserve access to the support they need to thrive. Benefit reductions, asset limits, work, and paperwork requirements are existing barriers making food assistance programs harder to access for those who need it the most.

KEY DEMANDS

1 Improve opportunities for start-up and expansion of local & self-reliant Black food economies

2 Invest in Black food sovereignty in an emerging Black food movement

3 Include Climate Regenerative Practices & Programs as priorities in the Farm Bill

4 Increase access to food assistance for Black & Brown communities who face crises of hunger and malnutrition

1. IMPROVE OPPORTUNITIES FOR START-UP AND EXPANSION OF LOCAL & SELF-RELIANT BLACK FOOD ECONOMIES

- **Implement the Justice for Black Farmers Act:** The Justice for Black Farmers Act (JFBA) is a critical component of the 2023 Farm Bill. This legislation provides technical assistance, land, equipment, infrastructure, regenerative agriculture training opportunities, reduced barriers, and predatory reporting as forms of non-monetary equitable relief for Black farmers. JFBA is also a continuation of the full justice sought under the original Pigford V. Glickman class action lawsuit of racial discrimination in the allocation of USDA farm loans and assistance to Black farmers. The Pigford v. Glickman lawsuit was expanded under the 2008 Farm Bill to provide additional funding for claims and related administrative costs but crucial debt relief and the recovery of land was never enacted. Including the JFBA in the 2023 Farm Bill can help to improve access to resources and support for Black farmers, who have historically faced significant discrimination and barriers to success.
- **Simplify Grant Application & Funding Process:** The grant application and funding processes through the USDA for local and self-reliant food economies can be unnecessarily complicated, which can limit access to resources for Black farmers and entrepreneurs. Programs such as the Local Food Promotion Program (LFPP), Farmers Market Promotion Program (FMPP), Value-Added Producer Grant (VAPG) program, and Rural Micro-entrepreneur Assistance Program (RMAP) requires a match of 15%-50% of the total project costs limiting the diversity of applicants. By simplifying funding processes and removing matching funds requirements, the 2023 Farm Bill can help to level the playing field for those seeking to expand and grow their businesses.

- **Support Urban Agriculture Programs & Research:** The 2018 Farm Bill included commitments to support urban agriculture programs and research such as the Urban Agriculture Production Program, which can help to expand opportunities for local and self-reliant food economies by developing under-utilized land to support the food system. Urban agriculture is an important tool for addressing food insecurity, promoting community development, and improving environmental sustainability. Black communities are disproportionately affected by food insecurity and health disparities. The 2023 farm bill can build on these commitments by providing funding for research and development of urban agriculture practices in underserved communities, as well as support for urban farmers and entrepreneurs.
- **Increase Subsidies for Growing Food/Specialty Crops:** The 2023 farm bill can help to support local and self-reliant food economies by increasing subsidies for growing culturally relevant food and specialty crops of fruit, vegetables, herbs, and spices. This can help to ensure that resources are directed towards those who are growing food for local communities, rather than large agribusinesses.

2. INVEST IN BLACK FOOD SOVEREIGNTY IN AN EMERGING BLACK FOOD MOVEMENT

- **Invest Robustly in Innovative Food Security Organizations:** Support the emerging Black food movement by recognizing and supporting Black grassroots formations organizing for food sovereignty in Black communities.
- **Restore, Protect, and Invest in Black Land Stewardship:** Provide non-restrictive funding for food and land commons, Black-led technical assistance and legal support for heirs property legislation, and organizations helping people navigate land tenure. Implementing legislation on the federal level like the Uniform Partition of Heirs Property Act that has been adopted by several states providing clear legal procedures and assistance for heirs property. Facilitate interagency interaction with the Bureau of Land Management to ensure public land management is serving community needs. Invest in multigenerational lifetime stewardship programs for restorative agricultural cooperatives, debt forgiveness for predatory land loss, and land redistribution via community land trusts, all accompanied by a legal guarantee of viable land.
- **Support Projects to Develop and Sustain Local and Regional Food System Infrastructure:** Include long-term funding for Black farmers to produce non-food items such as medicinal plants, textile fibers and dyes, and packaging materials. Incentivize the collaboration of auxiliary food system organizations that are required to sustain regional and local food infrastructure.

3. INCLUDE CLIMATE REGENERATIVE PRACTICES & PROGRAMS AS PRIORITIES IN THE FARM BILL

- **Divest from Practices that Conflict with Restorative and Regenerative Land Practices:** Explore universal basic income for Black land stewards engaged in practices that promote climate mitigation, climate adaptation, healing, and alternatives.
- **Invest in Regenerative Agriculture Practices and Community Based Solutions:** Facilitate community conversations, implement public comments, and meaningfully consult with those that will be impacted by climate crises. Invest in Black stewardship aligned with an acknowledgment of Indigenous ways and practices.

4. INCREASE ACCESS TO FOOD ASSISTANCE FOR BLACK & BROWN COMMUNITIES WHO FACE CRISES OF HUNGER AND MALNUTRITION

- **Remove the Existing Barriers to Food Assistance Programs:** It is imperative to understand that Black & Brown communities face systemic barriers to accessing healthy and affordable food, and it is our right to access food assistance programs, allowing everyone who has need to access food. These barriers include food apartheid, lack of transportation to access food, and limited financial resources. By removing additional work requirements for SNAP eligibility, eliminating student exemptions, removing bans on formerly incarcerated people, and creating alternative methods of verification for food insecure farmers and agriculture workers to qualify for food assistance programs, we can help to increase access to food assistance for those who need it most.
- **Include Farm Workers, Migrant Workers, and Meat Packers in Food Assistance Programs:** We need to ensure that the labor sector of the food system has access to food assistance programs regardless of their immigration status. Many of these workers may not have the documentation required to apply or prove that food assistance is needed, so alternative methods of verification should be considered. Including marker bills like the 2023 Protecting America's Meatpacking Workers Act (PAMWA) and Fairness for Farm Workers Act in the 2023 Farm Bill can ensure that the agricultural industry is held accountable for providing safe and fair working conditions for workers.
- **Increase the Awareness and Outreach Around Food Assistance Programs:** By funding liaisons for Historically Black Colleges and Universities, community land grant and vocational educational institutions, and outreach programs, we can help to increase awareness and understanding of food assistance programs and improve access to them.

- **Ease EBT Point of Sale for Producers and Cooperatives:** Provide technical assistance that meets the needs of producers and cooperatives to increase participation in EBT/SNAP transactions. The Double Bucks program and subsidizing Black farmers to supply food banks with fresh produce are initiatives that need to be expanded to increase access to healthy and nutritious food in Black and Brown communities. Including the Local Farms and Food Act in the 2023 Farm Bill will simplify applications for certain projects under the Farmers Market and Local Food Promotion Program, increase funding for the Local Agriculture Market Program (LAMP), reauthorize the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program, reduce barriers to the Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program (GusNIP), and build upon the GusNIP Produce Prescription Program, along with other provisions.
- **Ensure Resources are Available for Black Producers and Distributors in Food Crises:** Invest in and support infrastructure and other funding for Black producers and distributors who are growing food for their communities through crises. Increase support for crop loss due to climate events and ensure FEMA or appropriate agency is tasked with interagency coordination for the expedition of the demands during food crises.

RESOURCES

2018 Farm Bill Legislation

2022 NBFJA USDA Public Comment on Discrimination
Financial Assistance for Producers and Landowners

2023 Protecting America's Meatpacking Workers Act
(PAMWA)

A 2022 Review of the Farm Bill: Stakeholder Perspectives on
Title IV SNAP Provisions Article

Alliance Against Farm Bill Offsets

Fairness for Farm Workers Act

Farm Action's Fair Farm Bill Campaign

Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program (GusNIP)

HEAL Food Alliance 2023 Farm Bill Priorities

Local Agriculture Market Program

Local Farms and Food Act

"More Adequate SNAP Benefits Would Help Millions of
Participants Better Afford Food"

Movement 4 Black Lives Black Climate Mandate

National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition Farm Bill
Background Info

NBFJA Black Food Justice Glossary

Partition of Heirs Property Act

Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program

Union of Concerned Scientists Letter to President Biden on
Farm Bill Values

USDA Farm Bill Info

USDA Farm Service Agency Farm Bill Info

"USDA Rule Will Take Food Assistance Away from Millions
of People"

Learn More about the National Black Food &
Justice Alliance at www.blackfoodjustice.org.

