



UNITED STATES SENATE COMMITTEE ON  
**AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION,  
& FORESTRY**

U.S. SENATOR DEBBIE STABENOW, CHAIRWOMAN

## Miscellaneous

The Rural Prosperity and Food Security Act *keeps farmers farming, families fed, and rural communities strong* by supporting historically underserved producers and workers, safeguarding against animal and zoonotic disease, improving animal welfare, and addressing foreign ownership of American agricultural land. It also makes improvements to USDA departmental operations, continues support for urban agriculture and innovative production, and grows regional food systems.

### **Food Security is National Security:**

The bill bolsters national security by putting food security front and center. It requires new coordination on food and agriculture defense, cybersecurity risk assessments of the food and agriculture system, and tools and authorities for USDA to enforce compliance with the reporting requirements under the Agricultural Foreign Investment Disclosure Act. It also strengthens oversight over foreign ownership of American farmland.

### **Historically Underserved Producers:**

The bill continues \$50 million in mandatory funding for the **Farming Opportunities Training and Outreach (FOTO) program** established in the bipartisan 2018 Farm Bill to support education and training for the next generation of farmers and professionals. The bill makes changes to improve delivery of the program and addresses unique challenges faced by historically underserved farmers and producers like language barriers and land that has multiple owners.

The bill establishes an **independent ombudsperson** at USDA to assist farmers and ranchers as they navigate the civil rights complaint process to ensure they have equal and fair access to USDA programs and resources. It strengthens civil rights accountability for USDA employees and improves transparency across the Department.

The bill also creates an **Office of Small Farms** to advance programs and policies related to small farms.

### **Farm and Food System Workforce**

The bill recognizes the valuable contributions of grocery, farm, and food workers to our communities and ensures they have a seat at the table whenever decisions are made at USDA. It expands the responsibilities of the Farm and Food System Workforce Coordinator, while improving coordination of food and farmworker issues across USDA mission areas and across the federal government. It also closes a gap in USDA's disaster response by establishing a new program to help food and farmworkers during times of crisis.

### **Tribal Communities:**

The bill recognizes tribal communities in every title of the bill with more than 50 provisions that improve Tribal access to USDA programs and resources. It directs USDA to explore and conduct additional self-determination pilots, and it requires the Secretary to establish a Senior Official on Self-Determination to support USDA mission areas on self-determination contracts.

### **Local and Regional Food Systems:**

The bill continues to recognize the importance of urban agriculture by providing \$100 million over 10 years in mandatory funding for urban, small-scale, and innovative producers for community-led technical assistance, more grant funding opportunities, and better access to USDA farm programs at the local level.

The bill codifies the Regional Food Business Centers to strengthen our regional food supply chain by building connections between local producers and local businesses and equipping them with the skills and resources they need to access new and better markets.

The bill expands eligibility for the Composting and Food Waste Reduction grants to States and Tribal governments. It also expands food loss and waste efforts at the Department to include regional coordination, a public awareness and education campaign, and continued collaboration between USDA and other agencies.

### **Animal Disease Prevention and Management:**

The bill protects producers, consumers, and the economy from devastating animal disease by **increasing funding to \$350 million** over 10 years in permanent, mandatory funding for early detection, rapid response, and recovery from animal disease outbreaks, including Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI).

### **Climate and Drought:**

The bill establishes **climate hubs** to develop local tools and resources to build climate change adaptation and mitigation capacity across the country to address the

climate crisis. These hubs will provide planning and decision-making supported by science to help farmers, ranchers, forest landowners, and natural resource managers address the causes and consequences of climate change.

The bill addresses the historic drought in the Western United States by improving access to reliable and consistent data and establishing a **Drought Monitor Working Group** to recommend new policies, regulations, guidance, or changes to existing law to address this crisis.

### **Data Measurement, Monitoring, Reporting, and Verification:**

The bill helps farmers tackle the climate crisis by improving our understanding of soil carbon sequestration, which will help build soil health and make farms more resilient and productive, through standardized and consistent soil carbon monitoring. For the first time, the bill will also make soil data publicly available to researchers to compare the effectiveness of various conservation practices over time.

### **Competition:**

The bill promotes competition for American livestock producers by ensuring producers have more options for meat processing while increasing support for small and medium sized meat processors.

The bill creates a **USDA Special Investigator for Competition** to focus on ensuring fair competition practices throughout the livestock industry.

Together, this ensures the safety, capacity, and resiliency of our food supply chain. It also establishes a Farmer Seed Liaison to support competition and choice within the seed market.

### **Animal Welfare:**

The bill ensures the continued protection of livestock and animal welfare and includes new provisions to improve coordination between the Department of Justice and USDA to bring Animal Welfare Act violators to justice.

It also improves the adoption process of retired research animals from federal laboratories so that they can find their forever home, and it continues the bipartisan Pet Shelter and Housing Assistance Grant Program, which provides funding for shelters that harbor survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, and dating violence, along with their pets.

**Improving USDA Operations:**

The bill provides USDA with the tools to streamline program applications, modernize USDA technology, and recruit for and retain hard-to-fill positions such as veterinarians. These operational improvements will benefit the farmers, families, and rural communities who are served by USDA.