

What is the Farm Bill? And Why Does It Matter to Us All?

The farm bill is a package of legislation passed roughly once every five years that has a tremendous impact on not just farmers, but all citizens in many different ways. There have been 18 farm bills, with the first enacted in the 1930s. The current law, called the [Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018](#), is set to expire on Sept. 30, 2023, and discussions about the 2023 farm bill have already begun.

The farm bill has expanded over the decades from serving traditional commodity agriculture (corn, cotton, wheat, soybeans, rice, dairy, peanuts, and sugar) exclusively to now include nutrition assistance, conservation, research, specialty crops and bioenergy programs. Passing a new farm bill every few years gives policymakers a consistent opportunity to address agricultural and food-related issues comprehensively, instead of tackling individual concerns in many smaller pieces of legislation.

The farm bill is divided into sections call titles. The current Farm Bill, for instance, has twelve titles.

Title I: Commodities and Disaster

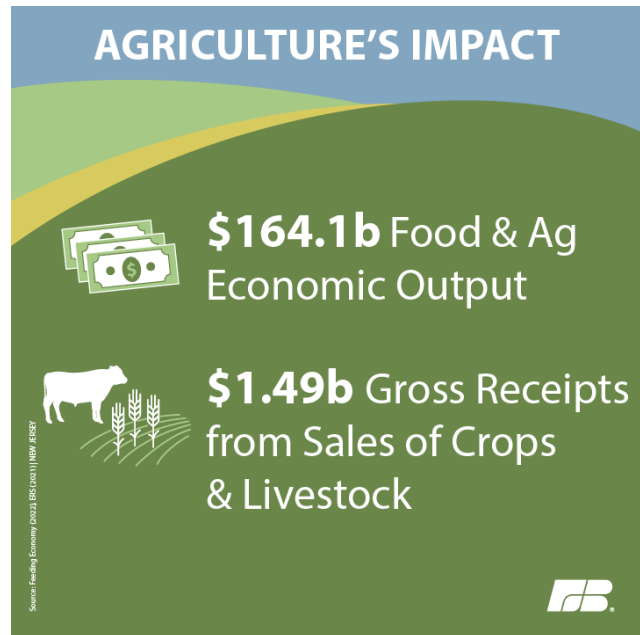
The commodity title provides certainty and predictability through price and income support for farmers who raise widely-produced and traded crops like corn, soybeans, wheat, and rice – as well as dairy and sugar. The title also includes agricultural disaster assistance. In New Jersey, more than 142,000 acres are enrolled in Title I income price and income protection programs such as Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC).

Title II: Conservation

The conservation title provides voluntary conservation programs that farmers use to improve their productivity and address natural resource and environmental concerns. These include soil and water conservation programs, plus soil, water and air quality improvement activities.

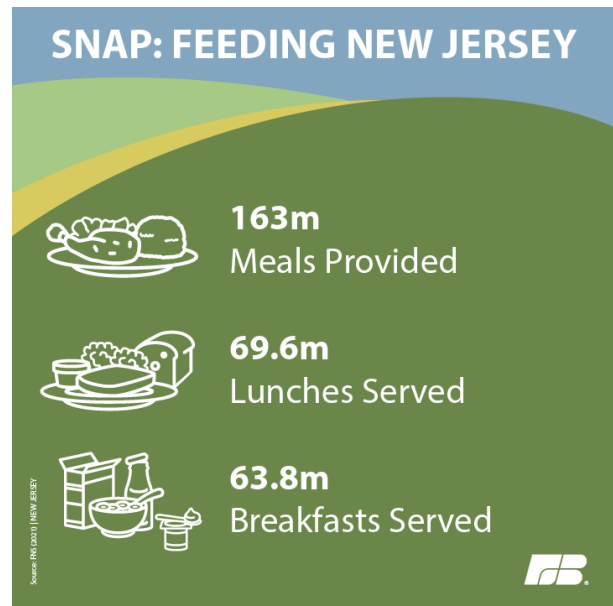
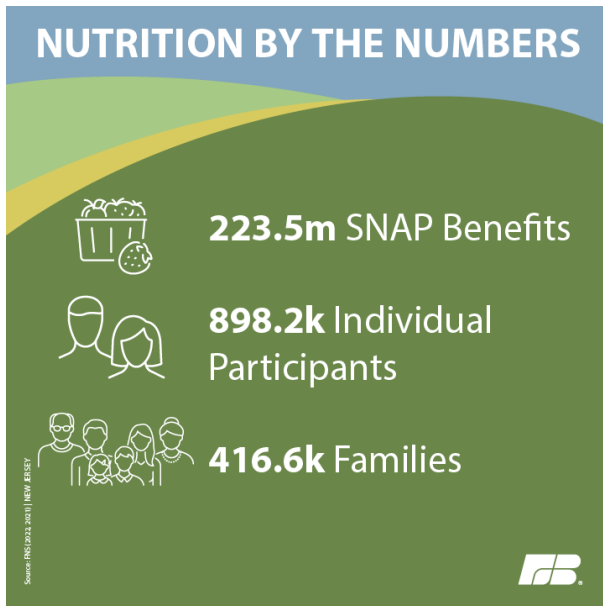
Title III: Trade

The Trade title helps to facilitate U.S. food and agriculture exports while simultaneously improving global food security. These efforts include direct assistance to food-insecure populations and also loan guarantees and other financial tools that reduce risk to U.S. exporters.



Title IV: Nutrition

First created with the Food Stamp Act of 1964, the nutrition title is a pillar in farm bill discussions, of particular interest to urban voters and their representatives. The nutrition title is the most expensive title in the farm bill, representing approximately 80% of the bill's total spending.



Title V: Credit

The Credit title covers federal loan programs designed to help farmers access the financial credit (via direct loans as well as loan guarantees and other tools) they need to grow and sustain their farming operations.

Title VI: Rural Development

The rural development title has held a spot in the farm bill since 1973, and now contains programs that help foster rural economic growth through rural business and community development (including farm businesses) as well as rural housing, and infrastructure. This includes the all-important expansion of broadband internet access to rural areas.

Title VII: Research

When the United States Department of Agriculture was created in 1862 it was primarily charged to support agricultural research. Serving, technically, as the oldest title of the farm bill, stemming from the Morrill Land Grant Act of 1862, the purpose was to establish and fund farm and food research, education and extension programs in land grant institutions in each state. These programs, carried out through Rutgers University in New Jersey, are designed to support innovation and vital training for the

next generation of farmers.

Title VIII: Forestry

First created in the 2002 farm bill, the forestry title provides authority for the United States Forest Service, which is the principal federal forest management agency.

Title IX: Energy

Renewable energy, primarily ethanol and biodiesel production, was spurred through the Renewable Fuel Standard, which is not included in the farm bill. However, it created interest in the development of farm bill programs regarding energy that encourage growing and processing crops for biofuel, help farmers and business owners install renewable energy systems, and support research related to energy.

Title X: Horticulture

The horticulture title covers farmers market and local food programs, funding for research and infrastructure for fruits, vegetables and other horticultural crops (known as “specialty crops”), and organic farming and certification programs.

Title XI: Crop Insurance

The crop insurance title provides new and continued insurance products for producers to purchase in a public-private partnership. The insurance helps protect producers against losses resulting from price and yield risks on over 445 million acres, in addition to a growing assortment of policies for animal agriculture.

Title XII: Miscellaneous

The miscellaneous title holds a variety of programs. In most cases, these programs either do not have a “home title” or are individual programs to address specific problems. In the 2018 farm bill, the miscellaneous title primarily focused on livestock programs, agriculture and food defense, historically underserved producers, limited-resource producers and other miscellaneous provisions.

