

Recommendation 6: Fund Local Food System Capacity-Building in Support of Food Security.

Congress should combine multiple food and farming programs into a delivery system that is supported by a ten-year, \$1 billion Community Food System Development grant program. This would change the way programs are organized and delivered by emphasizing local design, integration and control. It would encourage a joining of local citizens in devising strategies that maximize nutrition, community and agricultural development and healthy ‘foodsheds’.

Rationale: The last twenty years have seen an increase in public and professional awareness of the links between nutrition and farm policy. Many of our anti-hunger programs were driven by farm policy and the effects of production subsidies have, through the price mechanism, impacted on society’s dietary habits. Additionally, policies of urban neglect have contributed to the loss of primary farmland and the increased separation of consumers from the food supply. The variety of food programs, from crop subsidies to food stamps, has generally targeted positive community outcomes: i.e., increased farmer net income and household nutrition. Except through informal networks, these programs have no formal mechanism to promote synergy in our communities.

Description: This program would be used to establish food and agriculture-based community development programs at the local level. The target audience would be comprised of low-income consumers, resource challenged communities and small farms. A local entity could be defined as a county or group of counties constituting a region. Each local entity would adopt a ‘community self-sufficiency model’ that seeks to coordinate food policy and development in a way that maximizes its ability to utilize its consumption and production resources to further social wellness. This encompasses nutrition education, local food production and emergency feeding.

Typically, programs would be implemented that are similar to those currently funded by the U.S.D.A. Community Food Projects grants. Programs may seek to provide value-added food products, establish direct-marketing programs, increase urban gardening, supplement extension education and develop nutrition programs. The most important aspect would be that programming reflect the needs and resources of the local community and seek outcomes that boost food production and promote improved health and wellness, particularly in low-income sectors that currently access government programs.

Mechanics: Federal authorization would cover the term of the Farm Bill. Annual federal appropriations of approximately \$100 million would be accompanied by targeted measurable outcomes. These outcomes would target nutrition, farm income, farmland stewardship, value-added production, foodshed development and success in mobilizing and integrating local resources.

Each state would receive a base allocation of funding plus an additional amount that would be distributed by a formula reflecting economic and demographic statistics. The state would be responsible for policy guidance and oversight that seeks to integrate government food and agriculture programs. A 5 percent holdback would be used for state projects and the establishment of a policy organization. This would be similar to the way the Community Food and Nutrition Program has functioned. The state would submit a work plan aggregated from

local submissions; this state plan would target required outcomes. The oversight department would probably be either Agriculture or Community and Economic Development, as determined by the state.

To ensure local government support and control, the funds would only be released with an approved plan drawn by a local authority. The local authority, whether county or regional, would charter a non-profit organization specifically empowered to utilize this grant. This organization would work solely in the field of food and nutrition.

The organization would be monitored and tasked to meet goals established in the workplan and subject to status review at the end of the authorization period. However, this is specifically not a competitive grants program. The purpose of this program is not to divide the funds among competing interests, but to encourage local authorities to create synergy in their food and agriculture programs. As the project money is essentially supporting funds, the local organizations would be expected to raise additional funding.

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June 6, 2006