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## Farm Bill Primer: Overview and Status

A *farm bill* is a collection of laws and changes to laws that authorize, reauthorize, or amend various food, agriculture, and rural policies. Congress has passed farm bills about every five years for nearly a century. A periodic farm bill provides Congress with an opportunity to reexamine agriculture and food policies and programs. This report provides an overview of the farm bill, including what is typically included, how programs are funded, and the current status of congressional debate.

### Farm Bill Content

The contents of a farm bill can vary and are determined by congressional action. The content is usually areas of overlapping jurisdiction of the agricultural authorizing committees—the House Committee on Agriculture and the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry. However, issues outside the jurisdiction of these committees may be included in a farm bill with the approval of other committees of jurisdiction or by certain procedural actions taken on the floors of each chamber.

Farm bills have grown in breadth over time to reflect changing priorities and a broader coalition needed to support passage. Traditionally, farm bills were focused on support for a handful of staple field crops and a limited number of other commodities (e.g., corn, soybeans, wheat, cotton, rice, dairy, and sugar). These programs are still present in farm bills; however, the legislation has expanded in scope to include other prominent topics such as nutrition, conservation, horticulture, farm loans, research, rural development, forestry, and energy. Much of the breadth of recent farm bills includes changes to policies and programs that were originally enacted in stand-alone acts prior to their inclusion in farm bills. This is what makes the farm bill an omnibus act—compilation of new laws or amendments to existing laws. For information on titles in the farm bill, see CRS Report R47313, *Next Farm Bill Primer Series* and the **text box**. For historical information, see CRS Report R45210, *Farm Bills: Major Legislative Actions, 1965-2024*.

### Farm Bill Funding

Farm bills authorize programs in two spending categories: mandatory and discretionary. See CRS In Focus IF13124, *Distinguishing Between Discretionary and Mandatory Spending*.

#### Mandatory Spending

Most programs with mandatory spending authority are authorized for a period of years and have multiyear projections of future spending under current law (i.e., *baseline*). When legislation proposes to change policy, the effects are evaluated as the additional costs or savings from the proposed provisions (i.e., the *score* of a bill that is

relative to the baseline). Mandatory spending programs usually dominate the farm bill debate because the law authorizes outlays at the time of enactment. Mandatory spending is primarily authorized in the commodities, conservation, nutrition, and crop insurance titles. For more information on mandatory spending in farm bills, see CRS

#### Titles in Recent Farm Bills

**Title I, Commodities:** Provides support for major commodity crops, including wheat, corn, soybeans, peanuts, rice, dairy, and sugar. Authorizes disaster assistance.

**Title II, Conservation:** Encourages environmental stewardship of farmlands and improved management through land retirement programs, working lands programs, and partnership programs.

**Title III, Trade:** Supports U.S. agricultural export programs and international food assistance programs.

**Title IV, Nutrition:** Provides nutrition assistance for low-income households through programs, including the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or SNAP.

**Title V, Credit:** Offers direct government loans and guarantees to producers to buy land and operate farms and ranches.

**Title VI, Rural Development:** Supports community facilities, business, and utility programs through grants, loans, and guarantees.

**Title VII, Research, Extension, and Related Matters:** Supports agricultural research and extension programs to expand academic knowledge and help producers be more productive.

**Title VIII, Forestry:** Supports forestry management programs run by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA's) Forest Service.

**Title IX, Energy:** Encourages the development of farm and community renewable energy systems through various programs, including grants and loan guarantees.

**Title X, Horticulture:** Supports the production of specialty crops, USDA-certified organic foods, and locally produced foods. Authorizes a regulatory framework for industrial hemp.

**Title XI, Crop Insurance:** Enhances risk management through the permanently authorized Federal Crop Insurance Program.

**Title XII, Miscellaneous:** Includes programs and assistance for livestock and poultry production, support for beginning farmers and ranchers, and other miscellaneous and general provisions.

In Focus IF12233, *Farm Bill Primer: Budget Dynamics*.

#### Discretionary Spending

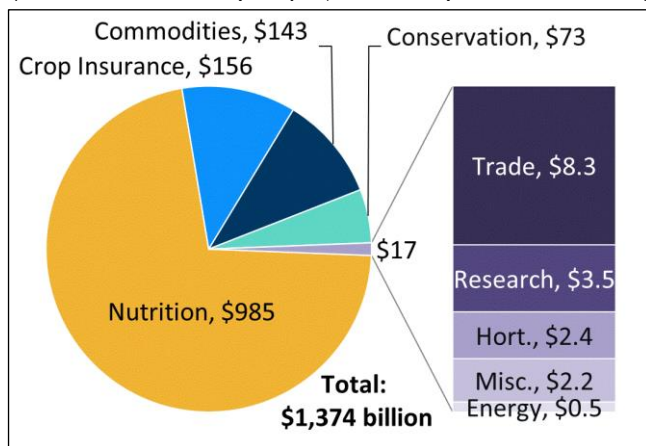
Programs authorized for discretionary spending are not funded by the farm bill and depend on future appropriations action. Farm bills establish program parameters such as eligibility requirements and program purposes, but do not provide funding for outlays. Most farm bill titles, such as rural development, research, and credit, include programs authorized for discretionary spending. For information on

farm bill discretionary spending, see CRS Report R48564, *Agriculture and Related Agencies: FY2026 Appropriations*.

### Cost of a Farm Bill

Under federal budgeting practices, farm bills have 10-year budget projections even though they may be authorized for less than 10 years. The February 2026 Congressional Budget Office (CBO) baseline is the most recent projection. Converting the CBO baseline for various programs into farm bill titles and adding funding indicated in law for other farm bill programs, CRS estimates that the 2026 mandatory spending baseline for all farm bill titles is \$1.374 trillion over 10 years (FY2027-FY2036) (**Figure 1**).

**Figure 1. Farm Bill Titles with Mandatory Baseline**  
(billions of dollars, 10-year projected outlays, FY2027-FY2036)



**Source:** Created by CRS using the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) February 2026 baseline for the five largest titles and amounts indicated in law for programs in other titles.

### Status and Recent Congressional Action

The most recent farm bill, the Agricultural Improvement Act of 2018 (2018 farm bill; P.L. 115-334), expired in 2023. It was extended three times for a year at a time: in November 2023 to cover FY2024 and crop year 2024 (P.L. 118-22, Division B, §102), in December 2024 to cover FY2025 and crop year 2025 (P.L. 118-158, Division D, §4101), and in November 2025 to cover FY2026 (P.L. 119-37, Division E, §5002). Policy for crop years 2026-2031 is partially covered by a budget reconciliation law enacted in 2025, as discussed below.

Other congressional action has amended farm bill programs since the 2018 farm bill, such as the FY2022 budget reconciliation law (P.L. 117-169, Title II) that reauthorized and increased funding for select conservation and forestry programs; and the FY2025 budget reconciliation law (P.L. 119-21, Title I) that amended and reauthorized several programs in the commodities, conservation, nutrition, research, crop insurance, and trade titles. Neither law reauthorized all of the policies present in a typical farm bill.

### FY2025 Budget Reconciliation Law

The FY2025 budget reconciliation law amended and reauthorized most of the farm commodity programs through crop year 2031. For conservation, trade, and nutrition programs, the law made changes to funding, eligibility, or benefit calculations but did not completely reauthorize

some of those policies. For other policy areas, the law could not reauthorize expired or expiring programs or authorizations because budget reconciliation rules only permit actions that have a budgetary effect on mandatory spending. Many of the policy changes and reauthorizations that Congress typically includes in a farm bill could not be included, such as policies related to farm loans, rural development, and agricultural research. It is these policies and programs, as well as further amendments to other program areas, that Congress may address in a 2026 farm bill. For additional information, see CRS Report R48775, *The Farm Bill After FY2025 Budget Reconciliation: Frequently Asked Questions*.

### Farm Bill Action in the 119<sup>th</sup> Congress

On March 5, 2026, the House Committee on Agriculture ordered H.R. 7567, the Farm, Food, and National Security Act of 2026, favorably reported to the House. The House amended and passed the bill on April 30, 2026. The bill contains many of the authorizations and reauthorizations that are present in a typical farm bill. Some typical farm bill policies not included reflect the passage of P.L. 119-21 and issues that were previously addressed.

On April 24, 2026, the Congressional Budget Office published a score indicating the bill would increase mandatory spending by \$162 million over six years (FY2026-FY2031) and be budget neutral over 11 years (FY2026-FY2036). To date, the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry has not marked up a farm bill in the 119<sup>th</sup> Congress. For additional information on H.R. 7567, see CRS Report R48918, *The 2026 Farm Bill (H.R. 7567): Comparison with Current Law*.

### Expiration

Some farm bill programs have been extended by the laws discussed above or are permanently authorized. Yet there remain several programs that will expire at the end of FY2026 and crop year 2026 if the current extension expires without other action. The timing and consequences of the farm bill expiring vary by program. Additional context is available in CRS Report R48775, *The Farm Bill After FY2025 Budget Reconciliation: Frequently Asked Questions*. Issues for expiration may include:

- For programs with mandatory spending authority provided by the farm bill that expire at the end of FY2026, authority to operate may cease.
- For programs with a fiscal year authorization that are funded with discretionary appropriations, or for programs with mandatory spending authorized but not appropriated by the farm bill—such as SNAP—an appropriations act or continuing resolution is needed for operations to continue.
- The suspension of an inactive and costly law—commonly called *permanent law*—would be restored for select farm commodities beginning January 1, 2027 (dairy would be the first commodity affected). Payments would be duplicative with current law.

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