

Farm Bill Report Card on the Land Stewardship Project's priorities in the 2008 Farm Bill.
 Contact LSP's Policy office at 612-722-6377 with any additional questions.

LSP 2008 Farm Bill Priorities	Food, Conservation & Energy Act of 2008
<p>Expand the Conservation Security Program (CSP) by providing more funding, and including an annual sign-up with a national scope, while maintaining conservation integrity.</p> <p>Grade: B</p>	<p>Congress increased funding for the renamed Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) by \$1.8 billion to \$4.67 billion over the next five years and a total of \$12 billion over the next 10 years. CSP was revised to be available to farmers nationwide through annual sign-ups. The goal is to enroll 13.3 million acres per year or 115 million acres by 2017 (since 2004, just 16 million acres have been enrolled in CSP). While additional funding would strengthen the program and the full evaluation of policy changes will not be completed until the changes are implemented, by providing for an annual sign-up and expanding the number of farmers and number of acres that will be involved, Congress enacted important gains in this bill.</p>
<p>Pass and fund strong beginning farmer and rancher policy.</p> <p>Grade: A</p>	<p>Congress dedicated \$75 million over the life of the bill to the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BFRDP). It also included other beginning farmer lending/savings and conservation provisions as well as support for socially disadvantaged farmers. The BFRDP, which focuses on community-based beginning farmer education and support programs, is the first-ever beginning farmer development program funded by Congress.</p>
<p>Policies to support the development of local and regional food systems.</p> <p>Grade: B</p>	<p>Invested: \$100 million in organic research and organic certification cost-share assistance; \$50 million in the Community Food Projects Competitive Grants Program (CFP); \$33 million in the Farmers' Market Promotion Program; and \$15 million in the Value Added Producer Grants Program (VAPG). Other good policy gains were made: new language to support "mid-tier" value chains in the VAPG program; the lifting of the prohibition on interstate shipment of meat from state-inspected, small processing plants; and the encouragement of public schools and institutions to use a geographic preference for the procurement of locally produced food. Gains were made in local foods, but demand, particularly in VAPG and CFP, will out-strip the investments for these programs.</p>
<p>Reform Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) with stronger payment limits per operator.</p> <p>Grade: D</p>	<p>The operator payment cap was decreased from \$450,000 to \$300,000, yet a waiver provision was included for projects of "special environmental significance." Overall, Congress gave EQIP a huge increase in funding at the expense of other conservation programs.</p>
<p>Livestock Competition Title/ban on packer ownership of livestock.</p> <p>Grade: D</p>	<p>Some gains: A requirement that USDA establishes criteria for what constitutes an "undue or unreasonable preference or advantage" violation of the Packers and Stockyards Act; good language on Country of Origin Labeling; improved producer rights regarding unfair mandatory arbitration forced on contract livestock producers; and improvement to mandatory price reporting (how it's implemented will be key). However, Congress did little to address concerns about corporate control in food and ag — e.g., no ban on packer ownership of livestock or inclusion of the Captive Supplies Act.</p>
<p>Fundamental reforms to the commodity programs.</p> <p>Grade: F</p>	<p>Some very minor payment reforms were passed, but there was no attempt to enact the kind of fundamental reforms needed to commodity programs.</p>
<p>LSP's overall assessment of the 2008 Farm Bill.</p> <p>Grade: C-</p>	<p>Congress failed to address major problems with farm policy, particularly the failed and unjust system of commodity subsidies to the largest operations, and increasing corporate consolidation of our farm and food system. But this Farm Bill does include building blocks for a more just and sustainable food and farm policy with investments in working lands conservation, beginning farmers and ranchers, and local and regional food systems.</p>