

Join us as we call on Congress to reform the Farm Bill!

Tuesday, April 5, 4:30-5:30pm, in Burnside Park, Providence (next to Kennedy Plaza)
For more information, write providencefarmbillreform@gmail.com

Did you know that Congress spends **billions of taxpayer dollars** subsidizing Big Agriculture? In 2009, the Farm Bill gave \$9.5 billion to farmers, and most of this money went to farms that rake in more than \$250,000.¹ On April 5, we're calling on Congress to reform this bill. **Why the Farm Bill?** Because it affects everything you care about:

ENERGY

The ethanol industry received \$7.7 billion in subsidies in 2009. Ethanol burns one third of America's corn, driving up food prices and ultimately failing to provide a sustainable alternative to fossil fuels. Al Gore, who once supported ethanol, said "It is not a good policy to have these massive subsidies."² Cellulosic biofuels are more energy-efficient and do not burn food, but they received only \$1 billion.

ENVIRONMENT

Oilseeds (like soybeans) and grains (like corn) receive massive subsidies, so farmers produce more of these commodities than consumers can eat. Over-production leads to over-application of fertilizers and pesticides made from fossil fuels.³ With subsidy reform, that money could fund conservation programs to counteract the harmful effects of industrial agriculture.

HEALTH AND NUTRITION

Why does our food contain so much hydrogenated vegetable oil and high-fructose corn syrup? Cheap, over-produced oilseeds and grains make it profitable for food corporations to add processed ingredients to our food. Fruits and vegetables receive no federal commodity support.

IMMIGRATION

US food policy has transformed Mexico from "a nation of farmers into a nation of farmworkers."⁴ By "dumping" subsidized grains onto the global market, we undercut small farmers like Wal-Mart undercuts small businesses. But the loss of a family farm is more than the loss of a business: a farm is also a home. Many people who come to the United States from Mexico without documentation are former farmers.

WORLD HUNGER

Grain dumping hurts farmers in every country that receives "Food Aid" from the US, from Jamaica to Burkina Faso to the Philippines. Even if these farmers are fortunate enough to hold onto their land and convert their farms to cash crops for export, they can't compete in a distorted market. Food security is dependent on a volatile global commodity market, instead of a robust regional economy.⁵

WORKERS' RIGHTS

The Farm Bill is nearly 1800 pages long, but it contains no significant provisions for agricultural labor. This is particularly disturbing because the Department of Justice has prosecuted seven cases of agricultural slavery in the past 15 years in Florida alone, involving over 1,000 farmworkers.⁶

¹ <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Briefing/FarmIncome/govtpaybyfarmtype.htm>

² <http://af.reuters.com/article/energyOilNews/idAFLDE6AL0YT20101122?pageNumber=3&virtualBrandChannel=0&sp=true>

³ <http://www.ewg.org/farmsubsidies>

⁴ <http://www.iatp.org/tradeobservatory/library.cfm?refID=98624>

⁵ <http://www.agobservatory.org/library.cfm?refid=98205>

⁶ <http://ciw-online.org/slavery.html>