

I just learned from the **Community Food Security Coalition** that the Senate Agriculture Committee has approved the **Agriculture Reform, Food and Jobs Act of 2012** with a bipartisan 16-5 vote. Here's more info from the CFSC:

The Community Food Security Coalition (CFSC) commends Chairwoman Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) and Ranking Member Pat Roberts (R-KS) on their bipartisan leadership of the committee and on crafting a bill that minimizes cuts to nutrition programs while supporting programs that are building a more resilient, equitable, environmentally and economically sustainable American food system for the future.

The bill includes increased funding for CFSC Farm Bill priorities that support community food security programs and local food initiatives including:

- **Community Food Projects Program** – Doubling mandatory funding for this program to \$10 million per year
- **Farmers Market and Local Food Promotion Program** – Expanding the Farmers Market Promotion Program to include developing food hubs and doubling funding to \$20 million in mandatory funds per year for five years
- **Hunger-Free Community Incentive Grants** – A new local fruit and vegetable incentive grant program to increase purchases by SNAP customers at farmers markets and other healthy food retailers with mandatory funding totaling \$100 million over five years
- **Specialty Crop Block Grants** – Funding increased to \$70 million per year for five years from the current level of \$55 million
- **Healthy Food Financing Initiative** – Authorization for funding up to \$125 million
- **Improving ease of SNAP Redemption at Farmers Markets, Mobile Markets and CSAs** – Authority to establish pilot programs to test mobile technology and online ordering as well as ease SNAP redemption at Community Supported Agriculture (CSAs)
- **Seniors Farmers Market Nutrition Program** – Mandatory funding maintained at \$20 million per year

*The \$4 billion cut from the Nutrition title mirrors last fall's cut in the **Super Committee proposal** and is significantly better than last week's House Ag Committee vote to cut \$33 billion from the program for **deficit reduction**.*

The Agriculture Reform, Food and Jobs Act (ARFJA) eliminates the direct and counter cyclical payment programs and includes a payment limit for farmers and a maximize size for farms to received federal farm support, important reforms to the flawed agriculture subsidy system. It also includes support (albeit at reduced levels) for beginning farmer programs, key organic provisions and instructions to USDA to create crop insurance that will serve the needs of small and diversified farmers.

The bill does not include mandatory funding for the 2501 Outreach and Assistance to Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers program.

from the CFSC Grapevine

I also recently found out that Rep. Marcia Fudge, a Democrat from Cleveland, has introduced the [Let's Grow Act of 2012](#), which aims "to support sustainable agriculture activities in American cities, promote urban farming, eradicate hunger and improve access to healthy food. There are a number of interesting provisions in the bill, including "virtual farmers markets" so that, as Fudge says in a [blog posting](#) on Cleveland.com,

[F]amilies will be able to access fresh and nutritious foods through schools and other places that are easy to reach in their own neighborhoods. This measure increases the availability of fresh fruits and vegetables in school meal programs and promotes expanded use of SNAP (food stamp) benefits at farmers markets. It assists local corner stores with offering a broader selection of fresh produce.

Particularly apropos to the CFI, the Act proposes to expand the Emergency Food Assistance Program, and will offer grants to create and expand community gardens. A summary of the Act is available [here](#).

Good on you, Rep. Fudge!