

Farm Bill 2023 Backgrounder

Protect farmers and mitigate climate change with increased incentives and full funding for conservation programs in the Agriculture Improvement Act 2023 Farm Bill

Immediate action is needed to lessen the rate and severity of the climate crisis. The 2023 Farm Bill can become an historic climate law – but only if environmental and conservation initiatives are fully funded and farmers are incentivized to use climate smart practices. In addition, a large percentage of conservation funds are currently not agricultural conservation efforts.

Members of Congress are questioning the need to increase conservation funding in the 2023 Farm Bill. Some members are even eyeing the farm bill as a chance to redirect climate smart agriculture money to increase crop subsidies and insurance programs for corn and soy, while other conservative lawmakers want across-the-board spending cuts.

The transition to regenerative, healthy soils practices needs to be funded. Most farmers lose money during the first few years of transitioning to organic and regenerative farming practices. Lack of funding for the transition is holding back many small and mid-size farmers who want to adopt climate friendly practices.

The 2023 Farm Bill must increase funding for small and mid-size farms. Based on their size, Massachusetts farmers are unable to compete for some subsidies and grants that are only available to farms larger than 1,000 acres.

Massachusetts would benefit from additional federal funds for rural and urban farmers: to adopt regenerative practices: to build local agricultural markets; for more farm-to-school programs; more community farms; more school farms; and mobile farmers market vans. There is a critical need for incentives and programs that support new and beginning farmers, including extra support for people of color and indigenous farmers.

Additional federal resources can help farmers with education, technical assistance, and funding to improve soil health and lock carbon in the ground by using climate smart agriculture practices such as:

- reduced pesticide use

- no-till farming
- cover crops planting
- agroforestry – integrating animal grazing among crop trees
- [Plant hedgerows](#) to help sequester carbon in the soil, manage pests, and provide habitat for pollinators and other wildlife.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Documentaries

[Regenerate America, Soil is our common ground, Kiss the Ground, YouTube, 2022](#)

[The Biggest Little Farm](#)

[Living Soil: a documentary for all of us, Soil Health Institute, YouTube, May 18](#)

References, including those used in *Act for Change*

[Sixth Assessment Report](#), IPCC Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

[America Has a Chance to Make Farming More Climate Friendly, NYT 6/12/23](#)

[Massachusetts Healthy Soils Action Plan](#), the first of its kind in the U.S., is an excellent resource for farmers.

[2023 Farm Bill Climate Ag & Conservation Investments Sign-on Letter Area Farmers Call on Congress to make climate policy a priority, Gazette, 3/13/23](#)

[Cover Crops and Crop Rotation, USDA, 2023](#)

[Economics of soil health systems, Soil Health Institute](#)

[Basic Information About Landfill Gas, EPA](#)

[Our World in Data](#)

[Why New York's \(Mostly\) Vegan Mayor Wants to Cut the City's Meat Budget, 4/17/23](#)

2023 LWV of California's Climate Smart Agriculture and Food Action Policy
IPCC Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability