

Field Notes: AgriPolicy Brief

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Farm Bill Passed Out of Senate Committee on Agriculture

Before the August recess, the Senate Committee on Agriculture considered the farm bill but the bill failed to pass out of Committee with a final vote of 10-11. During this vote, Senators Mitch McConnell (KY- R) and Tommy Tuberville (AL-R) were not present for the vote. Rather than adjourn the meeting, Chairman John Boozman (AR- R) recessed the Committee, this allows for the Committee to reconvene at any time and reconsider the bill.

On September 16, 2026, the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry reconvened to consider the farm bill. With all Senators present, the bill passed out of committee in a 12-11 vote.

The Committee passed farm bill did not include the two year extension for the implementation of the cost shift to states for federal nutrition programs. For this reason, Democrats on the committee did not support the bill. While the bill did include language for mandatory country of origin labeling, the bill did not address other controversial items covered in the House of Representative's version of the bill (including language to overturn California's proposition 12).

The farm bill will now await a vote on the floor of the Senate. The bill will need 60 votes to pass out of the Senate and a bipartisan vote will be required to vote the bill to the Conference Committee. The Conference committee is a bicameral (from both chambers of Congress) committee whose task is to find compromise between two differing bills passed by either chamber for final passage and to be signed into law by the President. Currently both parties are in a stalemate over the nutrition provisions and without further compromise, the bill is unlikely to pass the Senate.

Mandatory Country of Origin Labeling

A law requiring Mandatory Country of Origin Labeling (mCOOL) would require that all meat is labeled with the country from which the animal originated. Many American ranchers would like to see this come to pass because they believe that it will make it easier for the consumer to choose American-raised meat over imported meat.



Photo Credit: Ivy Jean Reynolds



Federal Nutrition Policy in New Mexico

By Jason Riggs, Director of Advocacy and Public Policy, Roadrunner Food Bank

When the Senate Agriculture Committee met in August 2026, they once again failed to pass a Farm Bill. The Committee met again September 16th and passed the Farm Bill that now moves to a vote on the Senate floor.

Many Americans are not all that familiar with the importance of Farm Bill and how it affects their daily life. This comprehensive omnibus determines a multitude of national agricultural issues such as crop insurance, livestock, forestry, and even farm credit.

It also governs federal nutrition assistance. This is often the sticking point.

In politics, it is easy and tempting to portray agriculture and food assistance as two completely separate and unrelated entities. It makes the Farm Bill discussion simpler. However, from a food security lense, the two aspects of this complex legislation are always intertwined. Various programs under the Farm Bill umbrella have a tremendous impact on both growers and those living with hunger.

One of the programs in the Farm Bill is The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP). The program was started in the Reagan era. The USDA purchases 100% American grown food directly from US producers and connects it to low income households facing food insecurity. It has a stabilizing effect on agricultural markets. Roadrunner Food Bank distributes TEFAP food in New Mexico. It is a major part of the food delivered to hundreds of food pantries across New Mexico. Unfortunately, TEFAP foods are down by 25% from last year due to USDA cuts. This has diminished the number of meals that food banks around the country can distribute. An increase in TEFAP budget was offered up as a bipartisan bargaining chip.

Some lawmakers have attempted to use Farm Bill negotiations to resurrect the Local Food Purchase Assistance (LFPA) program. LFPA, created during the pandemic, connected local and regional food from farmers and ranchers to food banks. The USDA abruptly terminated the program in March 2025. In New Mexico, 34% of all NM Grown institutional purchases from small and midsize producers were made via the LFPA in 2024. While the state of New Mexico has funded a smaller version of LFPA, discussions at the Federal level have stalled.

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is the largest and most effective federal nutrition assistance program and probably has the biggest impact on agriculture. SNAP can provide nine times the number of meals as the entire national food bank network. It is also an economic multiplier. In New Mexico, \$1.00 of SNAP can generate \$1.82 in economic impact for rural areas.

The USDA Federal Double Up Bucks program allows SNAP participants to purchase twice as much local produce at participating farmers markets. Since Double Up's inception in 2013, SNAP dollars at farmers markets have risen annually from around \$10 million to over \$70 million in 2023. Unfortunately, this upward trend may be threatened by recent events.

Historic and unprecedented cuts were made to SNAP under HRI (the One Big Beautiful Bill Act) in July 2025. Across the country, 4.5 million people have lost or fallen off SNAP. In New Mexico, as of this writing, about 23,798 individuals have lost SNAP. Over 12,000 of them are children.

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Federal Nutrition Policy in New Mexico – Continued

This has a compounding effect on local and state economies as fewer people use SNAP to purchase food. It also means fewer customers purchasing produce at farmers markets. The SNAP cuts come during a food and fuel affordability crisis. More households will be forced to choose low cost, calorically dense processed food over more expensive, healthful options.

New Mexico, unlike many other state governments, has been bold in fortifying food banks and other programs to counter the federal changes. However, if food banks can be seen as the last line of defense against food insecurity, SNAP is the first. New Mexico's food bank network has already seen increases in need at pandemic and recession era levels.

In October of 2028, percentages of SNAP program costs will be transferred to states depending on their respective rate of application processing errors. This has the potential to cost New Mexican taxpayers \$100-\$199 million for a program that has always been a federal responsibility. New Mexico, like many states, may be forced choose between funding programs that help prevent hunger or funding what could be anywhere between 5-15% of SNAP allotments. Already, states are scheduled to assume a 25% increase in SNAP administrative costs.

Farm Bill negotiations are a chance to adjust this devastating course. Even with gracious state support, New Mexico's food bank network, designed as an emergency response composed of hundreds of faith-based institutions, community centers, and schools, will reach a breaking point.

When lawmakers meet again to discuss the Farm Bill, they will resume a discussion that will impact generations of farmers, ranchers, and our most vulnerable citizens.

It is incumbent upon on all of us to let our leaders know that the Farm Bill must work for both those who grow the food and for the communities across America who need help putting food on the table.

Connection Over Confusion: How Navigators Help Clients Maintain Their SNAP Benefits in the Fallout of H.R. 1

By Jill Dixon, Executive Director & Catherine Nolte, Advocacy and Policy Specialist, The Food Depot

Food insecurity is a destabilizing experience on its own. When paperwork, changing eligibility requirements, and not knowing where to turn for help stand between a family and their ability to eat, the situation becomes overwhelming.

The federal government should be supporting families in crisis, not making it harder to meet their basic needs.

Changes to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program from H.R. 1 have not made benefits easier to access. More hurdles have been added to shrink federal costs and increase tax breaks for the ultra-wealthy by cutting participation.

Cornell University researchers describe these administrative burdens as "ordeal costs," where households with the greatest need are pushed off benefit programs when requirements become insurmountable.

In practice, this means a SNAP participant with inconsistent work hours, without reliable transportation to a job or volunteer opportunity, or who feels overwhelmed by these eligibility changes is at risk of losing their benefits. Since H.R. 1 was passed in July, SNAP participation in New Mexico has declined by more than 22,400 people, including over 12,600 children, according to data from the NM Health Care Authority.

When changes to the SNAP program create confusion or fear, clear and accurate information from trusted sources can break through the noise to help our communities.

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Connection Over Confusion – Continued

The Health Care Authority's SNAP Outreach program builds on the trust of established community partners to guide households through the SNAP application process. Across the state, ECHO, Inc., Roadrunner Food Bank, The Food Depot, and the UNM Social Work & Wellness Coaching Team connect families to SNAP Benefits and the resources they need to maintain them.

At The Food Depot, the Navigation team is staffed by two bilingual resource navigators who help clients apply for assistance programs and access community resources. Since January of this year, they have reached nearly 4,000 people through the SNAP Outreach program, including submitting 80 SNAP applications.

Where barriers and bureaucracy build walls, a kind and understanding voice over the phone or presence in the office can create bridges to stability. When someone knows your name and your story, it creates emotional safety to express frustrations and ask as many questions as needed to brace against information overload.

As advocates across the state and nation continue to push to undo the harms of H.R. 1, New Mexico's SNAP Outreach program empowers community partners to support clients through these changes in the interim.

Administrative burdens should not stand between a family and the benefits they are entitled to, nor their ability to keep food on the table.

For more information about HCA's SNAP Outreach program and its community partners, visit

www.hca.nm.gov/lookingforassistance/snap-outreach/.

**Farm
toTable**

Farm to Table's mission is to build a local, healthy, equitable and sustainable food system through education and advocacy.

Roadrunner Food Bank and the Coalition to End Hunger Food Security Gubernatorial Forum

Roadrunner Food Bank and the Coalition to End Hunger in New Mexico convened a nonpartisan, educational event to inform the public about candidates' perspectives on food systems and food insecurity in New Mexico. Recently, the Coalition interviewed the Democratic and Republican candidates for Governor in the State of New Mexico. You can watch the full interviews here:

[Interview with New Mexico Gubernatorial Candidate Deb Haaland](#)

[Interview with New Mexico Gubernatorial Candidate Greg Hull](#)

HOW TO FIND YOUR POLLING LOCATION

As summer rolls in, don't forget to mark your calendars for New Mexico's general election on November 3, 2026. You can find your polling place on the [New Mexico Secretary of State's Website](#).



State and Federal Review: Farm to Food Assistance Programs

By Bonnie Murphy, Regional Farm to Food Bank Program & Pam Roy, Farm to Table NM

The Local Food Purchase Assistance (LFPA) Cooperative Agreement Program demonstrated that strategic investments in local food systems can strengthen agricultural economies while improving food access. Despite its broad success, federal funding for LFPA was eliminated in 2025.

Recognizing the program's value, New Mexico secured a one-year, \$2 million appropriation for Regional Farm to Food Bank (RF2FB) during the 2026 legislative session. This investment will continue purchasing locally produced foods for the statewide emergency feeding network in Fiscal Year 2027. New Mexico is one of only a handful of states that has committed state resources to continue this work. While this investment provides an important bridge, long-term nationwide success will require federal partnership.

Congress now has an opportunity to build on LFPA's success through the reauthorization of the Farm Bill. The Food and National Security Act of 2026 (H.R. 7567), recently passed by the House of Representatives, includes the Local Farmers Feeding Our Communities Act (H.R. 4782). The Act would provide LFPA-like support for local and regional food systems. In the Senate, the proposed Strengthening Local Food Security Act (S. 2338) would establish long-term federal support for local food purchasing and emergency food distribution.

To continue this progress and ensure these benefits reach communities for years to come, Congress would need to include dedicated, long-term funding for LFPA style programs in the final Farm Bill.

In early August, the Senate Agriculture Committee took up the Farm Bill. Senator John Boozman (AR), Chair of the Senate Agriculture Committee, kicked off Farm Bill negotiations with a set of priorities that did not include many of the Farm Bill requests that would benefit New Mexico and most states. The major debate was the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) error rate and the cost share that states are now required to pay. The Senate Agriculture Committee proposed delaying the state level SNAP cost share burden for one year. This is not a solution for states.

In New Mexico, as of June 30, 2026, 441,060 New Mexicans benefited from SNAP (down from 459,108 a year ago, -3.93%) with a SNAP error rate of more than 16.6% (average 10.6% national rate). We know this means a potential federal penalty of at least \$149 million and a potential cost of about \$173 million to the state annually. This has a domino effect in multiple ways. Our food banks and pantries are sharing the increased challenges with us. We are so fortunate to be in New Mexico with so much state and federal delegation support! Yet, with all of the care and commitment in New Mexico, it doesn't solve our food insecurity problem.

Senator Bennet on the Senate Agriculture Committee introduced amendments in support of conservation programs such as EQIP (Environmental Quality Incentives Program) the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), Watershed Protection and the Emergency Forest and Watershed Protection Act, all that would benefit New Mexico, do not have the current support needed to be included in the bill. These programs are highly effective and used by many farmers and ranchers in New Mexico.

In total, 22 Senate Agriculture Committee members introduced amendments to secure resources across the Farm Bill's 12 Titles. However, the Committee measure ultimately failed on an 10-to-11 vote (with Senator Mitch McConnell absent).

The major debate is the SNAP error rate and the cost share that states are required to pay.

In the meantime, programs like LFPA provide important additions to SNAP at the local level, providing fresh, nutritious, locally grown food to those in need while increasing economic opportunities for farmers.

For more information on New Mexico's Regional Farm to Food Bank Program, please visit: nmfoodbanks.org

Farm to Table and NMFIP to Host Statewide Agricultural Conference in New Mexico

By Maya Martinez, Farmer Innovation Program Director, Farm to Table NM

Farm to Table's New Mexico Farmer Innovation Program invites agricultural leaders, organizations, farmers, ranchers, and community partners to participate in our upcoming conference, *Roots & Resilience: Strengthening New Mexico Farms, Food & Communities*, a statewide conference designed to strengthen connections across New Mexico's food and agricultural sectors.

The event will take place December 1-3, 2026, at the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center and will bring together farmers, ranchers, food system advocates, educators, policymakers, and industry leaders from across the state to collaborate on solutions that support a stronger and more resilient local food system.

Farmers and ranchers—this conference is for you! We want your voice to shape conversations and lead discussion of how to make New Mexican agriculture even stronger. At the conference, you will be able to deepen statewide relationships. Sessions will help you plug into opportunities that benefit agricultural communities throughout New Mexico.

The three-day event will feature a diverse lineup of plenaries, workshop-style sessions, and farmer-led discussions focused on key issues affecting agriculture and food systems across the state.

The conference is designed to help participants build meaningful partnerships, access valuable resources, and exchange practical knowledge that strengthens New Mexico agriculture.

"Our goal is to create a collaborative space where farmers, ranchers, and food system leaders can learn from one another, build relationships, and identify solutions that support thriving agricultural communities," Maya Martinez, NMFIP Program Director said.

For more information about the *Roots & Resilience Conference*, and to register, visit www.farmtotablenm.org/roots-and-resilience-conference.

You can keep tabs on upcoming announcements about conference registration by [signing up for Farm to Table's newsletter](#).

If you or your organization would like to sponsor a portion of the conference, please reach out to Executive Director, Cathy Day, at cathy@farmtotablenm.org

Here are a few of the featured speakers at workshops and breakout sessions:



Photo Credit: DeAnne Payne

Zach Ben Zach is a 6th generation farmer and sandpainter from Shiprock, NM. He is of the "Giant People" born for the "Red Running Into Water" clan. His maternal grandfather's clan is the "Red House People" and his paternal grandfather is of the "Salt People." Zach has over 15 years of experience in traditional Navajo farming and is the Co-Founder and sole Owner of Bidii Baby Foods LLC. Zach also serves as a part time Consultant with WESST where he supports other Indigenous entrepreneurs as they establish their businesses in/near tribal communities.

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Farm to Table and NMFIP to Host Statewide Agricultural Conference in New Mexico

By Maya Martinez, Farmer Innovation Program Director, Farm to Table NM



Photo Credit: DeAnne Payne

Mary Ben Mary has been farming in New Mexico for over 8 Years, and has 15 years of experience working in public health nonprofits. She is a founding member of The BEN Initiative, a 501c3 established to provide capacity building for farmers and grassroots organizations working in Birth, Environment and Nutrition (BEN) related projects across northwest New Mexico. Mary co-founded Bidii Baby Foods LLC with her partner, Zachariah Ben, and helps operate their 40-acre farm in Aztec, NM. She is a proud mother of two children, and Returned Peace Corps Volunteer (Ethiopia 2012-14). Mary holds a Masters of Public Health (MPH) in Maternal and Child Health and a Doctorate in Public Health (DrPH) in Health Equity & Social Justice from Johns Hopkins University.

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toTable**

Farm to Table's mission is to build a local, healthy, equitable and sustainable food system through education and advocacy.

Shenoah Dalziel I'm Shenoah Dalziel, the general manager of Khalsa Farms, a Certified Naturally Grown, non-profit organization located in Espanola, NM. We grow and sell a variety of produce all year round, including tomatoes, cucumbers, salad greens, cooking greens, root vegetables, herbs, and microgreens/sprouts. Our mission is to continue growing fresh, healthy food for our nearby communities through regenerative, sustainable practices while extending our growing season with the use of greenhouses and grow tunnels. The majority of our produce is allocated to tribal and rural communities through a collaboration with the New Mexico Department of Health and the New Mexico Grown Program.



Photo Credit: Gabriela Campos

**Roots
& RESILIENCE**

Strengthening New Mexico Farms, Food & Communities

Community Opportunity Profiles to Support Partnerships

The New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) and the Office of the State Engineer are inviting public entities to submit a Community Opportunity Profile describing local water supply challenges, brackish water opportunities, and potential technical assistance needs.

The profiles are intended to help connect New Mexico communities with qualified firms preparing proposals under the 2026 Strategic Water Supply Contracts RFP. Profiles will be posted publicly so prospective Offerors can learn about community needs, identify potential projects, and explore potential partnerships.

Submitting a Community Opportunity Profile is voluntary and informational. It is not an application for funding, a formal request for technical assistance, or a commitment to participate in a Strategic Water Supply project. Submission of a profile does not guarantee that a firm will contact or partner with the community, that a project will be proposed, or that NMED will select or fund a project. Likewise, firms responding to the RFP are not required to partner with a community that submitted a profile. Offerors may develop projects with other eligible Community Partners. Find more information [here](#).

Judge Acts to Pause USDA Reorganization

In a Secretarial Memo dated July 24, 2025, Secretary Rollins announced that thousands of USDA employees in the nation's capital, roughly 2,600 out of 4,600, are facing relocation to five new "hubs" across the country. This comes on the heels of over 15,364 USDA employees having already taken voluntary buyouts in 2025, a workforce reduction which has hollowed out the Department's institutional knowledge.

The Secretary Memorandum, explicitly outlines a "Department of Agriculture Reorganization Plan" with the stated purpose of "consolidation, unification, and optimization of functions within USDA to achieve improved effectiveness and accountability, enhanced services, reduced bureaucracy and cost savings for the American people". The reorganization will be distributed across all 29 USDA agencies, including the vital NRCS and FSA headquarters offices. Many employees have already received letters stating that they must accept relocation or resign from their positions.

On September 8th, AFGE and three other unions representing USDA employees filed a lawsuit to stop the Department from moving forward with the reorganization. Days later a District Judge issued an order to pause the Department's actions until after the hearing.

You can read the full story [here](#).



Photo Credit: Ivy Jean Reynolds

Native Seed Production Workshop

Join the Southwest Seed Partnership at Ledoux Grange Farm in Mora, NM to see small-scale native seed production fields in action, harvest wildflower seeds, and talk through lessons learned in seed production so that you feel prepared to become a native seed farmer!

The workshop will be held on Wednesday, October 7, 2026 from 10:30am – 02:30pm MT.

Light refreshments will be provided, but please bring a lunch, water bottle, and sun protection.

Address provided after registration. If you would like transportation from Santa Fe to Ledoux Grange, please choose a transportation needed ticket.

Registration closes Monday, October 5th at 12 am. Register [here](#).

Western Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) Now Accepting Applications

Western SARE provides grants in several categories. Each of these grants is available at specific times of the year. Not sure which grant is right for you? [Review this infographic](#) to help you decide which grant program is the best fit.

Before reaching out regarding a specific grant program, [please review who is the best person to contact](#). If you don't know the specific grant program, please email wsare-info@sare.org for more assistance.

Farmer/Rancher

The Farmer/Rancher Program focuses on advancing on-farm sustainability solutions by funding innovative producer-driven research and outreach.

Deadline: Oct 28, 2026 12:00 PM (Mountain Time)

Professional + Producer

The Professional + Producer Program provides opportunities for agriculture professionals working directly with farmers and ranchers on sustainable agriculture efforts.

Deadline: Oct 28, 2026 12:00 PM (Mountain Time)

Local Education & Demonstration

Funding for the Local Education and Demonstration (LED) grants will help increase the application and adoption of the results and recommendations from previous SARE-funded research by identifying and overcoming the environmental, economic, and social hindrances of adopting sustainable agricultural practices locally. (formerly Research to Grassroots.)

Deadline: Oct 28, 2026 12:00 PM (Mountain Time)

Professional Development

The Professional Development Program advances education and outreach strategies for professionals and educators who work directly with farmers and ranchers.

Deadline: Oct 28, 2026 12:00 PM (Mountain Time)

Visiting Research & Education (formerly Sabbatical)

The Visiting Research and Education Program provides an opportunity for researchers around the world to partner with farmers, ranchers, agricultural professionals, and other researchers for conducting research, education, and Extension activities.

Deadline: Oct 5, 2026 12:00 PM (Mountain Time)

Graduate Student

The Graduate Student Research & Education Program involves Masters or Ph.D students partnering with producers on innovative research and outreach on key sustainable agriculture topics.

Deadline: Oct 28, 2026 12:00 PM (Mountain Standard Time)