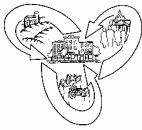


**ALLIANCE
TO END
HUNGER**

National Anti-Hunger Organization's Statement On the 2007 Farm Bill Reauthorization



The 110th Congress will reauthorize the “Farm Bill.” That important legislation has a breadth and reach far beyond American agricultural policy. The Farm Bill also will reauthorize a number of nutrition assistance programs crucial to the health and well-being of some of America’s most vulnerable people. The undersigned organizations comprising the National Anti-Hunger Organizations (NAHO) are a coalition of the nation’s leading anti-hunger advocacy, food bank, and emergency feeding organizations working to reduce hunger in the United States. The members of NAHO, representing member organizations in every State and Congressional District in the country numbering in the thousands, are united in the effort to ensure that the Farm Bill reauthorization provides adequate resources and program policy changes that are necessary to reduce the still-serious problem of hunger in our country.

We are deeply concerned about the many people in our communities who, for lack of resources, are not consistently able to put food on their tables for themselves or their families. Indeed, the most recent USDA/Census Bureau survey of food security documents that more than 35 million people in the United States live in households that face a constant struggle against hunger. Thus, it is essential that the 2007 Farm Bill address the pressing problem of hunger amidst plenty by strengthening the nation’s food assistance programs.

Our organizations’ top priority in the 2007 Farm Bill reauthorization is a strong Nutrition Title that reauthorizes and improves the Food Stamp Program, the nation’s first defense against hunger, and bolsters the efforts of the emergency food assistance system. We strongly urge that the 2007 Farm Bill and the Fiscal Year 2008 Budget Resolution reflect those urgent national priorities and ask you to consider the following recommendations.

The Food Stamp Program, the nation’s first defense against hunger, is a crucial and effective program that has nearly eliminated malnutrition from the national landscape and helps prevent the problem of hunger from becoming worse in our communities. Food Stamp Program participation closely tracks economic trends, responding quickly to increases in need, whether due to local or national economic circumstances or to disasters, as seen in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

Food stamps help strengthen families and the American communities where those families reside—rural, urban and suburban. More than 80 percent of food stamp benefits go to families with children, allowing their parents to obtain food at grocer stores for meals at home. Much of the remainder goes

to seniors and persons with disabilities. Through the nationwide use of Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards, program utilization has been streamlined for transactions for consumers and store clerks, and EBT has quantifiably reduced the chances of program abuse.

Food Stamps pay dividends for consumers, food producers and manufacturers, grocery retailers and communities. As food stamp purchases flow through grocery checkout lines, farmers' markets and other outlets, those benefits generate almost double their value in economic activity, especially for many hard-pressed rural and urban communities desperately in need of stimulus to business and jobs.

The Food Stamp Program's basic entitlement structure must be maintained while greater resources are provided to the program to more effectively fight hunger in our communities. Areas for program investment include:

- **Adequacy of Benefits Must Be Improved.** The first step to reducing hunger in the U.S. is to ensure that everyone in the Food Stamp Program has the resources to assist them in purchasing and preparing a nutritionally adequate diet. Neither the average food stamp benefit level of \$1 per person per meal, nor the \$10 monthly minimum benefit is sufficient to help families purchase an adequate diet. This dietary shortfall negatively impacts recipients' health and impedes the ability of children to learn and adults to work. Another key element to securing an adequate diet will be finding ways to improve access to affordable and healthful foods for food stamp households in low-income neighborhoods.
- **Access to the Program Must Be Expanded.** Too many people in our communities are in need of food stamps but cannot get them. Only 33 percent of the people in food bank lines are enrolled in food stamps. Those people in need of food but excluded from the Food Stamp Program include working poor families with savings slightly above decades old and outdated resource limits, many legal immigrants, and numerous indigent jobless people seeking employment.
- **Program Simplification and Streamlining for Caseworkers and Clients Must Continue.** While food stamp outreach and nutrition education are making important inroads, these efforts need more resources, and enrollments are hampered by shortfalls in state technology and supports. Too many eligible people—especially working poor and elderly persons—are missing out on benefits.

In addition to the necessary improvements to the Food Stamp Program, the 2007 Farm Bill also will provide Congress with an opportunity to assist the front-line agencies that deal with the problem of hunger every day. The nation's food banks, food pantries, and soup kitchens are stretched to serve more and more people whose food stamps have run out mid-month or whose income and resources put them just above the food stamp eligibility threshold. Currently, more than 25 million unduplicated people are accessing emergency food annually through food banks. In any given week, some 4.5 million people access food through pantries and soup kitchens throughout the United States. Requests for emergency food assistance are outstripping the resources provided through The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) and the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP). In TEFAP alone, surplus commodity deliveries have declined more than 50 percent in the past year, at the same time that requests for emergency food have increased.

Therefore, we urge the 2007 Farm Bill and FY 2008 Budget to invest significant new resources to make food stamp benefit allotments sufficient to real world needs, to open eligibility to more vulnerable populations, to connect more eligible people with benefits, and to adequately support emergency feeding programs.

We are fortunate to live in a nation with an abundant and varied food supply. In the upcoming Farm Bill reauthorization, we strongly urge the Congress to help connect more vulnerable people with that food supply and move our nation closer to a hunger-free America.

Sincerely,



Max Finberg, Director
Alliance to End Hunger



Vicki Escarra, President & CEO
America's Second Harvest—The Nation's Food Bank Network



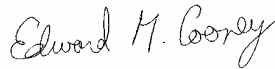
David Beckmann, President
Bread for the World Institute



Robert Greenstein, Founder & Executive Director
Center on Budget and Policy Priorities



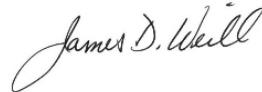
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World Hunger Year