

Letter to the Editor: The 2023 farm bill: New Mexicans should ensure their voices are heard

Written by Gallupsun Staff
Friday, 14 July 2023 03:58



Dear Editor,

Think about what New Mexico might look like without food production. What if we didn't have New Mexico chile, open space or healthy crops? Food nutrition is a crucial part of our everyday life. As you drive around your local community, take a minute to notice how the food and agriculture sector is everywhere.

All New Mexico agriculture and the consumers who enjoy our state's products are impacted by the 2023 Farm Bill being discussed by Congress, which is renewed every five years. The renewal provides an opportunity for producers and consumers to make decisions about commodities to grow, conservation practices to invest in and requirements to establish the nutrition programs that are important to so many people, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, through which over 510 million meals were provided to New Mexicans over the past 12 months as of June 15, according to the New Mexico Human Services Department.

The Farm Bill encompasses many programs and initiatives, including SNAP, which provides food assistance for low-income individuals, and The Emergency Food Assistance Program. The bill also supports the Federal Crop Insurance Program, which offers subsidized policies that help farmers by protecting against losses in yield, crop revenue or whole farm revenue.

The current Farm Bill – the 2018 bill – is valued at approximately \$428 billion dollars. What does this mean for New Mexico?

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According to the USDA, Farm Bill funding directly affected 621,000 New Mexico acres enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program in fiscal year 2022. In fiscal year 2020, New Mexico had just over one million acres enrolled in the Environmental Quality Incentives Program and led the nation with almost 934,000 acres enrolled in the Conservation Stewardship Program. Also in fiscal year 2020, almost 436,000 people in almost 218,000 households received SNAP benefits in New Mexico, and an average of \$51 million in SNAP benefits were issued each month, supporting farmers, processors, distributors and retailers.

The Farm Bill is important to everyone, so get involved in the discussion, and continue to make New Mexico the special place it is! We don't want to imagine what New Mexico would look like without the provisions being offered in the bill. Go to agriculture.senate.gov or agriculture.house.gov to submit feedback and input about the 2023 Farm Bill.

***Sincerely,
Jeff M. Witte
N.M. Agricultural Secretary***