



# U.S. Agricultural Policy Review, 2023

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## What Is the Issue?

U.S. Federal agricultural and food policies seek to accomplish various objectives: providing an income safety net for agricultural producers, minimizing the negative environmental effects of agricultural production, ensuring that agricultural supply chains are equipped to provide adequate quantities of safe food to consumers, and helping address food and nutrition insecurity. Different tools are used to meet these policy objectives—including cost sharing, direct payments, provision of credit, and access to services. This report details developments in U.S. Federal agricultural and food policies in calendar year 2023—with a focus on policies related to production agriculture, agrofood value chains, and food and nutrition assistance.

## What Did the Study Find?

Major developments in U.S. Federal agricultural policies in 2023 occurred within the production agriculture, agrofood value chain, and food and nutrition assistance policy domains. Most prominently, most provisions of the 2018 Farm Bill (the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (AIA; Public Law 115–334)) expired at the end of fiscal year 2023 but were then extended through the end of fiscal year 2024 as part of the Further Continuing Appropriations and Other Extensions Act, 2024 (Public Law 118–22).

Developments related to production agriculture spanned different policy areas, such as ad hoc assistance programs, standing farm programs, climate, equity, and organics, including:

- The launch of new ad hoc assistance programs: the Emergency Livestock Relief Program 2022, the Emergency Relief Program 2022, the Emergency Grain Storage Facility Assistance Program, the Rice Production Program, the Milk Loss Program, and the Pandemic Assistance Revenue Program.
- Discretionary changes to certain commodity programs: the Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-Raised Fish Program; the Livestock Forage Disaster Program; and the Livestock Indemnity Program.
- The expansion of certain conservation programs, largely as a result of new funding from the 2022 Inflation Reduction Act.

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- Several rounds of relief for different classes of distressed borrowers, also using funds from the Inflation Reduction Act.
- Updates to and expansions in coverage for certain existing crop insurance products, as well as the introduction of new insurance products.
- Investments in improved greenhouse gas emissions measurement and monitoring for the agriculture and forest sectors.
- The launch of the Discrimination Financial Assistance Program, which offered \$2.2 billion in financial assistance from the Inflation Reduction Act for borrowers who experienced discrimination in USDA farm lending programs.
- Regulatory changes for organics, including a rule that strengthens organic enforcement and specifies organic livestock and poultry standards.
- New assistance for organic producers and those transitioning to organic to help overcome barriers in organic production.

New programs or developments related to agrofood value chains in 2023 focused on competition, transparency, resilience, and sustainability in the food system. Efforts to enhance competition and transparency in the market included the launch of a cattle-contracts library; new rules on transparency in poultry grower contracting and tournaments; and the establishment of a USDA, Farmer Seed Liaison. Initiatives to enhance food system resilience included the launch of the USDA, Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Program (RFSI); programs to increase resiliency in the meat processing industry; and the creation of 11 Regional Food Business Centers and 1 national Intertribal Food Business Center. Sustainability efforts included the release of a draft national strategy to reduce U.S. food loss and waste.

Major developments in U.S. food and nutrition assistance programs mostly centered on the unwinding of temporary changes first introduced in 2020, following action by Congress in response to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. These changes included the end of emergency allotments for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) that supplemented regular benefits, administrative flexibilities for various programs, and the Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer (P-EBT) program. Other major developments included changes to SNAP work requirements for able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWD); the implementation of a new rule amending the eligibility criteria that schools and school districts must meet to be able to serve free meals to all students; and the authorization of new Supply Chain Assistance funding to support school meal programs.

## **How Was the Study Conducted?**

USDA, Economic Research Service researchers compiled details from various sources on U.S. Federal policies and programs announced or introduced in 2023 related to food and agriculture. Among these sources were Federal Register notices; budget documents; program agency websites, fact sheets, handbooks, and implementation documents; and USDA press releases. The authors obtained data for providing context on program trends and events from the relevant Federal agency databases, such as the USDA, Farm Service Agency's Emergency Relief Program Dashboard; the USDA, Risk Management Agency's Summary of Business data; and the USDA, Food and Nutrition Service's program data.