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- Research and Policy Director, CLF
- Assistant Scientist in the Departments of Environmental Health Sciences and Health Policy and Management
- Interests include the Farm Bill and public health, the contribution of food systems to climate change, the food price crisis, and food security in Baltimore
- Lead Editor on a new CLF textbook on food systems and public health
- Leads the American Public Health Association Working Group on Food and Environment
- Earned her PhD from the Bloomberg School, and her master’s degree from the Harvard School of Public Health
Overview

- Overview of policies affecting food and agriculture

- Farm Bill policy
  - History
  - What’s in the Farm Bill

- Farm Bill politics
  - Farm Bill politics
  - Public health advocacy
  - Farm Bill 2012 preview
Section A

Farm Bill History
Policies Affecting Food

Federal level
- Food assistance (domestic, international)
- Child Nutrition Act
- Food safety policy
- Regulations on food labeling and marketing
- Dietary guidelines
- Procurement policies
- Tax policy
- Trade policy
- Farm Bill

State and local levels
- Food policy councils
- Economic development policies/plans
- Infrastructure investments
- Tax policy
- Food safety policy
- Zoning and licensing requirements
- Limits on industry access to schools
- Procurement
- Laboratory—new policy ideas

Note: See also Muller et al. (2009). Food systems policies to advance public health. *Journal of Hunger and Environmental Nutrition.*
Policies Affecting Agriculture

- **Federal level**
  - Food safety policy
  - Regulation of feed additives
  - Clean Water Act
  - Clean Air Act
  - Regulation of biotechnology
  - Occupational safety and health regulations (sort of)
  - Tax policy
  - Labor standards
  - Trade policy

- **State and local levels**
  - Zoning policies
  - Nuisance laws
  - Economic development policies
  - Infrastructure investments
  - Tax incentives
  - Limits on specific pesticides
Farm Bill Policy
Farm Bill Policy
Farm Bill Policy

2008 Farm Bill

Image of a market scene with fresh produce.
The Farm Bill Is a Public Health Bill
The Farm Bill Is a Public Health Bill

1. What we eat
2. Environmental health/sustainability
3. Food security—short term and long term
4. Equity
5. Rural public health
Need for Government Role in Agriculture

- Farmers
  - Unpredictability
  - Individual farmers can’t influence market
  - Not nimble in face of market fluctuations

- Environment
  - Tendency toward overproduction
  - Tendency toward unsustainable practice

- Consumers
  - Need farms to produce food
  - Need to be able to afford, access food
  - Environmental and public health concerns


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Farm Bill Overview

- Broad omnibus bill

- Key legislation on farm, food, land use, rural policy (health, energy, development, etc.)

- Reauthorized every 4-6 years

- Annual appropriations
Longtime Federal Efforts to Increase Agricultural Production

- 1800s: encouraged westward expansion of farming: laws such as the Homestead Act; transcontinental railroad
- 1914: system of extension, university partnerships
Technology Available to Farmers
The Dustbowl
The Farmers’ Holiday Movement

First Farm Bills

- New Deal—Agricultural Adjustment Act 1933

- Price stabilization: “Ever-Normal Granary,” mandatory idling, loans based on target price

- Land, water conservation

- Subsidized food, school lunch

- Farm credit, insurance

- Research and extension

Image source: http://www.good-potato.com/beans_are_bullets/chapter5/ch5gallery3.html
1938-1970

- 1938, 1949: permanent legislation
- 1949: surplus food donated overseas
- 1970: some of the mandatory features aimed to stabilize prices shifted to voluntary
1973: Earl Butz

- “Fencerow to fencerow”
  - USDA soil conservation service helps farmers drain wetlands, remove forests, windbreaks, etc.

- Phase out supply management; work towards yield maximization

- “Get big or get out”

- Decline of small farms, dominance of large firms, industrial process

Also in 1973 ...

- Food Stamps program brought into Farm Bill
- Allowed use of commodities for feeding mothers, young children
1985, 1990: Environmental Programs

- Conservation and wetlands reserve programs
- Conservation compliance
- Info and research on sustainable agriculture

1996: “Freedom to Farm”

- High commodity prices, high farm income
- Aim to end government intervention in commodities
  - End of price supports over seven years
  - End land-idling programs
  - End grain reserves

**fast forward**

- In economy, prices dropped
- Large increase in government payouts
  - 50% increase by 1998
  - Doubled 1999-2001
- Dropped plan to end subsidies
USDA Subsidies to United States, by Year

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- Farm Programs
- Crop Insurance Premium Subsidies
- Conservation Programs (see note below)
- Disaster Programs