Farm Bill Stakeholders

- Historically driven by agricultural interests

- Anti-hunger: SNAP brings urban legislators on board with commodity policy

- Other
  - Sustainable agriculture, environment
  - International development
  - Community food security

- Health is newcomer
Public Health Engagement in the Farm Bill

- **2008**
  - Ad hoc coalition: healthy/sustainably produced foods in Nutrition Title
  - APHA—Farm Bill is one of top three policy priorities
  - Health professionals’ sign-on letter
  - All identified priorities were successful

- **2012**
  - Healthy Farms Healthy People Coalition
  - GOAT coalition
  - Ad hoc nutrition coalition
  - Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine coalition
  - APHA
  - SNAP to Health
  - *Mapping a Sustainable Agriculture & Public Health Alliance for the Next Farm Bill*
Seattle Farm Bill Principles

Supporting Healthy Farms, Food and People: Guidance for the 2012 Farm Bill

The Farm Bill is the primary piece of legislation that determines our nation's food and agriculture policy. The 15 Farm Bill titles address important issues including supplemental nutrition assistance programs (SNAP, formerly called food stamps), farm, trade, conservation, rural development, research, and food safety programs.

To help solve our nation's many health, social, economic and environmental challenges, the nation needs a comprehensive, health-focused food system that addresses the goals of hunger and disease reduction, local and family farm viability, food affordability and accessibility, environmental protection, land use planning, regional resilience, and social justice.

Good policy decisions are made through clear, transparent, and deliberative decision-making processes that involve the individuals and communities they affect. It is important that rural, urban, and suburban communities all have a voice in determining the policies that directly affect their economic and social well-being.

Our purpose in establishing these principles is to provide a framework of values that will help guide decisions by our elected officials. These principles are meant to provide guidance for the development of policies, regulations, programs, funding opportunities, technical support and research priorities for a healthy and sustainable food system supported by the 2012 Farm Bill.

Founding Co-Signers

Richard Conlin, President, Seattle City Council
Denis Hayes, President, Bullitt Foundation, National Coordinator of the first Earth Day
James Kelly, CEO, Urban League of Metropolitan Seattle
Dr. David Fleming, Director, Public Health Seattle-King County
Mary Embleton, Executive Director, Cascade Harvest Coalition
Trudy Bialic, Public Affairs Director, PCC Natural

Why Seattle Cares
Health-Related Marker Bills

- Local Farms, Food and Jobs Act
  - Sponsors Pingree (House), Brown (Senate)
  - Build local food infrastructure, slaughterhouses
  - Require USDA to research non-GM seeds and breeds
  - New crop insurance program for organic/diversified farms
  - Reduce barriers to school/institutional local food procurement
  - Improve farmers market access for SNAP recipients

- Healthy Food Financing Initiative
  - $125 million loan and grant financing
Expiring Programs

- Among “most forward-looking” in Farm Bill

- Many are public health, conservation priorities
  - Conservation Reserve Program—Transition Incentive Program
  - Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program
  - Outreach and Assistance to Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers
  - National Organic Certification Cost Share Program
  - Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative
  - Specialty Crop Research Initiative
  - Organic Production and Market Data Initiatives
  - Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program
  - Value-Added Producer Grants (VAPG)
Key Changes under Discussion

- SNAP cuts

- Direct payments

- Crop insurance
  - Conservation compliance
  - “like giving a homeowner cut rate fire insurance but not requiring fire extinguishers” — Kleinschmidt
Budget
Farm Bill 2012 in a Word

- Budget
- Election year
Farm Bill 2012 in a Word

- Budget
- Election year
- Drought
Drought

- Most severe, extensive drought in 25 years (USDA)
- Mid-August—60% of US farms
- Need for disaster assistance could pressure some to pass a bill they dislike
- Cuts to conservation
Drought

... thus far
2011–2012

- Supercommittee fails → sequestration (cuts $7 billion)
  - Mandatory cut of $984 billion
  - Will it happen?

- Senate passes its bill (cuts $23 billion)

- House Agriculture Committee passes bill (cuts $35 billion)

- House bill does not make it to floor
House Bill Politics

- **SNAP**
  - Republicans want to cut $16 billion, from 2 to 3 million would lose benefits
  - Democrats don’t want to vote for bill

- **Farm safety net**
  - Tea party wants deep cuts, end subsidies
  - Other Republicans traditionally supported these programs
House leaders don’t want to bring to floor—election year
  - Not enough votes to pass (?)
  - Debate could be divisive, harm candidates up for election
    ▶ Tea Party might demand further SNAP cuts
    ▶ Don’t want to be seen passing nearly a trillion dollar bill (over 10 years)
    ▶ Liberals could portray them as harming farmers, children, etc.
  - If next year, possible power shift → deeper cuts
October 1, 2012: Farm Bill Expires

- No extension

- Revert to 1949, 1938 Farm Bills
  - Different era—lower production, higher prices; doesn’t cover soybeans, others; supply management
  - Most commodity impacts start when harvesting crops planted—January 2013—but farmers need to plan
    - Milk affected sooner ... $38 milk?
  - Cost, time to plan to revert back
  - SNAP, Crop Insurance don’t expire now
Farm Bill Expires

- 37 programs without baseline also expired

- Other programs funded but lose authority to use their funds
  - Farmers Market Nutrition Program
  - Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

- Senate, House Agriculture Committee bills included them
Post-election Farm Bill?

- Possible: House passes bill, conference, floor votes, President’s signature within five weeks

- If not: Congress extends 2008 Farm Bill
  → Start all over next year

- Better to start over?
  - Yes
    - Maybe could avoid objectionable parts: SNAP cuts, not enough reform
  - No
    - Fewer funds to work with
    - Many programs expire
    - Educate new members
    - Time, effort
What’s Missing?

- Climate change
  - Bills actually cut CSP to pay for crop insurance

- IFAP

- True commodity program reform
  - Supply management

- Competition

- Farm worker health
What’s There but Needs Expansion?

- Support for farmers (including loans, access to insurance)
  - Sustainable
  - Diversified
  - Transitioning
  - Fruit and vegetable producers
  - Small and mid-sized
  - New and socially disadvantaged

- Demand for healthy, local/regional

- Local/regional food system infrastructure

- Research to support healthier food system
After the Farm Bill

- **Support/follow-up**
  - Appropriations process, rulemaking
  - Internal follow-up/oversight with agencies

- **Stay vigilant**

- **Prepare for next Farm Bill**
  - Research, pilots
  - Continuous effort/organizing

- Need long-term vision to use Farm Bill to shift food system in positive, healthy direction
What You Can Do

- Those with public health expertise can play an important role in advancing priorities
- Stay tuned for action alerts and opportunities to join in
- Help raise awareness (film screening? book discussion group? talk with friends and family)
- Visit with and/or write letters to legislators
- Op-eds, letters to the editor
- Continue educating yourself
- Address campaign finance, transparency issues, too
Ways to Stay Up to Date

- Farm Policy email updates
  - http://farmpolicy.com/

- Understanding the Farm Bill Facebook Page
  - http://www.facebook.com/UnderstandingTheFarmBill

- National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition
  - http://sustainableagriculture.net/blog/

- Healthy Farms Healthy People Coalition
  - http://hfhpcoalition.org

- SNAP to Health Web site
  - http://www.snaptohealth.org/

- CLF Farm Bill page
http://www.jhu.edu/farmbillvisualizer/
Conclusions