

Northeast Farm Bill Organizing: Building Power and Regional Coordination

[Survey](#) questions can be found here

Power Mapping Overview

NESAWG undertook this project in the fall of 2022 to begin to assess Northeast positioning going into the 2023 Farm Bill year. We asked network respondents about the quality and quantity of their congressional relationships, their priorities for the Farm Bill, and their needs for regional coordination. Below is a topline analysis of that assessment along with recommended next steps.

Northeast Congressional Targets

Members of the House and Senate Agriculture Committee are primary targets because they will be drafting the text of the Farm Bill, and northeast ag committee membership is poised to shift in the 118th Congress. Three New York representatives on-committee (Jacobs, Delgado, and Maloney) are no longer in Congress, and the balance of power in the house ag committee has shifted now that there is a Republican majority in the House. In the Senate, long-time sustainable ag champion Senator Leahy is retiring, giving up both his ag committee and ag appropriations seats.

We mapped out active organizations in each state and district with remaining ag committee members within the Northeast region, although committee appointments may shift. While we are best represented among survey respondents in Massachusetts (McGovern's homestate), Connecticut (with Rep. Hayes on committee) and New York (Senator Gilibrand remains on committee), that may be more reflective of the group who filled out the survey than actual organizing infrastructure in each state; for example, Maine has a number of active organizations who regularly interface with Senator Collins and Rep. Pingree but are not represented here. In italics, I've listed other organizations in each state who did not participate in this effort (either due to lack of capacity to respond or my own outreach failures) but have active presences in that state; that list too is not exhaustive.

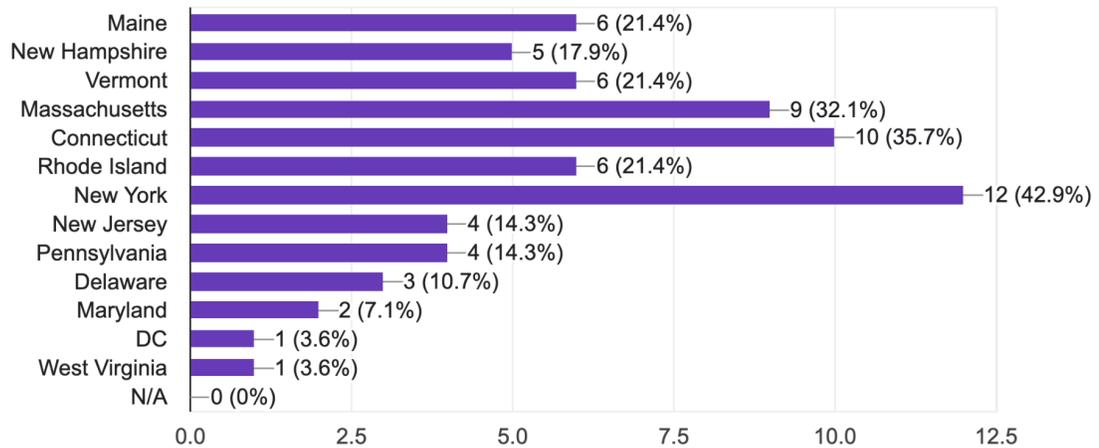
Nonetheless, a few trends are clear. Recommended focus areas for building power are districts PA-5, home district of future House Ag Committee chair G.T. Thompson; NH-2, where Representative Kuster has been an ag committee stalwart but we (the NESAWG network) are comparatively underpowered; and New Jersey, where Senator Booker has emerged as a champion for racial equity in food policy on the Senate Ag committee. Opportunities also exist to cultivate new champions and encourage existing off-committee champions to seek ag committee appointments (Welch in VT and Reed in RI, for instance).

Secondary targets exist as well, including members of the appropriations committees, those who are part of relevant caucuses, or supportive members who may offer amendments from the floor. We were not able to thoroughly map those additional groups.

Regional representation according to NESAWG Farm Bill Survey results

If your organization is regional, state, or locally-based, please check the state(s) in which you work:

28 responses



Organizational Farm Bill Priorities

Survey respondents had a few common themes to their Farm Bill priorities. More funding and support for BIPOC farmers— coupled with reduced inequity and repair for historic harms— was at the top of the list for multiple organizations. Sub-themes included Senator Booker’s [Justice for Black Farmer Act](#), farm labor reform, and addressing civil rights discrimination at the USDA. Many organizations also mentioned seeking more funding for technical assistance, as well as other policies to increase economic viability including increased competition, fairness, food business development, and fighting industry consolidation.

Other farm bill priorities addressed the unique needs of the northeast food system, including a focus on access to farmland and farm transition, as well more support for smaller-scale farms, diversified farms, specialty crops (and the specialty crop block grant program), and urban agriculture. Other policy suggestions to better meet the needs of northeast growers included shifting the commodity subsidy system, and increased funding for the LAMP program.

Other issues lifted up included a need for regional infrastructure, like storage, aggregation, and distribution, strengthening organic integrity, expanded conservation programs, and more funding for the Farmers and Ranchers Stress Assistance Network. FOTO and SNAP were also each mentioned as priorities.

Points of nonalignment

While no explicit contradictions emerged, a few organizations highlighted potentially polarizing positions; opposition to carbon markets, opposition to the Farmworker Modernization Act, advocating in favor of price supports, support for an expanded definition of “climate-smart”, and opposition to programs that serve only a very narrow sector of the farm economy (like subsidies for specific commodities) were lifted up as issues which may not be universally held across the region. We would recommend caution before endorsing these specific policies or wading into these issue areas to avoid alienating parts of the NESAWG network.

Next steps

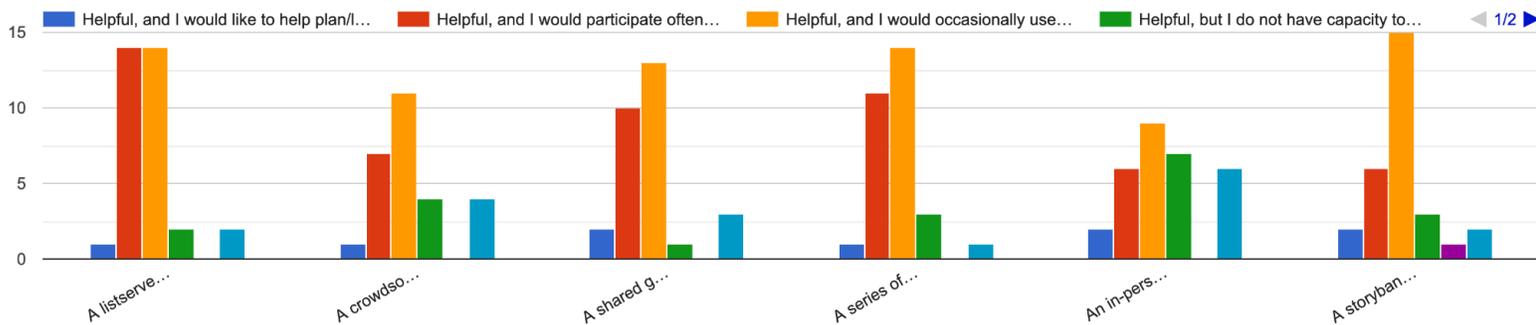
Unfortunately, NESAWG temporarily lacks capacity to move forward the work as planned as we hire a new Policy Manager. Detailed below are the planned next steps to coordinate activities, in case other organizations find the plan useful or have capacity to help move portions forward in service of advancing regional Farm Bill interests.

- Research and reach out to organizations in key districts and states with stories to share about Farm Bill program impacts and utility
 - Connect with Black Farmers United/Northeast Farmers of Color about their existing storybanking initiative so as to not duplicate efforts
- Boost this network with direct outreach in underrepresented and key areas (New Hampshire, Maine, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, as well as Delaware, Maryland, and West Virginia)
- Start a listserv for regional Farm Bill coordination
- Connect with the following individuals to help with leadership on specific projects:
 - Regional listserv:
 - Lindsay Shapiro, lindsey@pasafarming.org
 - Crowdsourced Powermap with congressional districts, targets, and organizations active in each
 - Bekah Williams, Rebekah@foodforthespirit.org
 - A shared google drive that compiles policy materials, platforms, and educational tools from across the region
 - Bekah Williams, Rebekah@foodforthespirit.org,
 - Meg Hourigan, coordinator@ctfoodsystemalliance.com
 - Storybank of profiles from across the region featuring Farm Bill programs in action:
 - Janna Siller, janna.siller@hazon.org
 - Lindsay Shapiro, lindsey@pasafarming.org

- Share a group google drive with folders for policy documents, related materials, story bank documents, etc.

Survey insights on useful next steps:

What would be useful to your work? What would you be interested in helping with? Check all that apply:



Categories from left to right are: A listserve of northeast policy advocates to talk about Farm Bill strategy and share ideas/initiatives, A crowdsourced power map with congressional districts, targets, and organizations active in each, A shared google drive that compiles policy materials, platforms, and educational tools from across the region, A series of online meetings between now and Farm Bill to talk strategy and share updates, An in-person forum at the NESAWG Conference next November (no longer applicable), and A storybank of profiles from across the region featuring Farm Bill programs in action

Appendix & expanded answers:

Members of Congress with whom survey participants have contact:

+’s indicate additional respondents who have contact with the legislator

1. Rep. Pingree (ME)
2. Senator Sanders (VT) +
3. Senator Leahy (VT) +, retiring
4. Rep. Welch (VT) +, newly elected Senator
5. Rep. Kuster (NH)
6. Senator Shaheen (NH)
7. Sen Ed Markey (MA)+
8. Sen Warren (MA)+

9. Rep. McGovern (MA) +++
10. Rep. Pressley (MA)
11. Rep. Katherine Clark (MA)
12. Rep. Lori Trahan (MA)
13. Rep. Neal (MA)
14. Senator Whitehouse (RI)+
15. Senator Reed (RI)+
16. Representative Cicilline (RI)+, retiring
17. Rep Langevin (RI)+
18. Rep. Hayes (CT) ++
19. Sen. Chris Murphy (CT) +
20. Sen. Blumenthal (CT)
21. Rep. John Larson (CT)
22. Sen Gilibrand (NY) +
23. Sen Schumer (NY) +
24. Rep. Jacobs (NY)
25. Rep. Maloney (NY) unseated
26. Rep. Stefanik (NY)
27. Rep Katko (NY), retiring
28. Sen Booker (NJ)
29. Rep GT Thompson (PA)
30. Rep Dwight Evans (PA)
31. Senator Casey (PA)

Members of Congress who are helpful in supporting northeast sustainable agriculture, according to survey respondents:

+’s indicate additional respondents who have contact with the legislator

1. Rep Pingree (ME) +
2. Rep King (ME)
3. Senator Sanders (VT) +
4. Senator Leahy (VT) +
5. Rep Welch (VT) +
6. Kuster (NH) +
7. Senator Whitehouse (RI)
8. Senator Reed (RI)
9. Representative Cicilline (RI)
10. Rep Langevin (RI)
11. McGovern (MA) ++
12. Markey (MA)
13. Sen. Chris Murphy (CT)
14. Rep. Hayes (CT) +
15. Sen Gilibrand (NY) +
16. Senator Booker (NJ)

17. Senator Bob Casey (PA)
18. Rep Dwight Evans (PA)

Particular notes and issues

- Jim McGovern and Ed Markey have been very supportive around immigration-related advocacy work
- Jim McGovern is currently supporting the White House Conference on Hunger and Nutrition
- McGovern is a strong advocate for organic and healthy soils
- Hayes has done lots of farm visits and pledged to support CT's BIPOC farmers.
- Leahy has been the strongest champion of organic in particular
- Rep Dwight Evans (PA) has been a champion of the Healthy Food Finance Initiative

Organizations with an active presence in Ag Committee Member Districts:

Organizations listed in italics did not fill out the survey but are suggested partners in this work subject to their own interest, capacity, and focus

Northeast House Ag Committee Members:

- Representative McGovern (MA-02)
 - NOFA/Mass, Marty Dagoberto, marty@nofamass.org, State
 - New Entry Sustainable Farming Project, Jennifer Hashley, jennifer.hashley@tufts.edu. We work at local and national levels
 - New England Feeding New England, Ellen Kahler, ellen@vsjf.org, Regional
 - Conservation Law Foundation, Scott Sanderson, rsanderson@clf.org, Regional
 - Land For Good, Regional
 - Cultivemos (FRSAN-NE), Jac Wypler, jac@youngfarmers.org, Regional
 - Farm Fresh Rhode Island, Jesse Rye, jesse@farmfreshri.org, Regional
 - National Young Farmers Coalition, Vanessa Garcia Polanco, vanessa@youngfarmers.org, National
 - Farm Aid, Caitlin Arnold Stephano (Hotline Program Manager), caitlin@farmaid.org, National
 - *World Farmers, state*
 - *Springfield Food Policy Council, state*
 - *Eastern Woodlands Rematriation Collective, regional*
 - *Northeast Farmers of Color Land Trust, regional*
 - *American Farmland Trust, regional*
 - *MA Food System Collaborative, state*
 - *Northeast Carbon Alliance, Regional*
 - *Native Farm Bill Coalition, national*
- Rep Hayes (CT-05)
 - Hartford Commission on Food Policy, Martha Page, martha1551@att.net, Local

- Connecticut Food System Alliance, Meg Hourigan, coordinator@ctfoodsystemalliance.com, State
 - New CT Farmer Alliance, Mary Claire Whelan, newctfarmers@gmail.com, State
 - Hazon, Janna Siller, janna.siller@hazon.org, I am based in northwest CT but we also have a national reach.
 - Farm Fresh Rhode Island, Jesse Rye, jesse@farmfreshri.org, Regional
 - National Young Farmers Coalition, Vanessa Garcia Polanco, vanessa@youngfarmers.org, National
 - New England Feeding New England, Ellen Kahler, ellen@vsjf.org, Regional
 - Conservation Law Foundation, Scott Sanderson, rsanderson@clf.org, Regional
 - Cultivemos (FRSAN-NE), Jac Wypler, jac@youngfarmers.org, Regional
 - Land For Good, Jim Hafner, jim@landforgood.org, Regional
 - Farm Aid, Caitlin Arnold Stephano (Hotline Program Manager), caitlin@farmaid.org, National
 - *Working Lands Alliance, State*
 - *Northeast Farmers of Color Land Trust, regional*
 - *American Farmland Trust, regional*
 - *Food Solutions New England, Regional*
 - *Farm to Institution, Regional*
 - *Northeast Carbon Alliance, Regional*
 - *Native Farm Bill Coalition, national*
- Rep Pingree (ME-01)
 - Maine Food Strategy, Tanya Swain, tswain@mainefoodstrategy.org, State
 - Maine Farmland Trust, Shelley Megquier, smegquier@mainefarmlandtrust.org, State
 - National Young Farmers Coalition, Vanessa Garcia Polanco, vanessa@youngfarmers.org, National
 - New England Feeding New England, Ellen Kahler, ellen@vsjf.org, Regional
 - Conservation Law Foundation, Scott Sanderson, rsanderson@clf.org, Regional
 - Cultivemos (FRSAN-NE), Jac Wypler, jac@youngfarmers.org, Regional
 - Land For Good, Jim Hafner, jim@landforgood.org, Regional
 - Farm Aid, Caitlin Arnold Stephano (Hotline Program Manager), caitlin@farmaid.org, National
 - *ME Food Strategy, State*
 - *Maine Network of Community Food Councils, State*
 - *Coastal Enterprises Inc., State*
 - *Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners, State*
 - *Eastern Woodlands Rematriation Collective, regional*
 - *Northeast Farmers of Color Land Trust, regional*
 - *American Farmland Trust, regional*
 - *Food Solutions New England, Regional*
 - *Farm to Institution, Regional*
 - *Northeast Carbon Alliance, Regional*

- *Native Farm Bill Coalition, national*
- Rep Kuster (NH-02)
 - National Young Farmers Coalition, Vanessa Garcia Polanco, vanessa@youngfarmers.org, National
 - New England Feeding New England, Ellen Kahler, ellen@vsif.org, Regional
 - Conservation Law Foundation, Scott Sanderson, rsanderson@clf.org, Regional
 - Cultivemos (FRSAN-NE), Jac Wypler, jac@youngfarmers.org, Regional
 - Land For Good, Jim Hafner, jim@landforgood.org, Regional *
 - Farm Aid, Caitlin Arnold Stephano (Hotline Program Manager), caitlin@farmaid.org, National
 - *Organization for Refugee and Immigrant Success, state*
 - *NH Food Alliance, state*
 - *Food Solutions New England, regional*
 - *Farm to Institution, regional*
 - *Eastern Woodlands Rematriation Collective, regional*
 - *Northeast Farmers of Color Land Trust, regional*
 - *American Farmland Trust, regional*
 - *Northeast Carbon Alliance, Regional*
 - *Native Farm Bill Coalition, national*
- Rep. Thompson (PA-05)
 - The Food Trust, Sam Gibb, sgibb@thefoodtrust.org, State
 - Pasa Sustainable Agriculture, Lindsey Shapiro, lindsey@pasafarming.org, Regional *
 - Cultivemos (FRSAN-NE), Jac Wypler, jac@youngfarmers.org, Regional
 - National Young Farmers Coalition, Vanessa Garcia Polanco, vanessa@youngfarmers.org, National
 - Farm Aid, Caitlin Arnold Stephano (Hotline Program Manager), caitlin@farmaid.org, National
 - *Penn Future, state*
 - *Stroud Center, local*
 - *Lehigh Valley Food Policy Council, local*
 - *Common Market, regional*
 - *Northeast Carbon Alliance, regional*
 - *Izaak Walton League of America, regional*
 - *Northeast Farmers of Color Land Trust, regional*
 - *Kiss the Ground. national*
 - *Native Farm Bill Coalition, national*

Rep Jacobs (NY) → did not seek reelection

Rep Delgado (NY) → resigned from Congress

Rep Maloney (NY) → unseated

Northeast Senate Ag Committee Members

- Senator Gilibrand (NY)
 - Black Farmers United - New York State (BFU-NYS), Martha Williams, martha@blackfarmersunited.org, State
 - Food for the Spirit, Rebekah Williams, Rebekah@foodforthespirit.org, State
 - Equity Advocates, Leah Eden, leah@nyequityadvocates.org, State
 - NOFA-NY, Katie Baidon, kbaidon@nofany.org, State
 - NY FarmNet - Cornell University, NY FarmNet, kdownes@cornell.edu, State
 - Syracuse-Onondaga Food Systems Alliance, Maura Ackerman, maura@syfoodalliance.org, Regional
 - Pasa Sustainable Agriculture, Lindsey Shapiro, lindsey@pasafarming.org, Regional
 - New England Feeding New England, Ellen Kahler, ellen@vsjf.org, Regional
 - Conservation Law Foundation, Scott Sanderson, rsanderson@clf.org, Regional
 - Cultivemos (FRSAN-NE), Jac Wypler, jac@youngfarmers.org, Regional
 - Land For Good, Jim Hafner, jim@landforgood.org, Regional
 - National Young Farmers Coalition, Vanessa Garcia Polanco, vanessa@youngfarmers.org, National
 - Farm Aid, Caitlin Arnold Stephano (Hotline Program Manager), caitlin@farmaid.org, National
 - Glynwood Center for Regional Food and Farming, State
 - *Soul Fire Farm, state*
 - *CADE, state*
 - *Certified Naturally Grown, National and NY based*
 - *GrowNYC, local*
 - *Hudson Valley Food System Coalition, local*
 - *Northeast Carbon Alliance, regional*
 - *Northeast Farmers of Color Land Trust, regional*
 - *Native Farm Bill Coalition, national*
- Booker (NJ)
 - NOFA NJ, Devin Cornia, devin@nofanj.org, State
 - Pasa Sustainable Agriculture, Lindsey Shapiro, lindsey@pasafarming.org, Regional
 - The Food Trust, Sam Gibb, sgibb@thefoodtrust.org, regional
 - New England Feeding New England, Ellen Kahler, ellen@vsjf.org, Regional
 - Conservation Law Foundation, Scott Sanderson, rsanderson@clf.org, Regional
 - Cultivemos (FRSAN-NE), Jac Wypler, jac@youngfarmers.org, Regional
 - National Young Farmers Coalition, Vanessa Garcia Polanco, vanessa@youngfarmers.org, National
 - Farm Aid, Caitlin Arnold Stephano (Hotline Program Manager), caitlin@farmaid.org, National
 - *Northeast Carbon Alliance, regional*
 - *Northeast Farmers of Color Land Trust, regional*

- *Native Farm Bill Coalition, national*
- Senator Collins (ME)
 - Maine Food Strategy, Tanya Swain, tswain@mainefoodstrategy.org, State
 - Maine Farmland Trust Shelley Megquier, smegquier@mainefarmlandtrust.org, State
 - New England Feeding New England, Ellen Kahler, ellen@vsjf.org, Regional
 - Conservation Law Foundation Scott Sanderson, rsanderson@clf.org, Regional
 - Cultivemos (FRSAN-NE), Jac Wypler, jac@youngfarmers.org, Regional
 - Land For Good, Jim Hafner, jim@landforgood.org, Regional
 - Farm Aid, Caitlin Arnold Stephano (Hotline Program Manager), caitlin@farmaid.org, National
 - National Young Farmers Coalition, Vanessa Garcia Polanco, vanessa@youngfarmers.org, National
 - *Coastal Enterprises Inc., state*
 - *Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners, state*
 - *ME Food Strategy, state*
 - *Maine Network of Community Food Councils, state*
 - *Food Solutions New England, regional*
 - *Farm to Institution, regional*
 - *Northeast Carbon Alliance, regional*
 - *Northeast Farmers of Color Land Trust, regional*
 - *Native Farm Bill Coalition, national*
- Senator Leahy (VT) → retired

Farm Bill platforms and priorities

Regional Groups as per survey responses:

American Farmland Trust: <https://farmland.org/2023-farm-bill/>
<https://workinglandsalliance.org/2023-policy-priorities/>

Vermont Law School:

We're part of a consortium of law schools called the Farm Bill Law Enterprise, our website is at <http://www.farbilllaw.org/>. The final report going up on our website is one that we (VLS) drafted, on equity and land and capital access, etc. Will be published by end of September.

New England Feeding New England:

Generally – what I will be most interested in additional shifts to the Farm Bill that regionalize our food system – by shifting \$ from corn, wheat and soy subsidies in the mid-west only to regions across the country who are building out local/regional food systems – both building a more equitable food system but also one that is more resilient to climate change and

pandemic impacts, and one that supports increased competition (and thus less consolidation and multi-national ownership of the food supply). I think the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program needs to get a serious infusion of additional annual funding allocation and that the funding formula they use needs to be changed. For instance, VT only gets about \$160k/year for that program when we could easily deploy a couple million!

We also need more \$ dedicated to regional infrastructure such as storage/aggregation, regionally owned distribution system. We also need a lot more \$ for business and technical assistance to farmers – like what the Farm Viability Alliance is requesting. And of course, we need dedicated funding for traditionally marginalized farmers (black, indigenous, people of color, LGBTQ+, immigrant) – with \$ for access to land, equipment, working capital and business supports. And we also need a lot more \$ for succession planning and the New and Beginning Farmer and Rancher Program.

Cultivemos:

Farmer mental health; racial equity - ie great supports across the board for BIPOC farmers and farmworkers

Conservation Law Foundation:

In general, we would like to see a Farm Bill that does more to support smaller-scale farms, diversified farms, urban farms, and beginning and BIPOC farmers. Second, we would like to see the Farm Bill's programs do more to help farmers who are pursuing agroecological management, whether through direct support, risk mitigation programs, like insurance, or other means. Third, we'd like to see a Farm Bill that does more to nurture and bolster local and regional food systems. Fourth, we'd like to see a Farm Bill that confronts systemic inequities, including farm labor and land justice issues, such as through the incorporation of Corey Booker's Justice for Black Farmer's Act.

It's worth noting that we have very limited capacity over the next fiscal year to engage in Farm Bill advocacy, so our related policy hopes are more general rather than concrete.

Land for Good:

Any policies that increase access to farmland, facilitate farm transition, provide more and more targeted funding for 1:1 business technical assistance, and lower inequities for historically marginalized groups (including BIPOC, beginning farmers, sm/med sized farms, specialty crops)

NOFA VT:

The NOFA chapters are actively working to develop our regional policy platform, which I'm happy to share once it's complete (or close to complete) - likely in the next month or so. Our platform will include provisions to strengthen organic integrity, improve upon and expand key conservation programs, support fairness and just livelihoods for farmers and farm workers, address and repair USDA's history of racism, and eliminate the use of toxic chemicals on farmland.

Hartford Commission on Food Policy:

Increased SNAP benefit levels; Increased support for urban agriculture; continued/increased support for fruit and vegetable access programs, such as FMNP, Fruit and Veggie Rx; increased focus on food businesses as economic development;

NY Farmnet: Cornell University:

I'd love to see continued funding for the regional FRSAN-NE work that is happening. I'd also love to see a greater focus on farmer and rural mental health.

Maine Food Strategy:

We would like to see programs and investments in the next farm bill support increased marketplace diversification and competition, e.i. less industry consolidation.

Farm Fresh Rhode Island:

Continued/Increased funding for USDA LAMP awards, NIFA's GusNIP program

Farm Aid:

Renewed Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network (FRSAN) funding

New Entry Farm Project:

We do not have a particular policy platform, but we are in general support of any issues impacting or supporting beginning farmers; expanding conservation programming to include urban/suburban and small acreage producers; supporting minority/socially disadvantaged producers; farmland access and priorities for small/BIPOC/Organic agriculture; more research and extension support for small specialty crop producers; programs that promote economic viability for small farmers.

Pasa:

- Increased funding for conservation and soil health programs
- Reduce/eliminate cost-share requirements for disadvantaged farmers (as currently defined)
- Invest more federal dollars in young/new farmer training and registered apprenticeships
- Develop a new program to create opportunities for new and under-resourced farmers to access farmland
- Continue to provide substantial funding for climate mitigation, including more incentives for tree and hedgerow planting, more technical assistance for agroforestry project implementation, and more technical assistance providers

New CT Farmer Alliance:

We have state policy priorities, some of which could be accomplished through Farm Bill programs.

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1SR0Di2cd0MbhFYi0d8dtyp15bl7hzsRst3vwbzE7znA/edit?usp=sharing>

NY Equity Advocates:

We held a series of statewide listening sessions and are working on developing our policy priorities.

<https://www.nyequityadvocates.org/newsandupdates/2022/9/20/farm-bill-campaign>

NOFA NY:

Policy priorities will be added to this page as we analyse them:

<https://nofany.org/advocacy/farmbill/>. We are mostly looking to allied organizations to identify policies that align with the principles that we developed among the 7 NOFA chapters.

NOFA NJ:

Increased funding for NRCS programs and extension services; increased capital access for beginning farmers

The Food Trust:

The Food Trust recommends the following areas be prioritized in the 2023 Farm Bill:

Healthy Food Financing Initiatives (HFFI)

Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program (GusNIP, formerly FINI)

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

SNAP-ed

National Groups**Farm Action**

<https://farmaction.us/fair-farm-bill/>

Native Farm Bill Coalition

Nativefarmbill.com

Regaining our Future II Report coming ~ May 2023

Rural Coalition

Coming soon

National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition

<https://sustainableagriculture.net/publications/2023-farm-bill-platform/>

National Organic Coalition

<https://www.nationalorganiccoalition.org/blog/2022/11/28/noc-farm-bill-recommendation-highlights>