Is the farm bill just for farmers?

Farm legislation also affects nutrition programs, say K-State officials

By Maddy Rohr, K-State Research and Extension news service

MANHATTAN, Kan. — Farm and food policy go hand in hand, so current discussions leading to the next U.S. Farm Bill is likely to affect the availability of food, said Kansas State University agricultural policy specialist Jenny Ifft.

“Food stamps began during the Great Depression based on shared policy objectives of increasing farm income and decreasing hunger in both rural and urban areas,” Ifft said. “Now that program is called SNAP.”

Ten percent of Kansas households experience food insecurity, K-State SNAP-Education coordinator Lisa Ross said.

“The effects of food insecurity can cause health complications, especially in growth and development of children,” Ross said. “SNAP-Ed works to give everyone nutrition education and make sure they get the most out of food assistance programs.”

Nutrition programs are predicted to make up 84% of farm bill spending because of the large role food assistance programs play in the broader social safety net, Ifft adds. SNAP-Ed works to help people eligible for assistance programs lead healthier lives within a limited budget.

“We also initiate and support policy system environmental work designed to promote healthy behavior and decisions in Kansas communities,” Ross said.

SNAP has more than 50 million participants nationwide, most of whom are children or elderly and disabled. Ifft explains that the majority of policy debates are about the 10% of SNAP participants in the “able-bodied without dependents” category.

“The budget for both food programs and farms increased in the last five years, but nutrition increased more,” Ifft said. “That is a topic of debate as well as increasing the budget for SNAP.”
According to Ifft, the SNAP budget was increased administratively by the USDA in the last five years, bringing to question who gets to make those changes -- and ultimately adding to the farm bill debate.

With more than 94,000 households receiving SNAP benefits, SNAP-Ed works to improve health outcomes in SNAP participants and communities.

“It is really important that we work together on this farm bill because without SNAP there is no SNAP-education,” Ross said.

For more resources, Ross recommends visiting K-State SNAP-Ed or reaching out to local extension agents.

FOR PRINT PUBLICATIONS: Links used in this story
K-State Research and Extension local offices, https://www.ksre.k-state.edu/about/statewide-locations.html
K-State SNAP-Ed, https://www.k-state.edu/ks-snaped/

K-State Research and Extension is a short name for the Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service, a program designed to generate and distribute useful knowledge for the wellbeing of Kansans. Supported by county, state, federal and private funds, the program has county extension offices, experiment fields, area extension offices and regional research centers statewide. Its headquarters is on the K-State campus in Manhattan. For more information, visit www.ksre.ksu.edu. K-State Research and Extension is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Story by:
Maddy Rohr
Maddy23@ksu.edu

For more information:
Jennifer Ifft
785-532-4486
Jifft@ksu.edu

Lisa Ross
785-532-2714
Lkross@ksu.edu