

## **Statement for the Record**

**Submitted by**

**The Association of Kansas Food Banks**

**Kansas Food Bank  
Harvesters—The Community Food Network  
Second Harvest Community Food Bank**

**For the Farm Bill Field Hearing on the 2018 Farm Bill**

**Manhattan, Kansas**

**February 23, 2017**

Chairman Roberts and Ranking Member Stabenow, thank you for the opportunity to submit this statement for the record on behalf of the Kansas Food Bank, Harvesters—The Community Food Network and Second Harvest Community Food Bank, which are the Feeding America food banks serving Kansas.

On behalf of the nearly 375,000 Kansans we serve each year through our network of food pantries, mobile pantries, kitchens and shelters, we urge you to protect and strengthen federal nutrition programs in the upcoming farm bill.

Our three food banks collectively serve every county in the state. We represent the state's network of emergency food providers, which include 715 emergency food pantries, soup kitchens and shelters. We provided more than 27.3 million meals to people in need in Kansas last year in partnership with Kansas' farmers, processors, retailers, schools, churches, community organizations and the public sector.

The demand for food assistance increased significantly during the 2008 recession. While the economic recovery has slowed the dramatic increases we were seeing, the recovery has not lessened the need. We are, at best, seeing a plateau in the number of people coming to our network for help, not an overall decrease. The recovery is uneven, with people at the low end of the economic spectrum continuing to struggle to make ends meet.

We have generous and dedicated Kansans committed to helping us feed the hungry. But as supportive as our community is, and as strong and creative as our charitable network is, we simply can't do it alone. The public sector support of food and hunger relief programs is vital to keeping our neighbors fed, healthy and productive and to protecting our most vulnerable. The public and private sectors must work together to prevent hunger and food insecurity in our community.

Local charities could not provide current levels of food assistance without support from The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) and the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP). In addition to emergency feeding, many of us also work to connect eligible clients with the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) when they are in need of more than the short-term, emergency food assistance we provide. We suggest the following in the 2018 farm bill:

We ask that the next farm bill reduce hunger in America, while supporting agriculture. It can best do this by protecting and strengthening **SNAP**. SNAP is efficient and effective, reduces food insecurity and helps working families put healthy food on the table. It also puts money back in local economies, supporting the farmers who grow the food and the grocers who sell it, as well as all of the companies and workers in between.

We do not support proposals to block grant SNAP, cap or cut funding, or otherwise restrict participation, which would result in millions more Americans losing food assistance. The countercyclical nature of the SNAP program allows it to respond efficiently and effectively to changes in the economy. To fundamentally alter the program by block granting it would decimate the program and its effectiveness in helping to feed our most vulnerable children, seniors, families and disabled.

We also ask that you protect and strengthen **TEFAP** and **CSFP**. Increased funding for TEFAP food purchases, in particular, and protecting TEFAP storage and distributions funds would directly benefit both the agricultural sector and the charitable sector.

We also ask that you consider strengthening **donation policies and incentives** in the farm bill. We urge Congress to address policy and regulatory barriers to food donation through expanding FSIS and FDA guidelines to include food donations. We also seek to expand access to USDA grant programs addressing agriculture policy and programs to ensure food donation and food banks are a key component of connecting US consumers with US grown food. And lastly, we seek to expand resources to invest in agriculture surplus removal programs in state and regional agricultural economies to provide growers and food banks a method to connect excess wholesome food with communities in need.

As Congress drafts the next farm bill, we ask you to remember the families in Kansas who are facing hunger and the important role that nutrition programs play in their health and well-being, especially for vulnerable children and seniors. We continue to explore opportunities to enhance and support federal nutrition programs through programmatic and policy innovations, and look forward to working with you as you review the Title IV Nutrition Programs and begin the work of crafting the next farm bill. Congress must keep the nutritional safety net strong – the health of our communities depends on it.

Respectfully Submitted,

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