

As you may have heard by now or seen on the CSREES Community Food Projects website, this year's competition for **the Community Food Projects Grants Program (CFP) has been halted by USDA because of "uncertainty" about the future funding of the program in the Farm Bill.** Over 460 Letters of Intent had been submitted prior to the suspension of the program.

Your advocacy is critical to restoring this decade-long enormously successful program. Millions of dollars are at stake for programs that support access to healthy food for underserved communities and benefit family farmers. Please today:

Send faxed letters to and call your House of Representatives member and both Senators and tell them you are very concerned that continued CFP funding is in jeopardy in the Farm Bill.

This small, but vital program, addresses the needs of low-income and underserved communities that do not have access to sufficient amounts of healthy foods. The demand for the program is great among the rural and urban areas where availability of fresh and healthy foods is low or overly expensive and there is high incidence of diet-related disease.

It is critical that CFP be included in the final version of the Farm Bill (H.R. 2419) at \$10 million mandatory funding, as provided in the Senate version of the bill.

For Representatives, ask him/her to contact Chairman Peterson (D-MN) or Rep. Goodlatte (R-VA) with these wishes. For Senators, ask him/her to contact Chairman Harkin (D-IA) or Sen. Chambliss (R-GA). Call 202-224-3121 (Congressional switchboard).

Let us know if you've taken action so we can track the follow-up.

Here's some background information

WHY:

In the 2002 Farm Bill, the Community Food Projects is authorized through 2007.

The current Farm Bill would extend CFP, yet it has not been finalized.

The Senate and House versions of the 2007-2008 Farm Bill (H.R. 2419) differ on CFP. The House version doesn't have mandatory funding, which means the program must be funded through the annual appropriations process. No funding was provided in the FY 2008 appropriations bill. The Senate version has \$10 million in mandatory funding for each of the fiscal years 2008-2012, which means that if this version passes, the program will automatically receive \$10 million in each of those fiscal years (double what it received from FY 2002-2007) .

USDA is cautious, because the House version may prevail, which means no money is available in FY 2008, or final action on the Farm Bill may be delayed.

WHAT'S NEXT

The Senate and House are trying to reconcile their bills through conference

committee. Once conference committee can come to an agreement on a final bill, it will be voted on by both the Senate and House and sent to the President for his signature. President Bush has threatened a veto of the Farm Bill if it includes a tax increase or goes over his budget.

SCENARIOS

The CFP competition for 2008 will **only** be renewed if:

Legislators approve – and the President signs- a new Farm Bill that includes mandatory funding for CFP

Legislators approve – and the President signs- a long term extension of the 2002 Farm Bill. This extension would most likely go until 2009 at a minimum.

Either of these scenarios has to happen more or less by May to enable USDA to have enough time to review and process grants for this fiscal year.

Please contact our DC office at 202-543-8602 with any questions. Or contact CFSC Exec Director, Andy Fisher at 310-822-5410.