



Write Here! Write Now!

Contact: advocacy@uusj.org or 202.600.9132

Delivery of Letters - Organizers: Letters are due by **Sunday 24, end of day**, online will stay open
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The 2023 Farm Bill Could Reshape Our Food System and Help People & the Planet Tell our Senators to Support Strong Climate Provisions

Why Are We Writing? We have a critical opportunity to advocate for a farm bill that encourages climate-smart production of healthful food grown with regenerative agricultural practices that sequester carbon, improve the health of our soil, and protect our waterways from pollution. We need a farm bill that adequately funds vital nutrition programs and promotes fairness to all farmers and farm workers.

Why Now? Every five years, the Farm Bill must be negotiated and authorized. The current 2018 Farm Bill expires on Sept. 30, 2023. We expect a Continuing Resolution that would extend the current Farm Bill through the calendar year. Congress is currently drafting the 2023 Farm Bill. Senators need to hear from us NOW so that the 2023 Farm Bill reflects our UU values that raise up the intersectional nature of climate, environmental and justice concerns.

Attention: Join UUs Sept. 26-28 in DC for [Farming for our Future, a UU advocacy conference](#).

Background: Our farming practices must be part of the solution to climate change. The [US agriculture](#) sector contributes [11% of total US greenhouse gases](#) (GHG). Past farm bills have directed major agricultural subsidies to growers of corn, soybeans, and similar commodities grown largely as feed for animals. This has encouraged farming methods that produce significant GHG, polluting our waterways and air with chemicals, excessive fertilizer use, and animal waste. It has skewed funding and profits to “big ag” while driving small-scale farms out of business. It contributes to food waste and animal suffering in concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs). Organic farms and small-scale family owned farms and ranches that use regenerative practices received limited help from past farm bills. The demand for conservation grants is greater than the funds available by 2 to 1. We’re joining allies in the faith and farming communities to redirect 2023 Farm Bill funding to promote conservation and climate-smart regenerative farming practices that protect the health of our soil and food, redirect funds to small-scale operations, fight climate change, and make our agricultural and food system more equitable and secure.

UU Grounding: Promoting regenerative farming practices, conservation, sequestration of carbon, and reducing carbon emissions falls within our UU 7th Principle: “Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.” The 2019 UU General Assembly adopted an Action of Immediate Witness [Build the Movement for a Green New Deal](#) that recognized the intersectional nature of climate issues and [environmental] justice issues. In 2011 a Statement of Conscience on [Ethical Eating: Food and Environmental Justice](#) passed that called us to look at systemic food-related issues and advocate for the benefit of animals, plants, food workers, the environment and humanity.

Key Message & Our Ask

Message: The 2023 Farm Bill presents an important opportunity to create a food and agricultural system that provides healthy food for all while helping to avoid a climate crisis, and improves equity for consumers and producers. A climate-smart farm bill can achieve many important goals: protecting soil fertility, improving water quality and helping farmers cope with extreme weather and save energy. The farm bill must help small-scale distressed farmers and ranchers with loan assistance, including [disadvantaged farmers harmed by past discrimination by USDA](#).

Ask: We urge Senators to strengthen programs in the 2023 Farm Bill that help avoid climate change while providing healthy food for all and supporting farmers who have the greatest need for assistance. We support the inclusion of climate-smart provisions of the **Agriculture Resilience Act (S.1016)** and the **Environmental Quality Incentive Improvement Program Improvement Act (S.658)** in the 2023 Farm Bill.

Suggested Talking Points

(use your own examples, tell your story, and/or draw on some of these suggested points)

- The EPA estimates that agriculture accounted for more than [11%](#) of US GHG emissions in 2020. Agriculture fertilizer runoff and animal waste are the [leading causes of water pollution](#). Including climate-smart provisions in the Farm Bill can protect local farming communities and improve the environment for all.
- Include in the Farm Bill, climate-smart provisions from the [Agriculture Resilience Act \(ARA\) \(S.1016\)](#). The ARA would: 1. increase investment in agricultural research, 2. improve soil health, 3. support pasture-based livestock systems to manage methane, 4. ensure farmland preservation and viability, 5. promote on-farm renewable energy, and 6. reduce food waste.
- Include in the Farm Bill, conservation practices that benefit water quality and soil health by shifting funds to conservation practices from the bipartisan [Environmental Quality Incentive Program \(EQIP\) Improvement Act \(S.658\)](#). Only 23% of EQIP funds go towards conservation now.
- Conservation and climate investments in the Farm Bill must be distributed equitably to reach farmers and ranchers that have been disproportionately impacted by discriminatory USDA practices.
- Congress should protect the \$20 billion provided in the [Inflation Reduction Act \(IRA\)](#). This funding can accelerate the adoption of conservation practices to mitigate climate change. Funds help producers to transition to proven climate-smart agricultural practices.

Sample Letter to Your Senators

[Use your own words. Speak from your heart -- this is only a sample letter with the core ask. Follow the link below to see if your senators are co-sponsors of the ARA or EQIP bills, if yes thank the senator.]

[Today's date]

Dear Senator _____, *[write to both of your Senators]*

I'm a Unitarian Universalist from *[optional: name of congregation and location]*, and supporter of the Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice. Fundamental principles of our faith include promoting justice, equity and compassion in human relations and respecting the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

As Congress works toward crafting the 2023 Farm Bill, I urge you to strengthen programs that promote soil health and conservation, and reduce carbon emissions by investing in practices to sequester carbon emissions. In addition, include climate-smart provisions of the Agriculture Resilience Act (S.1016) and the Environmental Quality Incentive Program Improvement Act (S.658) that promote environmental stewardship and fairness for small-scale farms.

[To support the message include in your own words a personal experience, a story, or concern relating to how food is grown and distributed in this country. Or use a talking point from above to adapt.] [adapt a closing... I look forward to hearing your plans to ensure that the 2023 Farm Bill promotes these vital objectives.]

Sincerely, *[YOUR NAME and include your COMPLETE ADDRESS]*