

Farm Bill passage crucial for hungry neighbors
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Every day, the front pages proclaim another devastating piece of news: more home foreclosures and increased unemployment, bankruptcies, higher gas prices and the rising cost of just about everything.

These issues go way beyond headlines and have a real impact on millions of people - moms, grandparents, workers, children. Families in Solano County are struggling to make ends meet and are forced to make hard choices, such as whether to pay their heating bill or put a meal on the table. Too often, these difficult decisions are causing families to go hungry.

That is why we are joining America's Second Harvest in urging the enactment of a final Farm Bill. This legislation authorizes necessary funding for nutrition and food assistance programs for low-income families, children and the elderly.

Enacting a new Farm Bill will provide much needed food for those most in need throughout the nation. It would provide a long-term, stable source of help to people whose needs are significant.

Our government, in addition to private sector and nonprofit organizations, plays an essential role in fighting hunger. Now is the time for the Congress and the president to respond to the grave need across the country and enact a final Farm Bill.

Typically, our food bank and others across the country receive much of their supplies from surplus commodity purchases by the federal government. Ironically, because we have a healthy farm economy, we are receiving less food to stock our shelves.

Over the next several weeks, a conference committee of the U.S. House and Senate will strive to develop a compromise Farm Bill; the final conference report must then be approved by both chambers and signed into law by the president.

It is imperative that Congress and the president move the Farm Bill forward so that millions of vulnerable families ... seniors neighbors friends can count on putting food on their table.

Larry Sly, Executive Director, Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano, Concord