



March 29th, 2018

Chairman Michael Conaway

Ranking Member Collin Peterson

Chairman Pat Roberts

Ranking Member Debbie Stabenow

Dear Chairmen and Ranking Members:

As the country's leading agricultural producer and exporter, California's 77,500 farms generate over \$47 billion dollars annually, producing high quality crops and commodities that feed our communities, connect consumers to healthy food and foster positive economic impacts in urban and rural communities across California.

In 2018, Congress will reauthorize the Farm Bill—the nation's most critical piece of food and farming legislation. The California Association of Food Banks and the California Farm Bureau Federation urge members of Congress to draft a unified Farm Bill that supports our agricultural communities and the nutritional needs of all our state's residents.

As negotiations and conversations continue to progress, we encourage the California congressional delegation and Agriculture Committees to keep food assistance programs in the 2018 Farm Bill. The farm programs and nutrition and food assistance programs have been paired together since the 1970s, which has formed a well-balanced bill that has passed through both chambers.

During the House Agriculture Farm Bill listening sessions held in Modesto and Salinas this summer, members of the community communicated their support for nutrition assistance programs and urged the Chairman and Ranking Member to protect the programs, such as SNAP and the National School Lunch Program, that benefit both food banks and our state's vegetable and fruit producers. Although the Central Valley is one of the top agricultural producing areas in both California and the nation, almost [400,000](#) of the region's children live in poverty and rely on those programs.

SNAP, known as CalFresh in California, serves as our state's first line of defense against hunger—lifting over 4 million Californians out of poverty including two million children. While millions of Californians struggle to afford basic needs, poverty would be much worse were it not for SNAP and other safety net programs. Federal anti-hunger programs are essential, not only to prevent hunger and some of the worst outcomes of poverty, but also for communities and retailers who depend on shoppers paying with assistance programs when their income falls short.

As you deliberate the 2018 Farm Bill, the California Association of Food Banks and the California Farm Bureau Federation urge members of Congress to produce a unified Farm Bill and make the necessary investments needed to strengthen and support our farming and low-income communities statewide.

Sincerely,

Andrew Cheyne

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andrew Cheyne', written in a cursive style.

Director of Government Affairs
California Association of Food Banks

Josh Rolph

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Josh Rolph', written in a cursive style.

Federal Policy Manager
California Farm Bureau Federation