



## Food Sustainability and Farm Bill Policy Statement

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### Background:

For more than 50 years, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) – formerly known as Food Stamps - has been vital in addressing hunger and food insecurity in the United States.





in higher health care expenditures and diminished quality of life.<sup>1, 30</sup> Some research has estimated that prohibiting sugary drink purchases using SNAP benefits could reduce daily sugary drink consumption by 112.5 g/person and prevent 797,900 cardiovascular disease events, gain 2.11 million quality-adjusted life years (QALY), and save \$39.16 billion in lifetime healthcare cfe.

- Three-quarters of HIP households felt that fruits and vegetables had become more affordable



Current dietary patterns do not align with this definition and have a significant impact on the health and well-being of the population as well as the natural resources that are used to produce food. The production and consumption of food are some of the main drivers of environmental degradation, threatening the future availability of natural resources like land, healthy soil, and clean water. Foods in the U.S. are produced in a way that relies heavily on nonrenewable inputs and unsustainable practices. The production of ultra-processed foods and beverages as well as meat and dairy are responsible for the uptake in GHG emissions such as carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), with agriculture account for 10 percent of all GHG emissions in the U.S.<sup>45</sup> and 24 percent of GHG emissions globally.<sup>46</sup> If these trends continue, GHG emissions associated with food production will double by 2050.<sup>47</sup> These emissions contribute to climate change which threatens the availability of a healthy food supply in the future and puts healthy diets further out of reach for most.

Much of the current literature around sustainable diets and food systems supports reducing consumption of certain foods (i.e. animal proteins) and increasing consumption of healthier, more plant-based diet rich in fruits and vegetables which may reduce GHG emissions by as much as 56 percent.<sup>48-50</sup> While ideal, shifting to a plant-based diet may not be possible or realistic for most people. To have the lowest environmental impact, there should not only be a shift to more sustainable, nutritious diets but food should also be produced, packaged, and transported to consumer with the lowest environmental impact. To promote a sustainable and healthy food system, considerable investments need to be made across the food system, from production to consumption.

While the U.S. has acknowledged the need to address sustainability within food systems, they have yet to incorporate these principles into food and nutrition policies. For example, the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA) advisory committee recognized sustainability as an important part of maintaining a healthy diet but the guidelines make no mention of environmental sustainability.<sup>33</sup> Likewise, the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), which supports diversification of agricultural practices, is included in the 2018 farm bill; however, funding for the program has seen cuts of \$3.6 billion over ten years. Recently, the U.S. launched the Sustainable Productivity Growth for Food Security and Resource Conservation (SPG) Coalition, an initiative aiming to boost sustainable agricultural production, make farms more resilient to climate change, and ensure vulnerable populations have access to safe, affordable and health food, indicating a desire to invest in strengthening food systems and ensuring access to healthy diets for all. The coalition has yet to announce concrete plans to move this initiative forward. To effectively address sustainability across the food system, the U.S. needs to provide significant investment and support to new and existing policies and programs that incorporate sustainable agricultural practices across the food system and ensure access to healthy, affordable food for all.







Creating an enhanced pilot program within SNAP that assesses the outcome of fruit and vegetable incentive









