

Federal Policy

A View from the Farm Bill Field

Farmers are Making their Voices Heard when it Comes to the Next Ag Law

Sarah Goldman

Fly-ins, farm tours, and field days... oh my! With the 2018 Farm Bill expiration on the horizon — it sunsets Sept. 30 — the Land Stewardship Project has been working hard organizing members, partnering with allies, and actively developing proposals we want included in its 2023 replacement. Namely, we are pushing for a 2023 Farm Bill that addresses problems with agricultural consolidation, conservation and climate change, and crop insurance, while supporting young, beginning, and BIPOC farmers, as well as regional food systems.

With the passage of the raising of the federal debt ceiling in early June, Farm Bill negotiations have ramped-up in earnest as Congress now has a budget to work with and the government has averted a shut-down. Although it is expected that Farm Bill negotiations will continue past the Sept. 30 deadline, now is the best time for LSP members to let lawmakers in Congress know what they want to see in our federal agriculture policies over the next five years. And members have risen to this challenge through fly-ins, Congressional meetings, and participation in a massive D.C. rally.

Rally for Resilience

For example, LSP members and staff traveled to D.C. in March to participate in

Give it a Listen

On *Ear to the Ground* podcast Episode 304, organizer Sarah Goldman talks about LSP's priorities for creating a more sustainable, and fair, 2023 Farm Bill: landstewardshipproject.org/podcast/ear-to-the-ground-304-policy-for-the-people.

Episode 305 features LSP farmer-members describing how farm policy impacts their operations, and ways it could be modified to benefit the land, people, and rural communities: landstewardshipproject.org/podcast/ear-to-the-ground-305-farm-bill-as-a-public-good.

→ A full day packed with meetings at the Capitol, where we met with the staffs of U.S. Representatives and Senators.

On-farm Congressional Visit

In April, U.S. Rep. Angie Craig met with direct-to-consumer farmers at Seeds Farm in Northfield as part of her in-district listening session tour to identify issues and opportunities in the upcoming Farm Bill. A few points that the farmers, many of them LSP mem-



In mid-April, LSP staffers and southern Minnesota farmers who raise fruit, vegetables, and livestock gathered at Seeds Farm near Northfield, Minn., to share with Minnesota U. S. Rep. Angie Craig (in gray jacket) what they would like to see in the next Farm Bill. Craig is a member of the House Agriculture Committee. (LSP Photo)

the “Farmers for Climate Action: Rally for Resilience” — the largest farmer rally this Farm Bill cycle — to demand action on climate change in the 2023 Farm Bill. Six LSP farmer-members, two farmers from the Midwest Farmers of Color Collective, and the full LSP policy team spent a week in Washington calling for a more just Farm Bill. A few highlights from this trip include:

→ Beginning farmer Claudia Lenz speaking on the main stage to 1,000 rally participants about the barriers that young farmers are facing (see page 13).

→ A farmer-to-farmer community building event with the LSP delegation and farmers from the Illinois Stewardship Alliance.

→ Chanting and marching down Pennsylvania Avenue to the U.S. Capitol to demand bold climate solutions in the Farm Bill.

bers, discussed during this session included crop insurance access and land access challenges, as well as the important role that direct-to-consumer producers play in local economies and feeding community members experiencing hunger. Craig is a member of the House Agriculture Committee.

Crop Insurance Access

LSP has launched a crop insurance working group consisting of Aaron Wills (Little Hill Berry Farm), Andy Petran (Twin Cities Berry Company), and Kathy Zeman (Simple Harvest Farm), along with Jeff Diamond, Scott Smith, and Nathan Hulinski (University of Minnesota Extension). This group has been investigating ways to improve the Whole Farm Revenue Protection crop insurance program through the Farm Bill.

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No legislation has as big an impact on our landscape, rural communities, and food system as the Farm Bill.
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Farm Bill, see page 13...

D.C. Fly-ins

Land Stewardship Project members Bonnie Haugen and Carrie Redden traveled to D.C. in April to participate in a fly-in with the Campaign for Family Farms and the Environment, which LSP is a member of. During the trip, Haugen and Redden, who are both Minnesota dairy farmers, talked with Congressional staffers in the offices of Senators Tina Smith and Amy Klobuchar, as well as staffers with Representatives Angie Craig, Tom Emmer, and Ro Khanna, about the impact of consolidation and factory farms on our farmers and rural communities. They also specifically asked that the Farm Bill not use public dollars through the USDA Environmental Quality Incentives Program to further support concentrated animal feeding operations.

In June, LSP member Angela Smith traveled to D.C. as part of a National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition fly-in to talk with the Minnesota Congressional delegation about the importance of crop insurance access through the Whole Farm Revenue Protection program and Micro-Farm policy. Smith, who raises fruit, vegetables, and herbs in southeastern Minnesota, made it clear that there are many ways these initiatives can be improved to better serve diversified, small, and beginning farmers.

Land, Capital & Market Access

In late June, the USDA announced the first ever grantees for its new Land, Capital, and Market Access Program, with \$300 million in federal funds targeted to directly

support land access projects for underserved producers. LSP is engaged in a federal effort to make this new USDA program permanent through the Farm Bill, and we are excited to see this effort moving via a bill that was recently introduced: H.R. 3955, the “Increasing Land Access, Security, and Opportunities Act.” LSP will continue to advocate for this proposal as the Farm Bill advances.

A Look Ahead

As September approaches, LSP will continue to create opportunities for farmers to speak directly with their Representatives and Senators who are actively engaged in the Farm Bill drafting process. This will be especially important in August, when Congress is on recess and lawmakers are back in their home states. Interested in engaging in this work? Reach out to me at sgoldman@landstewardshipproject.org or check out our federal policy web page at landstewardshipproject.org/federal-policy. □

LSP organizer Sarah Goldman works on federal policy issues.



While they were in D.C., the LSP “Rally For Resilience” delegation and allies met with Minnesota Congressional staffers to talk about priorities for the upcoming Farm Bill. They met with the offices of U.S. Representatives Angie Craig, Brad Finstad, Tom Emmer, and Betty McCollum, as well as staffers for U.S. Senators Amy Klobuchar and Tina Smith. (Photo by Sean Carroll)

LSP Farm Bill Platform

Member-leaders of LSP’s Farm Bill Organizing Committee have developed a platform that outlines the organization’s priorities for the 2023 Farm Bill. The platform addresses: agricultural consolidation; conservation and climate change; crop insurance reform; supporting young, beginning, and BIPOC farmers; and regional food systems. The platform is at landstewardshipproject.org/federal-policy/farmbill2023.

Young Farmers & the Climate

One of the Land Stewardship Project members who participated in the “Farmers for Climate Action: Rally for Resilience” event in March was Claudia Lenz (pictured). Her family has a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) operation in Star Prairie in western Wisconsin. Lenz spoke at the rally. Here’s an excerpt of her comments:

“There seems to be this common thought that the reason we’re losing farmers at a rapid rate is that there is a severe lack of interest on the part of younger generations in farming. I’m here to tell you the interest from young generations is there. As a 21-year-old who watched our parents start our CSA farm from scratch 16 years ago, I am interested in farming. I see the interest growing every year from the high school and college students my parents have employed, to the young folks I meet gathering around agricultural issues. But we are not interested in managing thousands of acres of a single crop, growing our livestock operations as big as we can, or continuing to deplete the resources we depend on.

“We are interested in climate solutions that protect the integrity of our land and water. Solutions that strengthen our food systems in rural communities. Young people want to secure a future on this planet, and we understand that climate-focused farming is the only way.” (Photo by Amanda Koehler)

