

Happy Monday to all,

Almost 90 years ago, on February 16, 1938, as part of the Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1938, the U.S. Congress established the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation (FCIC).

Created to help farmers recover from the Dust Bowl and Great Depression, the program offered subsidized insurance to stabilize farm income and provide a safety net against natural disasters. This allowed farmers to receive compensation for crops, even if they were not sustained in that year.

Based on late 2025 and early 2026 actions, the Trump administration has introduced significant changes to the U.S. Federal Crop Insurance program through the "One Big Beautiful Bill Act," increasing subsidies and coverage options to make insurance more affordable.

Of particular interest, the USDA Risk Management Agency is expanding its Controlled Environment (CE) pilot crop insurance program to Stanislaus County, California, for the 2027 crop year. This program provides specialized insurance for plants grown in fully enclosed environments, covering damages from diseases or contamination, and supporting innovative agriculture by providing risk management tools that fit the unique needs of indoor, climate-controlled farming.

The current Farm Bill, the 2018 Farm Act, has been extended for a third time, with current authority lasting through September 30, 2026. While this ensures continuity for key programs like crop insurance and safety nets, it delays policy updates needed to address current financial strains, rising production costs, and disaster relief demands in early 2026..

Catholic Social Teaching (CST) emphasizes that agricultural policy must prioritize food security for all, support family farms, and ensure a decent life for farmers and laborers. Government assistance is supported when it promotes the common good, fosters land stewardship, protects vulnerable farmers, and strengthens food access for the poor. In their pastoral letter, *For I Was Hungry and You Gave Me Food*, <https://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/agriculture-nutrition-rural-issues/for-i-was-hungry-cst-and-agriculture>, the U.S. bishops wrote, "Food sustains life itself; it is not just another product. Farming is a way of life, not just another business or industry."

Some key principles of Catholic Social Teaching on Farming and Agricultural Assistance are:

- Prioritize the most vulnerable, focusing on small to mid-sized family farms and assisting those facing poverty.
- Ensure that everyone has access to sufficient food, which includes protecting and strengthening SNAP (food stamp) programs.
- Exercise Stewardship of Creation, incentivizing conservation and environmental protection.

- Respect the Dignity of Work: Farmworkers deserve safe working conditions, fair wages, and protection of their rights. Recognizing the dignity of work of farmworkers is a central concern of the Catholic Church. In his 1981 encyclical, [Laborem Exercens](#), Pope John Paul II spoke of the importance of agricultural workers and the need to protect those working in the fields

Catholic organizations like Catholic Charities, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, and Catholic Rural Life (CRL) advocate for these principles, ensuring that agricultural policy remains rooted in moral, rather than purely economic, goals.

CRL is a national, Catholic nonprofit organization dedicated to the vitality of the American countryside. Catholic Rural Life believes farming is a noble vocation, but not simply because farmers and ranchers produce our daily food, essential as that is. To this purpose of promoting farming as a noble vocation, advocates for the following to be included in an acceptable Farm Bill:

- Protect and strengthen food assistance programs that reduce hunger.
- Promote investments that combat rural poverty and strengthen rural enterprises.
- Provide a fair and effective safety net for farmers when prices, incomes or yields fall to unsustainable levels.
- Establish commodity payments and crop insurance subsidies that benefit small- and medium-scale farmers.
- Strengthen policies and programs that promote conservation and protect natural resources from environmental degradation.

As we continue to advocate for a fair and just Farm Bill, our Bishop, The Most Reverend Myron J. Cotta, encourages Catholic families who are involved in agriculture, to consider joining and participating in Catholic Rural Life's mission of evangelization and celebrating our faith as you encounter God's presence in all that you do in the varied profession of agriculture, here, in the Diocese of Stockton! For more information, please view CRL's website: [CatholicRuralLife.org](http://CatholicRuralLife.org).

Blessings

Deacon Mike