



Diverse Markets

Farmers and ranchers need a wide range of abilities and knowledge to succeed. Depending on the operation, a producer may require aptitude in livestock nutrition, tractor repair, meteorology, regulatory permitting, purchase order negotiations, and more... all in the same day! But even the mastery of all these skills will not make a farm or ranch business succeed unless there is an adequate market for the product or service produced.

Traditional markets remain valuable and necessary for many producers. But as farmers explore different crops and livestock, alternative production methods and practices, and the possibility of value-added products and agritourism, they will likely need new avenues through which to access their customers. Many Farm Bill programs already exist that help facilitate such relationships, but if the current Farm Bill expires before a new one is instated, those programs will lose funding, consequently limiting potential market opportunities and exacerbating challenges farmers face when accessing markets.

Local Markets

As consumers become increasingly interested in where and who their food comes from, local markets have exploded in popularity. To help farmers reach interested consumers, programs like the **Local Food Promotion Program** and the **Farmers Market Promotion Program** award grants for research on and the implementation of local food markets. Similarly, **Value Added Producer Grants** help farmers process and market new value-added products. Other programs like the **Specialty Crop Grant Program** fund projects that enhance the competitiveness of fruits, vegetables, flowers, and tree nuts.

Organic Markets

Organic certification opens the door to profitable new markets, both locally and internationally. However, the success of the **National Organic Program** relies on the integrity of the label. When organic certifiers apply and enforce standards inconsistently, it can lead to consumer confusion over what practices the organic label represents, thus endangering its value and threatening the livelihoods of organic family farmers and ranchers.

Diverse Markets in the Farm Bill

The 2018 Farm Bill must promote a fair and open marketplace by strengthening programs that promote the development of new markets and supporting existing diverse markets. Congress can do this if they:

- ✓ **Maintain funding** for Specialty Crop Block Grants.
- ✓ **Restore and increase** the mandatory funding level for Value Added Producer Grants.
- ✓ **Provide additional resources** for auditing and enforcement for the National Organic Program.
- ✓ **Support programs**, including the Local Food Promotion Program and the Farmers Market Promotion Program, that bolster diverse markets.