

WHAT IS THE FARM BILL?

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The farm bill is some of the most powerful federal legislation shaping the United States' food and farm system. It impacts all of us living here, as well as communities around the world.

In a nutshell, the Farm Bill is a collection of food and agriculture laws, programs, and funding that congress passes every 5 to 7 years. It determines what food farmers grow, what consumers eat, and how we access food. Because of the central role food plays in our economy and our daily lives, the farm bill impacts our health, our jobs, our environment, and for many, even where we live.

A lot of people assume that our food and farm system operates in an open market, where farmers grow what consumers want to eat, and consumers pay for that food. In reality, the farm bill is what really pays for large portions of what we eat and how that food is grown, harvested, processed, and transported. The farm bill is funded by the federal government - aka us taxpayers. It's our bill. (The most recent farm bill cost about \$428 billion).

THE FARM BILL AND RACE

While many of these programs of the first farm bill helped provide relief to struggling farmers and people in general, it was also created within racist systems and laws, which made racial inequality worse. For example, the farm bill gave credit and funding to white farmers and excluded Black, Indigenous and farmers of color. This allowed more and more white farmers to buy land, and more and more Black, Indigenous, and farmers of color to lose land.



Cultivate Charlottesville has been having racial equity training at Ivy Creek Natural Area, which was the home and farm of Hugh Carr and his family.



Michael Carter Sr., a community member, and KJ at the Know Your Farmer Event at the Boys and Girls Club

Multiple lawsuits have proven that the farm bill discriminated against Black and Indigenous farmers:

In *Pigford vs. Glickman*, the federal government recognized that it had discriminated against Black farmers in credit programs, disaster relief, and other ways. In total, more than \$2 billion in claim settlements were awarded to Black farmers. While, in *Keepseagle vs. Vilsack*, the federal government recognized that it had discriminated against Indigenous farmers in credit programs. Unfortunately, today racist practices from the Farm Bill still cause a disadvantage for BIPOC farmers.

From the beginning, the United States farming system has been rooted in chattel slavery and colonization, including the harming, killing, and stealing from Black and Indigenous people for the benefit of white farmers. This has led to very few farms being owned by Black, Indigenous, and farmers of color. And that number continues to shrink.

For example, In 1920, the United States had about 1 million Black farmers; in 2017 there were just 45,000. In contrast, in 2017, 95% of all farm producers were white.

(Information from www.healfoodalliance.org)