

# Food, Faith & Farming: What's the Connection?

## Introduction

There are lots of things that we can all live without, but food is not one of them. We need a certain intake of calories and nutrition at regular intervals in order to stay healthy and remain active. Three times a day (and sometimes more) our bodies signal that they need refueling through the sensations of hunger and the mechanism of thirst, and we must pay attention and respond.

All human beings must eat to live. Because food is essential for sustaining life and is essential in ensuring human dignity, food policy and hunger issues are very much a focus of Catholic social teaching. Overcoming hunger and addressing the root causes of poverty have been significant issues that command the attention of numerous Catholic groups and agencies along with the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

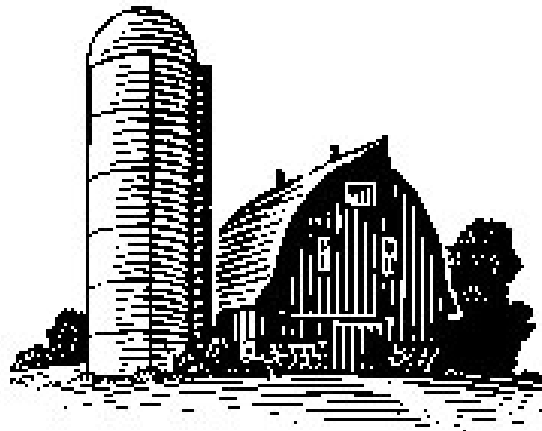
At present, a very significant piece of legislation is currently in the process of being revisited and renegotiated by the U.S. Congress. It is commonly referred to as the U.S. "Farm Bill" and is set to expire at the end of 2007. On January 31, 2007, the Administration opened the debate on a new bill with a package of proposed policy changes.

The Farm Bill is one of the most significant pieces of legislation in this country because it drives our nation's food and agricultural policy and has ripple effects for the rest of the world through the trade policies that are effected as a result of it.

What does the Farm Bill have to do with us? For one thing, our lives are directly linked to what is happening on America's farms. The food we find in our grocery stores and serve at our dinner tables is directly affected every single day by agricultural policies set by the U.S. Government.

The Farm Bill has a role in determining the variety of foods we have access to, the price of basic com-

*The First in a Series of Resources on the U.S. Farm Bill*



modities, the nutrition programs we find in our schools, the extent of land conservation promoted, alternative energy issues, the subsidies and tariffs set for our commodities, and much more. The Catholic community has been critical of some provisions of the Farm Bill because it often serves political and corporate interests instead of promoting the good of all.

Here is what the U.S. Catholic Bishops are saying regarding this important piece of legislation:

*"The primary goals of agricultural policies should be providing food for all people and reducing poverty among farmers and farmworkers in this country and abroad. A key measure of every agricultural program and legislative initiative is whether it helps the most vulnerable farmers, farmworkers, and their families and whether it contributes to a global food system that provides basic nutrition for all."*

– USCCB Farm Bill Hill Notes, 2007

**Take the quiz on the following page to determine your own level of knowledge regarding food and farming.**



# Food and Farm Quiz

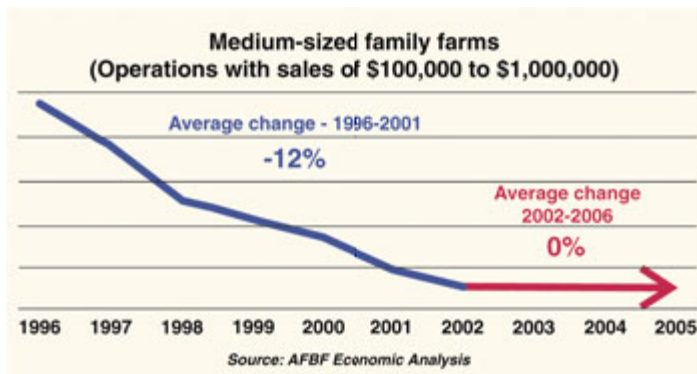
Test your food and farm knowledge by taking the quiz below. Circle your answer for each question.

1. The children's song, "The Farmer in the Dell", (where the farmer takes a wife, etc. and the cheese stands alone) is an allusion to the state known for its dells and dairy production. What is a "dell"? (Bonus: What state is this song referring to?)
  - a. another name for a barn
  - b. a small wooded valley
  - c. a kind of cheese
  - d. the name of a town
2. The average farm size nationally in terms of acres is...
  - a. 200 acres
  - b. 151 acres
  - c. 443 acres
  - d. 695 acres
3. Since 2002, the number of medium-sized family farms in the U.S. has \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. increased
  - b. decreased
  - c. stayed the same
4. Most farmers got their start by...
  - a. being born into it through family or family partnership
  - b. by marrying into a farming family
  - c. by starting on their own
  - d. by inheriting a farm
5. On average, the work of one farmer feeds approximately. . .
  - a. 20 people
  - b. 60 people
  - c. 145 people
  - d. 500 people
6. Over the past 10 years, hunger in the U.S. has been, and is currently...
  - a. decreasing
  - b. increasing
  - c. has stayed the same
7. Which of the following presidents were active agricultural farmers before becoming president?
  - a. George Washington and Thomas Jefferson
  - b. James Madison and Andrew Jackson
  - c. Abraham Lincoln and Ulysses S. Grant
  - d. Only A and B.
  - e. All of the above
8. Corn grown in the U.S. is most commonly used for. . .
  - a. feed for livestock (cows, pigs, sheep, chickens, etc.)
  - b. the creation of plastics
  - c. the manufacture of ethanol
  - d. food for human consumption
9. Corn is NOT used to make which of the following?
  - a. crayons
  - b. batteries
  - c. toothpaste
  - d. soap
  - e. catsup
10. The state which ranks first in the production of corn and soybeans is. . .
  - a. Ohio
  - b. Iowa
  - c. Indiana
  - d. Nevada
11. The most common main dish ordered in restaurants is...
  - a. Chicken
  - b. Fish
  - c. Beef
  - d. Pork
12. This state grows enough cotton every year to make more than one pair of jeans for every person in the United States.
  - a. Mississippi
  - b. Alabama
  - c. Louisiana
  - d. Arizona
13. Each Idahoan would have to eat how many potatoes per day to consume all of the potatoes Idaho grows.
  - a. 10
  - b. 39
  - c. 52
  - d. 63
14. In addition to being used for livestock feed, soybeans can also be used for all but the following. . .
  - a. clothing manufacture,
  - b. medicines,
  - c. inks and paints,
  - d. cosmetics
15. Which three countries are the largest export destinations for U.S. agricultural products?
  1. \_\_\_\_\_
  2. \_\_\_\_\_
  3. \_\_\_\_\_



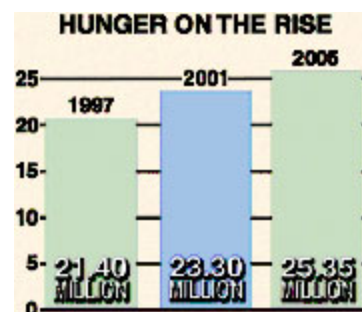
## Quiz Answer Key

- Correct answer: B.** A dell is the name for a small wooded valley formed by glaciers. The state of Wisconsin is known for its dells in the Wisconsin River area. The dells were formed during the ice age approximately 15,000 years ago. Today, Wisconsin is the dairy capital of the U.S. where Wisconsin's 14,521 dairy farmers produce more than 13% of the entire nation's milk supply.
- Correct answer: C. 443 acres** is the average size of a family farm nationally.
- Correct answer: A. Stayed the same.** (See graph)



- Correct answer: A. Approximately 53%** of farmers got into farming because they were part of a family or family partnership that was involved in it; 23% started on their own; 16% married into farming; 8% inherited the operation. Source: USDA
- Correct answer: C. On average, one farmer feeds 145 people.** Source: USDA

- Correct answer: B.** Even though the U.S. produces enough food to feed all of its citizens, people still go hungry. Hunger in the U.S. has been on the increase since 1997. Approximately 25 million Americans are "food insecure" meaning they do not always have enough to eat on any given day.



- Correct Answer: D. All of the above.** (Another interesting fact they all share in common: they are all featured on U.S. currency).

**Washington** described his most important occupation as a farmer. He tested over 60 different crops and practiced crop rotation at his Mount Vernon plantation.

**Jefferson** was known as one of America's early agronomists due to his practices with crop rotation, fertilizer, and contour plowing. He believed that agriculture, manufacturing, commerce, and navigation were the four pillars for the nation's prosperity.

**Madison** managed the family plantation at Montpelier, which included over 5,000 acres of land. He was president of the Agricultural Society of Albemarle; the main goal of the society was to sustain a "rural and republican virtue in country life."

**Jackson** owned a 1000-acre plantation called The Hermitage located in Tennessee. Here Jackson planted 200 acres of cotton. The remainder of the land was devoted to corn, oat, and vegetable production.

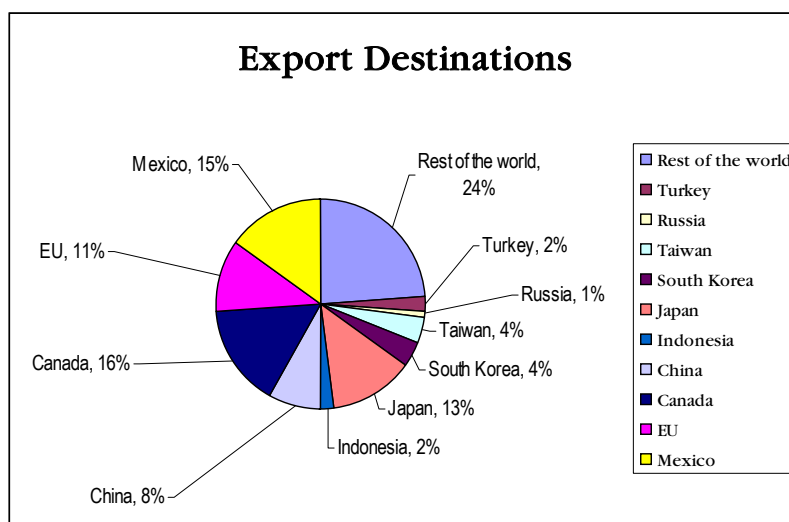
**Lincoln** had a background in pioneer farming and worked as a country lawyer. He believed that farmers' interests were of primary importance.

**Grant** married the daughter of a plantation owner. Grant helped manage the farming operations of the family's plantation called White Haven where he planted wheat, oats, corn, and potatoes.

Source: <http://www.agintheclassroom.org/060605/Teachers/Printable/ChangeforaDollar.pdf>

8. **Correct answer: A. Feed for livestock.** The corn grown in the U.S. is most commonly used for feed for livestock. An increasing numbers of acres of corn are being used for the production of ethanol sparking debate about whether land should be used first to feed people, before providing fuel alternatives.
9. **Correct answer: D. All but soap.** Believe it or not, corn is used to make all of the following: crayons, mayonnaise, batteries, paper, peanut butter, licorice, catsup, marshmallows, pet food, dyes, plastics, chewing gum, soft drinks, toothpaste, cooking oil, margarine, ethanol, and dozens of other products. Source: USDA.
10. **Correct answer: B. Iowa.** Iowa is the corn growing capital of the U.S. One bushel of corn makes 32 pounds of starch, 33 pounds of sweetener, or 2.5 gallons of ethanol. Source: USDA
11. **Correct answer: C. Beef.** Beef is the most commonly ordered item in restaurants. Beef is 27% leaner today than it was ten years ago due to advances in feed technology. Source: Ohio Farm Bureau Association.
12. **Correct answer: D. Arizona.** Arizona is one of the top cotton growing states. If Arizona's cotton crop can make one pair of jeans for every person in the U.S. then that means approximately 301,838,832 million pairs of jeans. (According the U.S. Census Bureau, the Population in the U.S. is estimated to be 301,838,832 as of May 13, 2007).
13. **Correct answer: 63 potatoes per day!** Potatoes and wheat are Idaho's top crops. There are primarily 4 varieties of potatoes grown in Idaho with Russet Burbank taking up the lion's share (70.8%). Source: USDA.
14. **Correct answer: A.** Source: USDA

15. **Correct answer:**  
**Mexico** (destination of 15% of exports),  
**Japan** (destination of 13% of exports),  
**Canada** (destination of 16% of exports).  
 These three countries accounted for 44% of the U.S. exports in fiscal year 2005.  
 Source: American Farm Bureau Federation.



## What is a “Farm Bill”?

A farm bill is an “omnibus” legislative statute consisting of a collection of laws that sets the overall direction of U.S. agriculture policy for a specified number of years. It includes provisions for programs and policies designed to:

- Maintain a stable domestic farm economy and promote U.S. agriculture products here and abroad;
- Provide nutritious, safe, affordable food for consumers;
- Support the food needs of low-income Americans and those in underdeveloped nations;
- Conduct research and provide extension and inspection services related to plant and animal production, protection, and disease prevention; and
- Protect farmland and conserve natural resources and the environment.

### An OMNIBUS BILL is:

a specific type of bill that packages together several measures into one or combines diverse issues into a single bill.

## What types of issues are included in a “Farm Bill”?

A Farm Bill typically covers a wide range of topics and issues, and varies from farm bill to farm bill. The order and total number of farm bill titles (or sections) varies from bill to bill. The proposed list of titles from the 2007 Farm Bill give an idea of the kinds of issues included. As you can see, a farm bill covers a wide range of topics.

### 2007 Proposed Farm Bill Titles:

Title I – Commodity Programs  
 Title II – Conservation  
 Title III – Trade  
 Title IV – Nutrition Programs  
 Title V – Credit  
 Title VI – Rural Development  
 Title VII – Research and Related Matters  
 Title VIII – Forestry  
 Title IX – Energy  
 Title X – Miscellaneous (crop insurance, disaster aid, animal health and welfare, organic, farmers’ markets, civil rights, etc.)

- See the **U.S. Farm Policy Timeline on page 7 for an overview of policy development over time.**

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*The Farm Bill drives our nation’s food and agricultural policy.*

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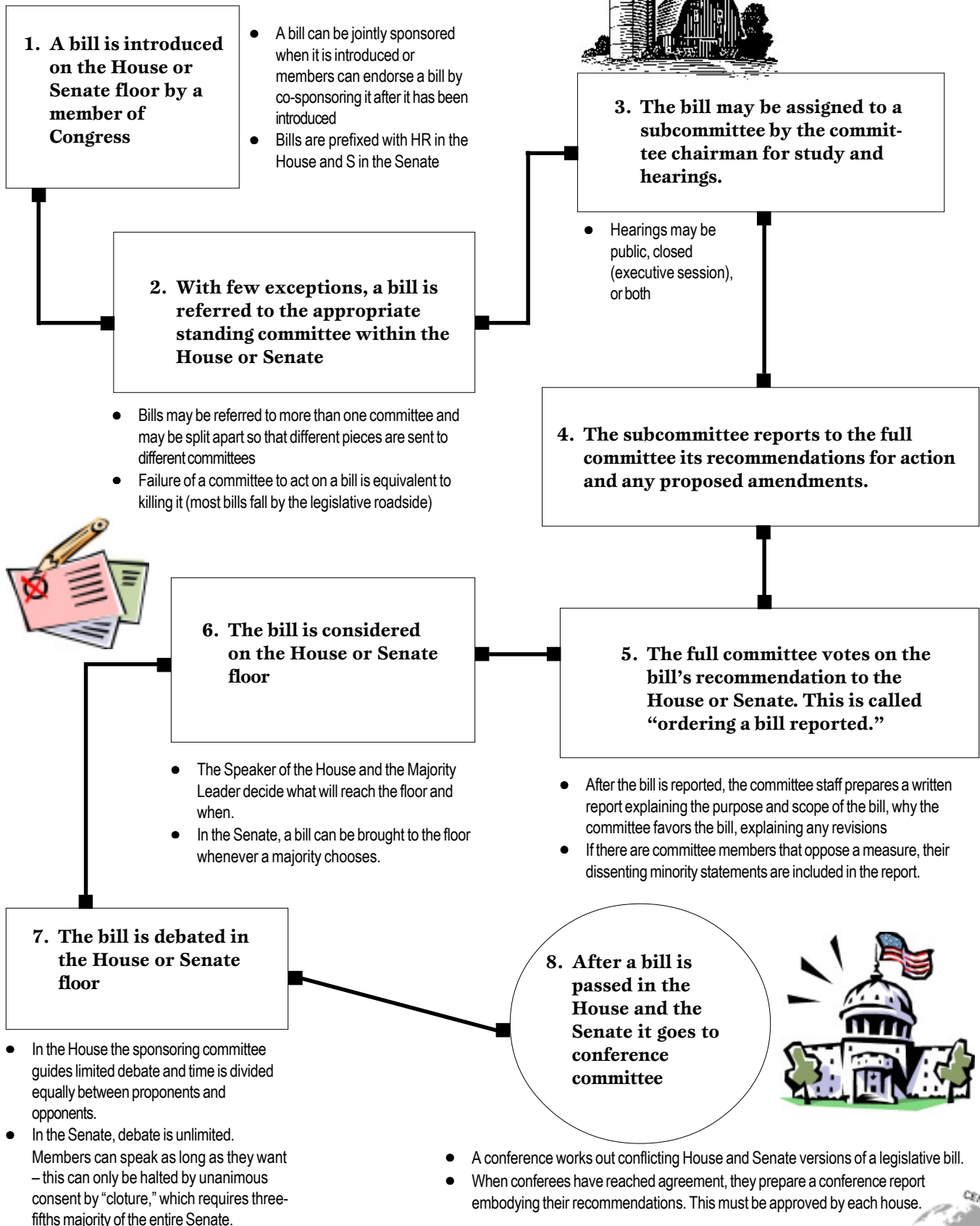
U.S. Bishops and numerous Catholic groups across the country have a strong critique of the current positions in the bill and are calling for a Farm Bill that will. . .

- Increase investments that combat rural poverty and strengthen rural communities
- Strengthen and expand programs that reduce hunger and improve nutrition
- Strengthen and increase investment in policies that promote conservation and good stewardship of the land
- Provide a transition for farmers to alternative forms of support that are more equitable and do not distort trade in ways that fuel hunger and poverty
- Protect the health and safety of farmworkers
- Expand research related to alternative and renewable forms of energy
- Improve and expand international food aid in ways that encourage local food security

*(Watch for expanded explanations and analysis of these points in future segments in the series.)*



## How Farm Legislation Becomes Law



Source: Midwest Sustainable Agriculture Working Group <http://www.msawg.org/farmbill-basics.html>



# U.S. Farm Policy Timeline

Farm Policy: Improve productivity of land through research and education

## 1830-1914

Farm Policy: Regulation of markets, infrastructure improvements

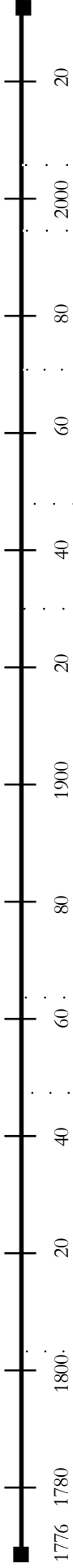
## 1870-1933

Farm Policy: Direct government intervention to provide farm income support and movement towards more open global trade. Increased emphasis on market-driven production decisions, and environmental awareness

Farm Policy: Land distribution and settlement

## 1785-1890

## 1924-2002



### The Louisiana Purchase, 1803

by Thomas Jefferson expanded the territory of the U.S. by more than 50%.

### Declaration of Independence

### The Homestead Act of 1862

Free distribution of land to anyone willing to settle and farm it. USDA was created.

### The Mexican Cession, 1848

As a result of the Mexican-American War the U.S. now included the present-day states of California, Nevada, Utah, and parts of present day Wyoming, Arizona, Colorado and New Mexico.

### The Great Depression

### 1933 Beginning of Commodity Programs

These were price and income support programs for U.S. farmers

### The Agricultural Act of 1949

began the official core set of laws that govern agricultural policy in the U.S. This act is known as the "permanent legislation" and is still in effect unless amended or revised by successive farm bills.

### How to use this handout:

- Use this handout to gain an overview of U.S. farm policy in general terms.
- Use this handout to facilitate a discussion exploring how the farm policies above the timeline are connected to the political events below the timeline.
- Using the events in bold below the timeline, look up each event and learn more. Explore connections to farm policy through critical thinking and reasoning.

1970

Farmers made up less than 5 percent of work force for the first time.

1976

Federal Land Policy and Management Act repealed Homestead Act and many other land laws.

1860

Farmers made up 58 percent of the labor force.

1865

Slavery was abolished by the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

1869

Transcontinental Railroad completed.



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