

U.S. Agricultural Policy Review, 2022

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What Is the Issue?

U.S. agricultural policies target an array of policy objectives, such as providing an income safety net for agricultural producers; minimizing negative environmental effects of agricultural production; ensuring that agricultural supply chains are equipped to provide adequate quantities of safe food to consumers; and helping address food and nutrition insecurity. Various tools are used to meet these policy objectives, including cost sharing, direct payments, provision of credit, and access to services. This report examines the major developments in agricultural policies in calendar year 2022, with a focus on policies related to production agriculture, agro-food value chains, and food and nutrition assistance.

What Did the Study Find?

Major developments in agricultural policies in 2022 spanned production agriculture, agrofood value chain, and food and nutrition assistance policy areas. Policy developments targeting production agriculture included the establishment of several new programs and some adjustments to existing programs, such as:

- The launch of the Emergency Livestock Relief Program and the Emergency Relief Program, which are new temporary disaster relief programs.
- The start of temporary assistance programs related to continued effects from the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, such as the Food Safety Certification for Specialty Crops Program.
- Discretionary changes to the Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honey Bees, and Farm-raised Fish Program.
- The introduction of certain discretionary changes and administrative flexibilities for various conservation programs.
- The authorization of \$19.5 billion in new spending until 2031 through the Inflation Reduction Act for certain existing USDA conservation programs, including the Conservation Stewardship Program, Conservation Technical Assistance, Regional Conservation Partnership Program, Agricultural Conservation Easement Program, and the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, to support the adoption of selected practices with climate mitigation benefits.



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- An update of farm loan program regulations to implement 2018 Farm Bill provisions and the authorization of \$3.1 billion in debt relief for distressed borrowers with USDA, Farm Service Agency direct and/or guaranteed loans under Section 22006 of the Inflation Reduction Act.
- Updates for certain crop insurance products, amendments of crop insurance reporting regulations, and coverage expansion for some current insurance products.
- The launch of the Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities, which invested more than \$3.1 billion in projects to expand markets for climate-smart commodities and generate greenhouse gas mitigation benefits from climate-smart production.
- The start of a new Bioproduct Pilot Program.
- The beginning of various technical assistance and training programs targeting historically underserved populations.
- Updates to USDA organic regulations and the launch of new programs to support producers who are transitioning to organic operations.
- Developments in other laws and regulations with implications for agriculture, including the passage of the Pesticide Registration Improvement Act of 2022 and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) release of a new workplan in April 2022 that addresses the agency's obligations under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.

Several initiatives and programs related to the resilience and functionality of agrofood value chains were also introduced in 2022. These included broad initiatives such as the Food System Transformation Framework and the Meat and Poultry Supply Chain Initiative, as well as individual programs under the initiatives, such as Regional Food Business Centers and the Meat and Poultry Processing Expansion Program. Other new programs launched in 2022 included the Fertilizer Production Expansion Program, the Cotton and Wool Apparel Program, the Commodity Container Assistance Program, and the Cattle Contracts Library pilot program.

Developments related to food and nutrition assistance included the continued introduction of temporary changes to existing food assistance programs in response to economic effects related to the pandemic, such as administrative flexibilities and temporary increases in benefit levels. In addition, a permanent Summer Electronic Benefit Transfer program was created to fill a gap in food assistance availability for children when schools are out of session during the summer months. Several emergency actions were also implemented in response to infant formula supply chain disruptions including allowing Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) participants to exchange recalled formulas as well as to receive different brands, forms, and sizes of formula than they typically would. Finally, the White House hosted a Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health in September 2022 to develop a national strategy for ending hunger and increasing healthy eating and physical activity by 2030.

How Was the Study Conducted?

USDA, Economic Research Service (ERS) researchers compiled details on new policies and program initiatives announced or introduced in 2022 related to the U.S. agriculture sector and food supply chain from Federal Register documents; budget documents; program agency websites, fact sheets, handbooks, and implementation documents; and USDA press releases. The authors obtained data for providing context on program trends and recent events from the relevant Federal agency databases, such as the USDA, Agricultural Marketing Service's Iowa Production Costs Report; USDA, Farm Service Agency's Emergency Relief Program Dashboard; USDA, Food and Nutrition Service's program data; and USDA, Risk Management Agency's Summary of Business data.