As the House Committee on Agriculture prepares to mark up this year’s Farm Bill we, the undersigned chefs and farmers from across the United States, the James Beard Foundation, the Natural Resources Defense Council and the Environmental Working Group are urgently calling on Congress to take immediate action to address the impacts of climate change in this year’s Farm Bill. We hope that as the House moves forward, there is an effort to engage in a bipartisan manner, which will be necessary to pass a Farm Bill that supports a sustainable food system, protects farmers from climate risks, and benefits rural communities.

Specifically, we urge Congress to safeguard the historic conservation investments from the Inflation Reduction Act in the Farm Bill. Congress must preserve both the $20 billion in the climate and soil health funding and protect the critical protections in current law that keep these agricultural conservation investments focused on transforming agriculture. These historic investments maximize the economic impact that food producers have on supporting the U.S. economy. This funding is crucial in combating climate change, centering soil health, protecting businesses and the supply chain that restaurants rely on, and ensuring the affordability of produce for consumers.

Restaurants and local producers—including farmers, fishermen and ranchers in every community—that supply them are directly connected. When one of us is harmed by climate change, it harms us all, including the people we employ and the local economies we both support.

The agriculture, food, and related industries are integral to the U.S. economy, providing 22.1 million full and part-time jobs, amounting to 10.4% of total U.S. employment. With 2.6 million direct on-farm jobs, these industries contribute significantly to the nation’s GDP, totaling $1.4 trillion. A recent report from the George Washington University’s Global Food Institute and the James Beard Foundation underscores the significance of the independent restaurant industry, employing 3.9 million workers, generating $75 billion in wages, and contributing over $209 billion in revenue to local economies across the U.S.

The detrimental effects of climate change are causing severe economic risks to U.S. farmers, leading to restaurant closures, employee layoffs, and escalating consumer costs.

Recent climate events, such as droughts, floods, fires, and extreme temperature variations, are placing immense strain on our restaurant supply chains. These events result in diminished crop supply, ingredient shortages, and operational challenges that ultimately impact pricing, wages and our livelihoods.

https://www.jamesbeard.org/climate-solutions-for-restaurant-survival
Together we feed America and provide jobs in communities across the country. You represent us and have an obligation to act on climate change.

We urge you to preserve and protect USDA’s popular and effective conservation programs that help energize local economies and improve climate resilience. Specifically, we ask that Congress:

- Support conservation programs aimed at helping farmers implement practices that mitigate the impact of climate change by keeping existing protections written in the Inflation Reduction Act.

- Promote local and sustainable farming practices to diversify our supply chain and enhance resilience.

The historic investments made to agricultural conservation in the Inflation Reduction Act are one of our best tools to prepare our agricultural and restaurant sectors to address the climate crisis, build resilience in our soil, and to empower farmers. These historic investments must not be diluted, divided or weakened.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter. We trust in your commitment to representing our interests and urge you to take decisive action in addressing climate change.

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