

GOP Farm Bill Supports Hunger, Agribusiness and Ecocide

By [Stephen Lendman](#)

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By a narrow 213 – 211 margin, including all undemocratic Dems and 20 Republicans, House members passed a deplorable \$867 billion farm bill – a measure only agribusiness, opponents of ecosanity, and anti-social justice advocates could love.

According to House Agriculture Committee chairman Rep. Mike Conway, a “razor-thin” margin was expected.

Senate members are expected to take up their version of the bill next week, a gentler measure, leaving food stamp benefits largely intact, compromise between the two bills likely coming. The current farm law expires on September 30.

House legislation flagrantly violates 8th Amendment protection against “cruel and unusual punishments,” depriving about two million needy Americans of food stamp eligibility by cutting over \$20 billion from the program over the next decade.

Critics believe nearly 265,000 needy children could lose access to free school lunches under the House measure – for too many, their only daily hot meal.

More cuts are sure to come over the next 10 years, given a nation dedicated to force-fed neoliberal harshness, an agenda with bipartisan support.

Despite the close vote, the measure passed with no floor debate. It requires able-bodied adults aged 18-59 to work or participate in job training for 20 hours a week to qualify for food stamps, averaging around \$450 a month for a family of four.

According to ranking Dem House Agriculture Committee member Rep. Collin Peterson, the bill fails to “do enough for the people it’s supposed to serve.”

“It still leaves farmers and ranchers vulnerable. It worsens hunger, and it fails rural communities.”

United Way Worldwide senior vice president Steve Taylor said

“(t)hey’re trying to find ways to cut back on people who have access to SNAP, and frankly they’re trying to do it by putting in new work requirements” – legislating harshness on needy people.

Environmentalists complained about new rules, undermining clean water standards.

A Sierra Club press release slammed what it called “a package that weakens the SNAP anti-hunger program and includes provisions undermining bedrock environmental safeguards for clean water, wildfire and forests.”

It rolls back Clean Water Act requirements, easing rules on pesticide use, along with provisions to enhance logging and mining in forests.

Lisa Arthur heads various Friends of the Earth initiatives, including its Health and Environment Program. She called the House bill “a massive handout to corporate agriculture...a disaster for people and the planet” – at the expense of ecosanity.

Center on Budget and Policy Priorities president Robert Greenstein blasted the House measure, saying it

“includes a sweeping proposal to impose harsh penalties on those who don’t prove within a limited time frame that they have worked or participated in work programs for enough hours each month or that they qualify for an exemption from the bill’s aggressive work requirements,” adding:

“Among those likely to lose food assistance are a considerable number of working people -including parents and older workers – who have low-wage jobs such as home health aides or cashiers and often face fluctuating hours and bouts of temporary unemployment that could put their SNAP benefits at risk.”

“In addition, substantial numbers of people with serious physical or mental health conditions, as well as many caregivers, may struggle either to meet the monthly work-hours requirement or to provide sufficient documentation to prove they qualify for an exemption -and, consequently, may be at risk of losing nutrition assistance.”

“While the requirements focus on adults, children, too, will be harmed, because when parents lose SNAP, there are fewer resources available for food for the family.”

“Going forward with policies that reduce food assistance to poor children flies in the face of research showing that SNAP not only reduces short-term hardship but has a positive effect on children’s long-term health and educational outcomes.”

U.S. policies are transforming America into a sinkhole of dystopian harshness, inequality and deprivation – serving privileged interests, egregiously harming the nation’s most vulnerable.

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