

Indian Country Priorities and Opportunities for the 2023 Farm Bill Title IV: Nutrition

Key Points and Recommendations

- Indian Country needs a consistent, comprehensive, and Tribally-led approach to tailor federal food assistance programs to the specific needs of tribal communities and citizens.
- Expanding “638” authority to all Farm Bill food assistance programs, and making the current FDPIR authority a permanent option, would provide that necessary flexibility for Tribes.
- Additional flexibilities would open up new market opportunities for farmers and ranchers into food assistance programs, improving rural economies and food security simultaneously.

Background Information and Context

As Tribal Nations continue to reimagine their food systems and utilize their sovereignty to enhance their citizens’ access to traditional, culturally appropriate, Native-produced, or fresh produce, USDA’s suite of food assistance programs can provide an underutilized pathway to improve both Tribal food access and Native food economies simultaneously. The FDPIR “638” demonstration projects for food procurement, authorized by the 2018 Farm Bill, showcase the extraordinary potential of these food assistance institutional markets to change both food access and Native food producer market opportunities at the same time. Building on that progress in this Farm Bill—with expanded 638 authorities and enhanced flexibilities across the Nutrition Title for Tribes—will continue to improve not only nutrition security in Tribal communities, but will promote economic development and job creation across rural America.

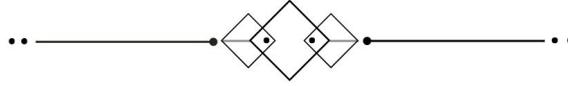
Priorities for Indian Country in the Nutrition Title Include:

“638” Application to All Food and Nutrition Programs

- Applying “638” authority—including Self-Determination and Self-Governance—to all Farm Bill nutrition programs would ensure maximum flexibility and best service to Tribal citizens across the Farm Bill nutrition support portfolio. It also opens up a host of opportunities for food producers to access new institutional markets as Tribes are able to source food directly from producers, instead of going through USDA markets.

Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR)

- ***Expand and / or make permanent the 2018 Farm Bill’s 638 program for FDPIR***
 - The FDPIR 638 self-determination project has so far been a resounding success. If Congress made this procurement opportunity permanent and granted it mandatory funding in the Farm Bill, more Tribal Nations would be able to



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participate and take advantage of this pathway to improved Tribal food access and economic development.

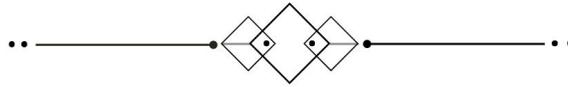
- ***Reduce the matching requirement from 80% to 0%***
 - A 0% matching requirement would eliminate the need for Tribes to seek waivers and for USDA to process those waivers, reducing administrative burdens and expanding FDPIR access.

- ***Continue the new nutrition education funding requested by USDA in recent appropriations bills***
 - Provide continued funding to Indian Tribal Organizations (ITOs) that run FDPIR, especially on a non-competitive basis, to improve the health of FDPIR participants across Indian Country.

- ***Create a pilot program to enable ITO direct sourcing of locally produced herbs and spices as part of nutrition education opportunities***
 - A pilot or demonstration project to provide ITO funding to source herbs and spices would improve participant engagement with the foods provided and serve as a valuable part of nutrition education at the same time.

- ***Clarify that Tribal Nations on international boundary lines with bands or communities across international borders may have food products sourced from those bands – especially traditional and culturally significant food products – be considered domestic for the purposes of FDPIR sourcing***
 - Those nations whose communities are bifurcated by modern international boundaries would have expanded opportunities to move their own food products into programs like FDPIR if waiver authority existed within USDA to enable these products to be designated domestic in these limited circumstances.

- ***Issue waiver authority for USDA-FNS to allow FDPIR sites to be able to provide non-domestically sourced produce in emergency situations.***
 - The pandemic greatly impacted supply chains and markets across the country. Issuing waiver authority that operates in the event of natural or other disasters



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and crises would ensure uninterrupted access to healthy foods for FDPIR participants.

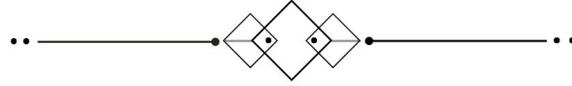
- ***Provide additional infrastructure dollars to FDPIR for necessary upgrades to facilities and equipment.***
 - A dedicated influx of infrastructure dollars that reaches every ITO is still needed.
 - A Tribal set-aside in the program in combination with the long-awaited creation of the Rural Development Tribal technical assistance office promised by the 2018 Farm Bill would significantly bolster FDPIR sites' chances of accessing Community Facilities funds.
- ***Include more traditional and Tribally-produced foods in FDPIR on a regional basis***
 - Regionalizing food distribution ensures more culturally appropriate food access across Indian Country and has the potential to provide significant cost savings to the federal government.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

- ***Tribal eligibility to administer SNAP***
 - Tribal Nations already administer FDPIR, which is considered an alternative to SNAP. Enabling Tribes to choose to administer SNAP would enable Tribes to serve their citizens more directly.
- ***"638" Authority for SNAP***
 - Expanding "638" authority to the SNAP program would allow for a more robust Tribal option than programmatic administration and be a significant acknowledgement of Tribal sovereignty in food systems.
- ***Dual use of SNAP and FDPIR***
 - Removing the statutory prohibition of dual use of SNAP and FDPIR would improve food access and opportunities for Tribal citizens to feed their families.

The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)

- The Farm Bill could add Tribal Nations to the list of eligible entities for TEFAP, preparing Tribes to better respond to any future crisis affecting food systems.



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