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Senate Released Bipartisan Draft of Farm Bill

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- As previously reported on this blog, in March 2018, House Agricultural Committee Chairman Michael Conway delayed the release of the draft law renewing farm and nutrition programs due to opposition to cuts to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). SNAP offers nutrition assistance to more than 47 million eligible, low-income individuals and families, and is authorized and subsidized by the farm bill. However on May 18, 2018, the U.S. House of Representatives voted down its version of the farm bill.
- The Senate [released](#) its bipartisan draft of the farm bill on June 8, 2018. The bill, titled the Agricultural Improvement Act of 2018, is largely a continuation of the current farm bill, which passed in 2014. The Senate's draft bill takes a more conventional approach than the House version, and does not include the same controversial work requirements for SNAP that appeared in the House's proposal.
- Other notable provisions in the Senate bill include:
 - Re-authorization of the Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network (FRSAN), which is a mental health resources program established by the 2008 farm bill, but never funded. This provision allocates \$10 million through 2023 and requires USDA to report to Congress on the state of mental health in farming communities.
 - Funding for the Organic Certification Cost Share Program (which reimburses producers who apply for organic certification) and the Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative (which funds projects for organics research and development).
 - Modernize the Food for Peace program, which provides nutritional assistance around the world.
 - Legalize hemp as an agricultural product and make the plant eligible for crop insurance.
 - Bring back the position of Under Secretary for Rural Development at the USDA, which Secretary Sonny Perdue eliminated in 2017.
- The bipartisan bill is likely to pass in some form. The Senate Agricultural Committee will vote on the bill today, June 13, 2018.



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