

# PLENTY

Summer 2023

MEMBER OF  
**FEEDING  
AMERICA**

**food gatherers**  
fighting hunger where we live

## Elevating Voices

The 2023 Farm Bill is on the horizon. To make our voices heard on this critical package of anti-hunger legislation, we welcomed Senator Debbie Stabenow, Representative Debbie Dingell, and Representative Elissa Slotkin to our warehouse to discuss why a strong Farm Bill is key to fighting hunger where we live.

Passed every five years, the Farm Bill decides policy and funding around agriculture and key federal nutrition programs. This will be Senator Stabenow's final Farm Bill of her career before she steps down at the end of her term in January 2025.

Throughout her decades-long career, Senator Stabenow has been a champion of food security and an advocate for nutrition programs through her leadership of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, & Forestry.

At the event, Senator Stabenow heard from community members about their experiences and the importance of federal programs, like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), that provide food for residents and food banks.

Vivian Lehman, a resident at Avalon Housing, has volunteered at the supportive housing community's food pantry for five years. She sees first-hand how cuts to benefits like SNAP impact families.

**"I have noticed that there's a need for more assistance. I know how hard it is for me and other people I know, especially those with kids, who do not get enough in SNAP benefits, and they have to visit food pantries," says Lehman.**

As food prices remain stubbornly high, SNAP benefits don't go as far. Our neighbors rely on food pantries to fill the gaps. Food banks are buying more food – and paying more – to meet the need.

In Manchester, the Community Resource Center (CRC) has seen an increase in neighbors needing food assistance after pandemic-related SNAP benefits ended in March.



*Food Gatherers welcomes Senator Stabenow for Farm Bill discussion in June, 2023.*

During a panel discussion, Carol Wotring, CRC Executive Director, shared how the rising cost of living has made it difficult for people to afford basic needs. "Although the pandemic has officially ended, people are still struggling," she says. **"They rely on food pantries to help them. And food pantries in Washtenaw County rely on our partnership with Food Gatherers. We need funding for food more than ever."**

Food Gatherers knows that creating a food-secure community requires listening to our partners and the people we serve, and elevating their voices to make meaningful change.



**"Organizations like Food Gatherers and their many partners are part of the heart and soul of communities around the country. It was helpful to hear from**

**these community leaders about the vital work they do across Washtenaw County as we draft the 2023 Farm Bill.**

**–Senator Debbie Stabenow**

We are grateful to work closely with elected officials like Senator Stabenow who listen to the lived experience of our neighbors as they shape food and nutrition policy that improves the lives of Michigan families.

*Learn more about Farm Bill and its impact on hunger inside.*

# Five questions to help you understand the 2023 Farm Bill

One of the most powerful pieces of hunger-relief legislation is up for renewal this fall. Below, we share our vision for the 2023 Farm Bill, why you should care, and how we can make our voices heard.



## The Farm Bill is a big deal. But what is it?

This expansive package is the centerpiece of federal legislation for nutrition and agriculture. Passed roughly every five years, the Farm Bill covers everything from crop insurance to resource conservation to nutrition and will have an enormous impact on food access for years to come.

## Why is it key to fighting hunger?

When the Farm Bill is reauthorized, we have the opportunity to improve and strengthen key federal nutrition programs, including the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP). These programs directly support food banks and people facing hunger, and they are some of our most powerful tools for helping millions of children, adults, seniors, and veterans access nutritious food each year.



## What is most critical to food banks and families in the 2023 Farm Bill?

Food Gatherers and Feeding America, the national network of food banks, call on lawmakers to come together to pass a strong 2023 Farm Bill that lays the foundation for food-secure communities and resilient food systems. Our highest priorities are to:

- ✓ **Increase TEFAP funding to help people facing hunger:** During the pandemic, Congress authorized USDA to distribute more food to meet the need. That extra food has ended but the need is still high in our community. Food banks need more TEFAP to have a steady and consistent supply of food for their communities.
- ✓ **Strengthen and protect SNAP:** Lawmakers should increase SNAP's purchasing power to bring benefit amounts in line with grocery prices and provide adequate support during tough economic times; streamline SNAP eligibility and enrollment processes to increase access; and provide better support and increased flexibility for individuals seeking employment.

*The Farm Bill creates pathways to connect farmers to food banks, providing individuals and families facing hunger with fresh produce, meat, and dairy.*



## How do strong federal nutrition programs affect my community?

Whether or not you rely on support from SNAP or your local food pantry, access to nutritious food impacts you. Food security is at the heart of a healthy, thriving community when your neighbors have the resources they need:

- ✓ They no longer need to choose between buying food and paying for other basic needs, like housing and medical care.
- ✓ Children are able to focus in school, have the energy to be physically active, and experience higher attendance and graduation rates.
- ✓ They have a lower risk of diet-related diseases such as type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, and heart disease.
- ✓ They can access emergency food through a network of community-based food pantries supported by the local food bank during times of crisis.

## How can I take action?



Scan here to **write your members of Congress**. Tell them that a strong Farm Bill that protects and strengthens SNAP and increases TEFAP food for food banks is important to you!



Scan here to **sign up for advocacy email alerts** and Farm Bill updates from Food Gatherers.

## Food Banks Can't Solve Hunger Alone

### These programs fight food insecurity:

There are several important federal nutrition programs authorized by the Farm Bill. These programs work in tandem with food banks to assist families and individuals facing hunger. Two of the most critical are SNAP and TEFAP.

### The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

SNAP (formerly known as food stamps) provides monthly payments to low-income families to supplement their grocery budgets. It is the largest anti-hunger program in the United States, serving 40 million people.

SNAP is the most comprehensive approach to addressing hunger. This is the largest program authorized by the Farm Bill and the cornerstone of federal hunger-relief programs.

### The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)

TEFAP creates a pathway to connect farmers to food banks to supplement their food supplies and feed people in need. Thanks to this program, people facing hunger can access nutritious, farm-fresh food from American growers and producers.

Food from TEFAP is essential to food banks like Food Gatherers. Temporary increases in food distributed through TEFAP during the pandemic have gone away but the need in our community has not. Charitable donations can help fill the gap but our community needs more support in the form of increased TEFAP food to meet the need.

# Summer as It Should Be

**S**ummer is the hungriest time of year. Children get 50% of their daily calories at school but during summer vacation, kids lose access to that source of nutrition. Many families struggle to fill the gaps, especially with rising grocery prices.

To help kids have a happy and healthy summer break, Food Gatherers has been hosting free meals for kids and teens in Washtenaw County through our Summer Food Service Program.

**Eat-and-Play Meals:** This summer's program returned to the "Eat-and-Play" model, where kids and teens enjoy meals together and participate in free games and activities hosted by the meal site.

**Grab-and-Go Groceries:** To support families who relied on the "Grab-and-Go" meals for the last three years, we are also hosting grocery distributions with nonperishable food at locations throughout the county.



Kids enjoy free meals and activities at a Summer Food Service Program site.

Free meals are available to children 18 years of age and under or persons up to 26 years of age enrolled in an educational program recognized by a state or local public educational agency.

A list of both food distribution programs can be found on Food Gatherers' website: [FoodGatherers.org/SummerFood](http://FoodGatherers.org/SummerFood).

*The 2023 Summer Food Service Program is generously sponsored by the Michigan Department of Education, Toyota Research & Development, the Lake Trust Credit Union Foundation, and the Kiwanis Club of Ann Arbor Foundation.*

## Upcoming Events

### Mow Down Hunger

September-October 2023

Generously sponsored by Weingartz, this fundraiser will match your donations to Food Gatherers! Look for details this fall.

### Hunger Action Month

September 2023

Hunger Action Month seeks to bring awareness, spark conversations, and inspire action about food insecurity. Follow along on our social media pages to find ways to participate!



### Food Gatherers Main Office

1 Carrot Way, Ann Arbor, MI 48105

Phone: 734-761-2796

Website: [www.foodgatherers.org](http://www.foodgatherers.org)

Email: [info@foodgatherers.org](mailto:info@foodgatherers.org)

    @foodgatherers