

help to slow the troubling trend of significant land loss by African American and other socially disadvantaged producers.

Additionally, the bill significantly boosts spending for conservation programs to reduce soil erosion, enhance water supplies, improve water and air quality, increase wildlife habitat and reduce damage caused by floods and other natural disasters.

Of particular interest to my home State of North Carolina, fruit and vegetable producers will have their own place in the Farm Bill for the first time. The bill includes more than \$1.3 billion to support research, pest management, trade promotion and nutrition for the industry.

Also of interest to North Carolina, this bill takes another important step in moving biofuels beyond focusing on corn. It reduces the current tax credit for corn-based ethanol by 6 cents per gallon and creates a new tax credit to promote the production of cellulosic biofuels.

While the Farm Bill may not be perfect, the good far outweighs any shortcomings.

Mr. LANGEVIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 2419, the Farm, Nutrition, and Bioenergy Act of 2007, better known as the Farm Bill. This measure, which reauthorizes federal agriculture and nutrition programs for five years, reflects Rhode Island's priorities: protecting our farmers and surrounding environment and caring for the most vulnerable members of our society.

There has been much discussion about reforming the Farm Bill, particularly with regard to how payments are structured to producers of certain commodities like cotton, rice and sugar. H.R. 2419 begins this process by lowering the annual adjusted gross income of farmers eligible for subsidies from \$2.5 million to \$750,000 and also excludes farmers making more than \$500,000 from non-farm income. This structure will prevent millionaires from receiving farm subsidy benefits, and will also make payments transparent. While I believe we should go further with reform, I look forward to building on this restructuring in future legislation.

This legislation increases funding by nearly \$8 billion for the conservation title, which includes programs important to Rhode Island, such as the Environmental Quality Incentive Program, the Farm and Ranchland Protection Program, and the Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program. I am also pleased that H.R. 2419 includes funding for specialty crops, which will benefit our fruit, vegetable and nursery crop farmers. These farmers, who make up a large percentage of Rhode Island's farming landscape, will now receive equal assistance and access to conservation programs.

H.R. 2419 includes over \$10 billion in increased funding for the nutrition title, which includes food stamps and other programs aimed to combat hunger and improve nutrition for children, the elderly and low-income Americans. Unfortunately, these members of our society face a stigma when they realize they must turn to the government for assistance, and this Farm Bill works to end that by renaming the Food Stamp Program as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and replacing food stamp coupons with Electronic Benefit Transfer cards. This bill also reauthorizes programs such as the Community Food Projects program, which awards grants to non-profit groups that establish community food projects targeted to low-income individuals,

and the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program, which provides vouchers for low-income seniors to purchase fruits and vegetables at farmers' markets.

This measure also increases funding for school nutrition programs, including the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program, which will help purchase fruits, vegetables and nuts, and create more avenues for produce to flow from local farmers to schools. This is especially important in Rhode Island, where state lawmakers and local organizations have already taken the initiative in improving the eating habits of our students. In 2007, 26 of 38 RI school districts participated in the Farm to School Program, where produce is purchased from local farms. This Farm Bill will help those school districts continue in a healthy direction.

H.R. 2419 also helps northeast dairy farmers, including those in Rhode Island, by extending the Milk Income Loss Contract Program, which compensates dairy producers when domestic milk prices fall below a certain level. Further, this measure encourages the expansion of renewable energy research and production, contains a new section for horticulture and organic agriculture, and includes funding to make sure our food supply is safe and stable.

Mr. Speaker, this is not a perfect bill; however, this Farm Bill helps farmers meet growing environmental challenges, gives consumers more healthy food choices, and promotes critical renewable energy development. It was also imperative that the Farm Bill take into consideration the country's current economic state. This bill will help stock food banks across our country by increasing funding to the Emergency Food Assistance Program by \$1.26 billion. I look forward to passing this measure into law.

Mr. STARK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in opposition to a Farm Bill Conference Report (H.R. 2419) that will continue our wasteful agricultural policy for another five years. It is a rare day indeed that I agree with President Bush, but he is absolutely right to have issued a veto threat of this bill.

With farm income and food prices at or near record highs, now is the perfect time for reform. Unfortunately, this conference report, while masquerading as a reform package, simply tinkers around the edges of our bloated agri-business subsidies. Our current "farm policy" is little more than corporate welfare, with benefits flowing to large corporate operations at the expense of small farmers, both here and abroad, who actually need help. Under current policy the top 10 percent of recipients received 75 percent of all subsidies, while 67 percent of farms receive nothing. This is not good for rural communities, small farms, or taxpayers.

At best, this conference report represents "half a loaf," as the group Bread for the World has said. The conferees got the nutrition title right and I commend them for it. There are important changes to the eligibility rules for the food stamps program as well as a raise in the minimum benefit. These changes, along with increases in funding for emergency food aid will have a real impact on the millions of families who are struggling to put food on their tables. If all this bill contained were the nutrition title, I would proudly support it. For all the conference accomplished on nutrition, they failed in greater measure on reforming farm subsidies.

Proponents of the conference report argue that it represents "reform." They can't be serious. Under this so-called reform, farmers filing jointly could have an adjusted gross income, AGI, of \$2.5 million, or \$1 million if their only source of income is farm-related and they could still receive subsidies. This amounts to cutting off only 0.3 percent of farmers from the dole. The report does nothing to means test countercyclical payments. Furthermore, the report creates an entirely new \$4 billion permanent disaster program that is not only wasteful and redundant, but will also encourage pushing marginal and environmentally sensitive land into production. This is not reform.

Real reform would mean eliminating all subsidies for corn-based ethanol, which have driven up food costs around the world. Real reform would mean ending direct payments except for farmers who actually need assistance. By passing this bill, Congress is missing a golden opportunity to enact real reform. We should not wait another five years to make our farm policy equitable and responsible. By rejecting the conference report we can begin the important work of enacting a fair Farm Bill. I urge all of my colleagues to vote no.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the Conference Report on H.R. 2419, the Food and Energy Security Act of 2007.

With the U.S. economy faltering and food prices rising, this conference agreement takes critical steps to reduce hunger, ensure that healthy foods are included in federal nutrition programs, and meet the nutritional needs of many low-income Americans.

To help low-income families hit especially hard by high food prices, this legislation invests more than \$7.8 billion in the food stamp program, now renamed the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

This commitment will slow the erosion of food stamp benefits caused by increasing food prices, provide food assistance to recipients without requiring them to spend down their education savings accounts and retirement plan assets, and increase food assistance to households with high child care expenses.

The bill also invests \$1.25 billion in commodity purchases for food banks, which will strengthen emergency food assistance programs' efforts to serve needy families.

Our nation is facing a growing child obesity epidemic—an issue that demands strong efforts to improve the quality and nutritional value of foods offered through school meal programs.

H.R. 2419 includes important provisions that will expand children's access to healthy foods during the school day, and that will help inform our efforts to reauthorize the nation's child nutrition programs next year.

I am also pleased that this report increases the volume of fresh fruits and vegetables available through federally-supported domestic nutrition programs, and, as part of that, invests more than one billion dollars in expanding the fruit and vegetable snack program.

Thanks to this significant investment, the snack program, targeted primarily to low-income children and to schools that disproportionately serve low-income families, will now provide thousands of students in every state with greater access to healthy foods.

This bill also supports local food systems and farm-to-school programs by encouraging child nutrition programs to use a geographic