

Food Policy for Food Justice: THE FARM BILL

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We all pay for an unhealthy

The current food system in the United States is bad for the environment, bad for public health and primarily benefits the largest agricultural companies. This may not be news to most people, but what is less known is who pays for the current US food system.

Every few years, the US government adopts a new Farm Bill. The most recent Farm Bill, like the previous ones, provides billions of dollars to Big Ag and little to small, family run farms. The 2014 Farm Bill provides \$956 Billion in taxpayer subsidies to huge corporations like Monsanto, Tyson Foods, Archer Daniels Midland, Kraft and Wal-Mart, corporations which make billions in profits annually.



So why does the US government give these corporations so much of the taxpayers' money? These companies spend millions of dollars lobbying Congress every year and they finance political candidates running for election. For example, in the 2012 election cycle, Monsanto contributed \$1,209,714 to candidates. In 2013 alone, they spent nearly \$7 million lobbying the US Congress. (Source: www.opensecrets.org)

In Michigan, 2012 farm subsidies provided by taxpayers totaled \$263 million, with most of that money going to large farms growing mono-crops or livestock: corn subsidies, \$59 million; soybeans, \$35 million; and the dairy sector, more than \$22 million. (Source: <http://farm.ewg.org/>)



While providing huge subsidies to agribusiness, the 2014 Farm Bill cut \$8.6 billion in Food Assistance. During a time when more and more Americans live in poverty and rely on government food assistance programs, Congress decided to drastically cut these funds and give more taxpayer money to large corporations.

What we need is a food system that is based on food justice, where food is a right and the government does not punish marginalized communities but provides them access to healthy, nutritious food. We need to promote and practice food sovereignty, giving everyone a voice in deciding what kind of food system they want for their community. This is what Our Kitchen Table and Well House both promote and practice through their food growing and food justice work.



To get involved contact Our Kitchen Table at OKTable1@gmail.com.



OKTjustice.org

oktable1@gmail.com 616-206-3641