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RECKLESS SHUTDOWN POSES THREATS TO FARMERS AND THE FOOD SYSTEM

Dysfunction in the House of Representatives Grinds Important Programs to a Halt

MINNEAPOLIS—If Congress does not pass a spending bill and the United States federal government shuts down this Sunday, the shutdown will have wide ranging implications for U.S farmers and people facing hunger, as well as slow action to restore fairness in agriculture markets and combat the climate crisis.

The shutdown creates even more uncertainty over the fate of the 2023 Farm Bill, as the 2018 Farm Bill nears its September 30 expiration date with little sign that a new Farm Bill will be approved this year. This level of uncertainty and dysfunction makes it difficult for farmers to plan for the short term and make the longer-term investments necessary to address the growing impact of climate change on farms across the nation.

Farmers depend on U.S. Department of Agriculture agencies in every state and territory to administer essential loans and to apply for conservation program support to protect the soil, air and water. A government shutdown will temporarily suspend the administration of important conservation programs, including the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) and Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), and prevent farmers from accessing existing money. These conservation programs play a pivotal role in helping farmers build climate resilience and can provide economic certainty in the face of extreme weather events.

Already, farmer demand for these programs exceeds available funding, as IATP underscored in our recent report, [Still Closed Out](#). Three out of four farmers who applied for CSP and EQIP in 2022 were turned away. The shutdown and associated funding freeze would come at a crucial time for farmers, as many are still in the field harvesting and beginning to plan for the coming year.

“A majority of farmers already face obstacles to accessing federal conservation programs that are crucial to helping farmers adapt to a changing climate. Now, if the government shuts down, *all* farmers will be locked out of the programs, creating yet another roadblock for farmers attempting to do the right thing for climate,” says Michael Happ, IATP program associate for climate and rural communities.

In addition, a shutdown could have an immediate impact on the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), which provides critical grocery assistance to around 7 million women and children. Recipients would experience an immediate reduction in benefits.

“At a time when we are already seeing unacceptable levels of hunger and record high visits to food shelves due to post-pandemic fallout and the continuing impact of inflated grocery prices, losing the critical nutrition assistance WIC provides will be immediately devastating for families with young children. A prolonged shutdown will also cut off SNAP benefits, putting more vulnerable people at risk,” says, Erin McKee, IATP program director for community food systems.

IATP advocates for changes in many U.S. government policies, but we greatly value the importance of the public sector and its workers. A government shutdown will undermine those democratic institutions and will hurt families, farmers, communities and the environment.

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