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# Food Fight: A Case Study of the Community Food Security Coalition's Campaign for a Fair Farm Bill

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# **FOOD FIGHT**

A Case Study of the Community Food Security Coalition's Campaign  
for a Fair Farm Bill

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*PIM 70/71*

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## **ABSTRACT**

The farm bill is an all-encompassing piece of legislation that is reauthorized approximately every five years and establishes federal policy for everything from farm subsidies and crop insurance to energy, conservation, food stamps and school lunches. The current law expires at the end of September 2012. Reauthorization of the farm bill represents the single largest opportunity to reform the policies that shape food systems in the United States. The Community Food Security Coalition (CFSC) is campaigning to improve access to healthy food by increasing links with family farmers and to strengthen local and regional food systems. This case study traces CFSC's 2012 Farm Bill campaign from its inception to late April 2012, when the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry released its version of the 2012 Farm Bill – The Agriculture Reform, Food and Jobs Act of 2012 (ARFJA). It investigates and evaluates CFSC's policy advocacy work and provides a detailed examination of the context and impact of the Farm Bill.

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

The United States is one of the richest countries in the world and yet many people do not have access to safe, nutritious, affordable food; many farmers are not paid a living wage; many regions of the country no longer produce the food they consume; and large-scale industrial agriculture pollutes our soil and water. All of these social and environmental injustices are rooted in decades of food and farm policy legislated through the farm bill.

The farm bill is rewritten roughly every five years and it is a critical opportunity to change federal farm and food policy. The Community Food Security Coalition (CFSC) is one of many national organizations working to rebuild local food systems through farm bill reform. This case study, researched over the course my six-month practicum (January through June of 2012) working as CFSC's Policy Intern, examines the historical context of the farm bill and explores the intersection of advocates, policy issues, political structures and actors as well as the selected strategy and tactics implemented. As the farm bill most likely will not become law before the end of my practicum, this case study traces CFSC's 2012 Farm Bill campaign to late April 2012, when the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry released its version of the 2012 Farm Bill – The Agriculture Reform, Food and Jobs Act of 2012 (ARFJA) (S. 3240). The bill still has a long way to go. First, it must be passed by the full Senate. The House also has to pass an equivalent bill and then the two bills must be reconciled. The President must then sign the final bill into law.

In addition to research conducted around existing farm bill programs and written materials such as policy briefings, fact sheets and the monthly policy newsletter – which I created as the CFSC Policy Intern – information was collected through review of secondary literature, observation and informal conversations. The final section of this paper is an evaluation

of the campaign's success and a reflection of possible lessons learned, addressing the following questions:

- How effective has the Community Food Security Coalition's Farm Bill campaign been in terms of process and outcomes?
- What are some general lessons to be learned from this initiative that might apply to other advocacy efforts?

Many of the concepts and frameworks referenced throughout the paper have been derived from two comprehensive Policy Advocacy course materials, *A New Weave of Power, People & Politics* by Lisa VeneKlasen with Valerie Miller and *The Democracy Owners' Manual* by Jim Shultz.

## **II. ADVOCACY CONTEXT**

### ***The History of the Farm Bill and the Industrialization of Agriculture***

The farm bill is a major piece of agriculture and nutrition legislation that serves as the road map for land use in the United States, both in terms of food production and conservation. It also ultimately determines the types of food we eat and greatly influences how much it costs. Congress writes a new farm bill every five to seven years with input from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), farmers, food manufacturers, agribusiness organizations and other stakeholders.

The first farm bill, the Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1933, was created to address rock bottom prices, national hunger, soil erosion, lack of credit and unfair export practices in the wake of the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl. Since then, there have been 15 farm bills which have, in one way or another, addressed the above-mentioned issues.

In his *Citizens Guide to the Next Food and Farm Bill*, food policy researcher Daniel Imhoff (2012) points out that the technological advances brought about by World War II greatly altered the agricultural sector of this country. Tractors replaced horses and chemicals were used to create pesticides, herbicides and synthetic fertilizers in an effort to meet the rising global demand for food. Plant breeding also evolved, creating high-yielding hybrid grains tailored to these shifts in chemical inputs and mechanical growing and harvesting. As yields rose, so did the price of inputs (e.g. pesticides and fertilizers). However, because oversupply led to consistently low prices, farming did not necessarily become any more profitable. The size of farms began to increase, as consolidation was thought to be the best way to defend against price instability. In addition, the mechanization of food production incentivized specialization. By the 1970s, agricultural progress was measured by increasing yields. Farm Bill policies started to heavily favor larger producers growing commodity crops (e.g. corn, soy, wheat, rice and cotton) with payments designed to reward farmers for maximizing crop yields. The age of monoculture and factory farming had begun.

This system of overproduction benefits large agriculture corporations – known as agribusinesses. They are the grain-trading companies, meatpackers and food manufacturers that reap enormous profits because current farm policy promotes cheap commodity crops. The unhealthy, processed foods these corporations produce that are currently flooding the market cost less than fresh fruits, vegetables and whole grains because food and farm policy in the United States caters to agribusiness's desire for cheap raw materials.

### ***The Farm Bill as Legislation***

The farm bill is an “omnibus” legislation because it addresses multiple issues simultaneously. The bill itself is organized by "title." The 2008 Farm Bill, called the Food,



Conservation and Energy Act, had 15 titles covering a variety of programs. New titles are added as new scopes of work become crucial to the food and farm economy. This was the case most recently in 2008, when the Horticulture and Organic Agriculture and the Livestock titles were added (Farm Aid, 2012). Among the many titles of this bill, programs address trade and foreign food aid; forestry; agricultural credit; rural development; research and education; marketing; food safety; animal health and welfare; energy; and organic agriculture. According to the Congressional Budget Office, the Senate Agriculture Committee's 2012 Farm Bill entitled the Agriculture Reform, Food and Jobs Act (ARFJA) would cost approximately \$969 billion over the next ten years. Table 1 lists of the all titles found in the Senate Agriculture Committee's 2012 Farm Bill as listed on the Library of Congress Website. The asterisk symbol denotes titles that contain Community Food Security Coalition policy priorities.

Despite this wide range of spending categories, Imhoff (2012) explains that recent farm bills have three dominant components: 1) food stamp and nutrition programs, 2) income and price supports for commodity crops, and 3) conservation incentives. In fact, the Nutrition title receives the highest level of funding - approximately 79% of total spending in the ARFJA (CBO, 2012). These programs include the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) – formerly known as Food Stamps; the Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP); programs that provide fresh fruits and vegetables to schools such as the Department of Defense Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program; and initiatives that promote local foods. Many of the Community Food Security Coalition's policy priorities fall within the Nutrition title.

Title I is perhaps the most often mentioned and most difficult to understand: commodities. Subsidies to farms growing commodity program crops (e.g. corn, cotton, wheat, rice and soybeans) are paid through this program. It is important to note that the farm bill

differentiates between commodity crops and specialty crops. All fruits and vegetables are known as specialty crops, and farmers who grow them receive only a fraction in federal support compared to commodity growers. The most dramatic change in this Farm Bill is Title XI, the crop insurance title, which is the second-highest funded title in the ARFJA at roughly \$94 billion. This is a large shift in farm bill spending from the commodities title. Unlike commodity payments, there are no conservation requirements attached to crop insurance, therefore this policy shift has potentially dangerous implications for the environmental sustainability of our food system.

Title II, Conservation, is where victories for sustainable agriculture may be found. Over the past 25 years, several conservation programs were developed under this title to reward farmers for sustainable farming practices intended to protect the soil and water. These programs, however, are limited in scope and funding, and especially at risk of cuts in the 2012 Farm Bill.

**Table 1: Farm Bill Titles, The Agriculture Reform, Food and Jobs Act of 2012 (S.3240)**

<b>ARFJA Farm Bill Titles</b>
Title I – Commodity Programs: Income support to growers of selected commodities, including wheat, feed grains, cotton, rice, oilseeds, peanuts, sugar, and dairy. Support is largely through direct payments, counter-cyclical payments, and marketing loans. Other support mechanisms include government purchases for dairy, and marketing quotas and import barriers for sugar.
Title II – Conservation: Environmental stewardship of farmlands and improved management practices through land retirement and working lands programs, among other programs geared to farmland conservation, preservation, and resource protection.
Title III – Trade: U.S. agricultural export and international food assistance programs, and program changes related to various World Trade Organization (WTO) obligations.
*Title IV – Nutrition: Domestic food and nutrition and commodity distribution programs, such as food stamps and other supplemental nutrition assistance.
*Title V – Credit: Federal direct and guaranteed farm loan programs, and loan eligibility rules and policies.
*Title VI – Rural Development: Business and community programs for planning, feasibility assessments, and coordination activities with other local, state, and federal programs, including rural broadband access.
Title VII – Research, Extension, and Related Matters: Agricultural research and extension programs, including biosecurity and response, biotechnology, and organic production.
Title VIII – Forestry: USDA Forest Service programs, including forestry management, enhancement, and agroforestry programs.
Title IX – Energy: Bioenergy programs and grants for procurement of biobased products to support development of biorefineries and assist eligible farmers, ranchers, and rural small businesses in purchasing renewable energy systems, as well as user education programs.
*Title X – Horticulture: Fruits, vegetables, and other specialty crops and organic agriculture.
Title XI – Crop Insurance: A new farm bill title federal crop insurance and disaster assistance previously included in the miscellaneous title (not including the supplemental disaster assistance provisions in the Trade and Tax title).
*Title XII - Miscellaneous: Other types of programs and assistance not covered in other bill titles, including provisions to assist limited-resource and socially disadvantaged farmers, Agricultural security, and Livestock, among others.

\*Denotes titles that contain Community Food Security Coalition policy priorities.

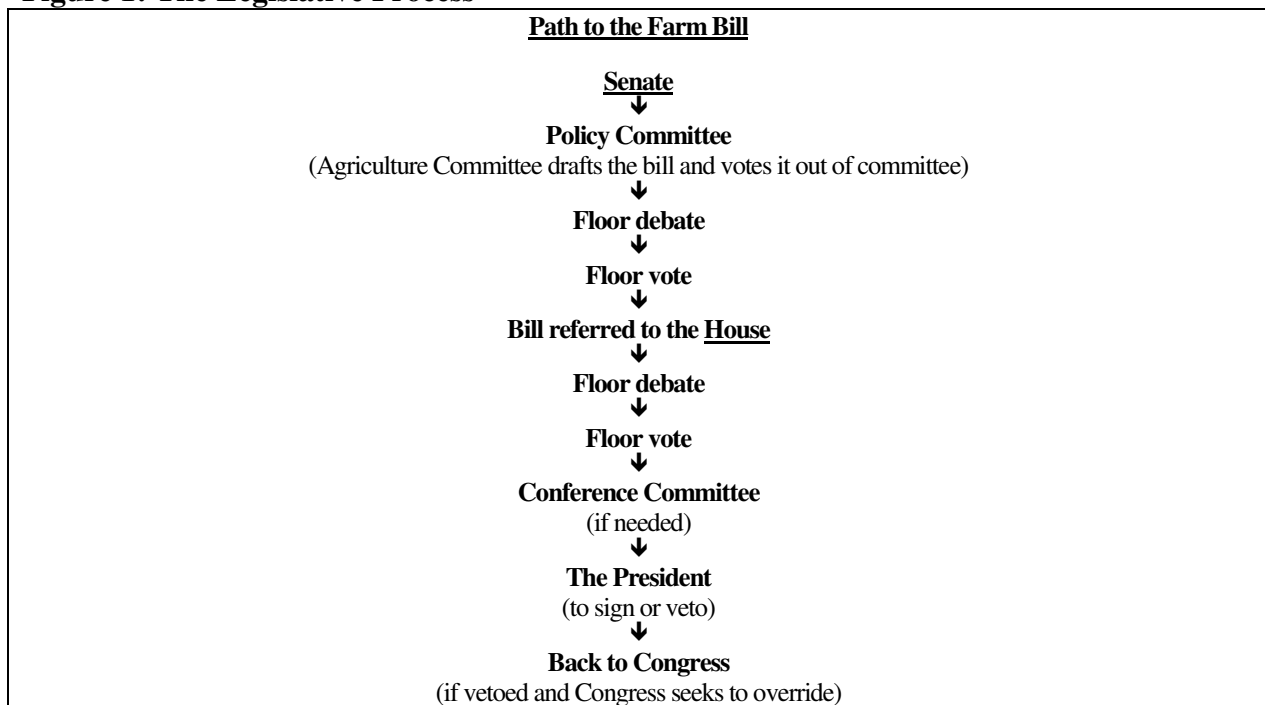
As so many people have a stake in the farm bill, the process of passing it is an arduous one that can take up to several years. Typically, the House and Senate Agricultural Committees begin with hearings to review how the farm law is working, what changes are needed, and how much funding would be available. In addition, policymakers conduct meetings with trade groups and hold hearings outside of Washington for local constituents. The White House and Agriculture Department also gather ideas at forums around the country before proposing legislation to Congress. Then, a final round of hearings is held by one or both Congressional Agriculture Committees in Washington, DC before the bill-drafting process begins.

The process for developing the 2012 Farm Bill has been unique. Even though hearings did take place, the Senate Agriculture Committee is working from a draft bill created during the Supercommittee Process last fall, which cuts \$23 billion from farm bill programs over ten years. The bipartisan supercommittee was established under the debt-ceiling legislation passed in August 2011. It was required to cut \$1.2 trillion over ten years from the federal budget by November 23, 2011 in order to avoid automatic cuts in defense and domestic programs – known as sequestration – triggered by that same legislation. The supercommittee failed. In fact, the Agriculture Committees were the only ones to submit a proposal for the supercommittee’s review. This proposal was drafted primarily by the Agriculture Committee Chairs and Ranking Members in both the House and Senate with very little, if any, input from other members on the Committees. On the House side, the budget resolution includes instructions to six authorizing committees – including the Agriculture Committee, to undertake a budget reconciliation process. On its website, the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP) explains reconciliation as a deficit-reduction tool Congress uses to force committees to produce spending cuts or tax increases called for in the budget resolution (CBPP, 2011). The House Agriculture Committee has been instructed to pass a plan that would cut \$33.2 billion from the farm bill baseline over the next 10 years including a disproportional \$8.2 billion cut in 2013 – roughly 25% of the total.

In the most intense form of drafting, subcommittees debate and vote on proposals, usually working from a Chairman's "Mark" or draft, which can be amended. Again, in the case of the Senate Agriculture Committee, Chairwoman Stabenow (D-MI) most likely used the Supercommittee Bill as her starting point. The entire Agriculture Committee weighs in and approves a final version of the bill for floor debate. Elements can be added, refined or deleted from any subcommittee draft. Eventually, each chamber of Congress passes its farm bill. Then,

the Senate and House appoint negotiators to reconcile differences in the bills so a final, identical version can be submitted to a vote in each chamber. If the bill passes, it will go to the president to sign or veto. If vetoed, the bill returns to the House and Senate, which can either vote to override the president's veto or write a new bill. A two-thirds majority is needed to override a veto and enact the law. Figure 1 illustrates the legislative process for the 2012 Farm Bill.

**Figure 1: The Legislative Process**



Source: The Democracy Owners Manual (Shultz, 2002)

***Current Political Climate***

There is rarely a "typical" legislative year in Congress, but this year there is a presidential election, many politicians will be running in newly drawn districts, and pressure to reduce the deficit is dictating virtually every decision on the Hill. Each of these factors will significantly affect the 2012 Farm Bill.

The fact that the farm bill debate is taking place in an election year affects the process in two main ways. Firstly, the legislative calendar will be shorter to accommodate Congressional campaign schedules. Consequently, there is less time for hearings, committee meetings, and

floor debates and votes. Given the truncated Congressional schedule, the majority of the work on the 2012 Farm Bill, though not necessarily final votes, would have to be finished by summertime for a new bill to be enacted in 2012. Secondly, as National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition Policy Director Ferd Hoefner points out, Congress is closely watching approval ratings. The recent highly partisan legislative battles have resulted in very low Congressional approval ratings. As a result, “Congressional leaders will be reluctant to engage in serious legislating unless there is notable pressure from the public” (Hoefner, 2012). There are also a number of Democrats on the Senate Agriculture Committee who are up for reelection in 2012, including Chairwoman Stabenow (D-MI) and Senators Klobuchar (D-MN), Gillibrand (D-NY), Brown (D-OH), and Casey (D-PA). Senators Conrad (D-ND) and Nelson (D-NE) are retiring. Hoefner further notes that of the five incumbent Democrats on the Committee seeking reelection, none is in a tight race at the moment. If that changes, then the pressure to deliver a farm bill in the Senate could increase.

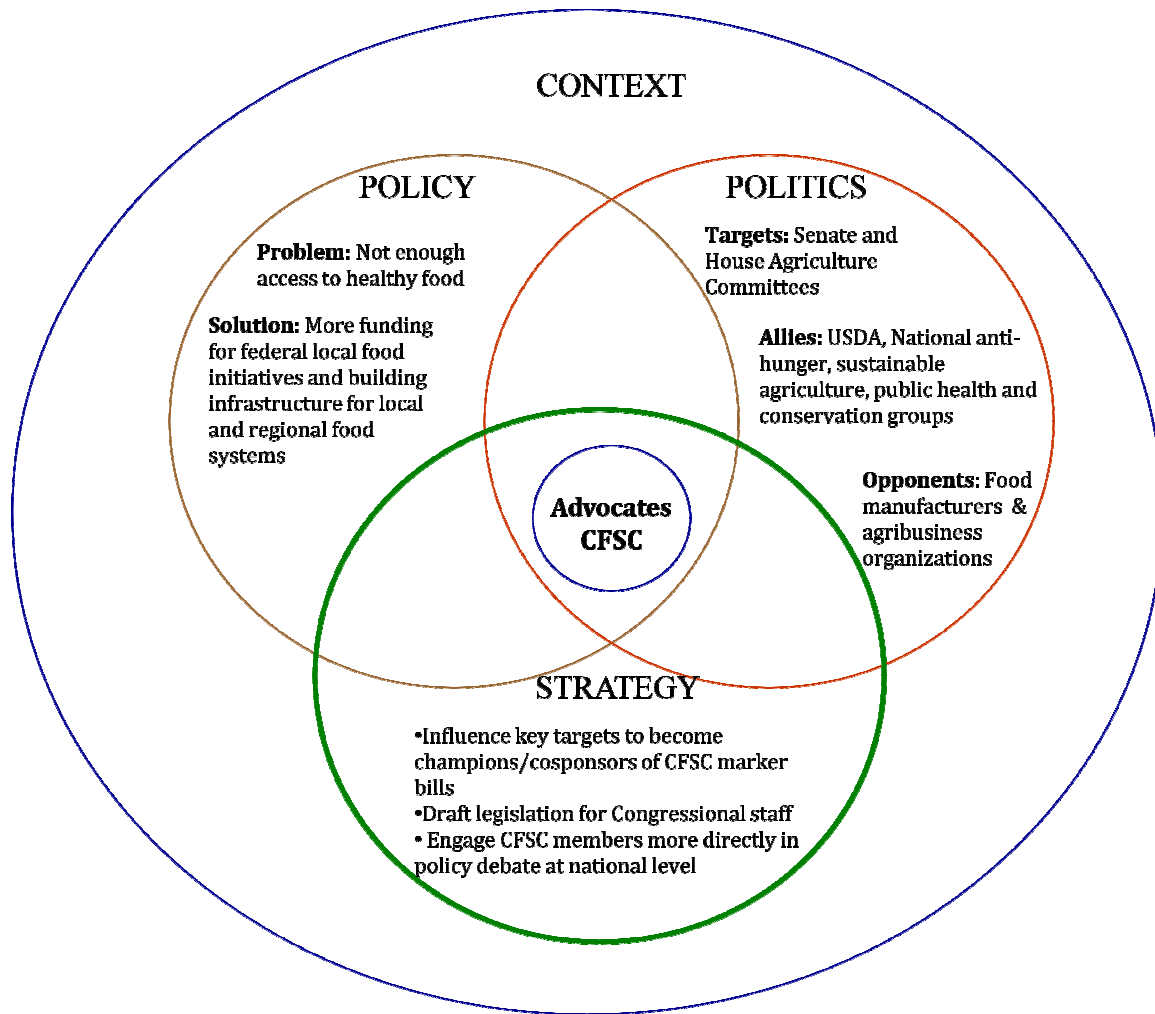
In contrast to the usual process, only a few Senators and Representatives wrote the farm bill drafted for the Supercommittee. This does not mean the views of others stakeholders were not taken into account, but it is unlikely the full Agriculture Committees, as well as the House and Senate floors, agree with a farm bill drafted by only a few members. Furthermore, the expiration of Bush-era tax rates at the end of the year and the triggering of automatic cuts to defense spending, which many lawmakers wish to avoid, could make farm programs a popular target in December if a farm bill hasn’t already been approved by then.

The Food, Conservation and Energy Act of 2008, more commonly known as the 2008 Farm Bill, expires on September 30, 2012. If Congress does not authorize a new Farm Bill or an extension of the current legislation – which is very unlikely given the emphasis on deficit

reduction, farm policy reverts back to 1949 law. In a recent article for the Washington Post, Deborah Atwood explains that if Congress passes neither a new farm bill nor an extension of the “current” one by the end of September, then all the subsidies and programs that exist, from crop insurance, to direct payments to conservation programs, would disappear (Atwood, 2012). It is for this reason that it is likely a new farm bill will be passed in 2012.

### **III. INTERSECTION OF CAMPAIGN ELEMENTS**

This section of the case study looks at specific elements of the campaign, based on the intersecting circles diagram below (Unsicker, 2012). It provides a detailed background of the advocates, followed by a discussion of their identified policy issues and proposed solutions. It then explores political dynamics by examining primary actors, including the advocacy targets, allies and opponents. Finally, it identifies elements of the strategy, focusing on the campaign objectives, member engagement, coalition building, framing of the message and other advocacy methods used.



## ADVOCATES

Established in 1994, The Community Food Security Coalition (CFSC) is made up of individuals and organizations across the country. CFSC membership consists of over 300 organizations across a variety of different sectors, including anti-hunger, conservation, community development, sustainable agriculture, and public health that believe in CFSC’s work and want to be a part of it. While some of CFSC’s members are national organizations like the Farmers Market Coalition and the National Family Farm Coalition, most of them are state and community-based organizations including food banks, food policy councils and advocacy groups that vary greatly in terms of size.



According to its website, The Community Food Security Coalition's mission is to "catalyze food systems that are healthy, sustainable, just, and democratic by building community voice and capacity for change" (CFSC, 2012). Though the organization does not explicitly state its vision, the words of its mission statement imply an understanding of strong, local and regional food systems as a catalyst for community development, economic empowerment, and climate change resilience. With these words, CFSC articulates the differences between its perspective and that of other advocacy group working on the farm bill. For the most part, food and agriculture advocates tend to focus their efforts on one piece of the farm bill, such as conservation or federal nutrition assistance programs or subsidies and other farmer support programs. CFSC is one of the only national organizations looking at current farm bill policies through a social justice lense, concentrating specifically on what communities need to empower themselves. Its mission statement emphasizes that sustainable policy reform must be holistic and for this reason, CFSC's approach must cut across all sectors of this legislation.

CFSC achieves its goals through a combination of activities. At the federal level, CFSC advocates for federal policies that promote community food security and provide resources for community-based initiatives, including within the farm bill and the Child Nutrition Act. The Community Food Security Coalition also co-leads the National Farm to School Network. After policies are passed, CFSC works to ensure they are fully funded and implemented as intended.

In addition to policy work, CFSC offers free training and technical assistance to Community Food Project (CFP) grantees, helping them navigate the application process and conduct program evaluations. CFP is a competitive grants program funded through the Farm Bill and administered by USDA. It provides the major federal funding source for community-based food and agriculture projects. Every fall, CFSC also hosts a four or five-day conference that

brings together hundreds of people working on community food security issues. Finally, CFSC hosts the COMFOOD listserv – a nation-wide, electronic forum where approximately 4,000 subscribers share information and network.

The majority of CFSC's 10-person staff is based in the main office in Portland, OR. There are also three full-time staff members, working from Virginia, Pennsylvania and New Mexico. In addition, the policy office, located in Washington, DC, is currently staffed by one full-time Policy Associate and a full-time Policy Intern (the position I held). CFSC previously employed a full-time Policy Director, but the person occupying that position resigned shortly after my practicum began, and a part-time Policy Consultant was hired to provide additional support while CFSC conducts a search for a full-time replacement.

To supplement the limited human resources, as well as to engage its members, CFSC organizes them into a number of committees that focus on various aspects of community food security work. The Policy Committee and the Urban Agriculture Committee are of particular importance to CFSC's policy work around the 2012 Farm Bill, as they both identify specific advocacy needs as they manifest themselves on the ground. The Policy Committee meets via conference call once a month to strategize on current legislative efforts and share updates. Committee members also play a vital role in targeted outreach in specific districts and states during recesses in the federal legislative calendar. The CFSC Urban Agriculture Committee is one of the Coalition's most active units. Composed entirely of volunteers, including board members of CFSC and the American Community Gardening Association, the committee identifies specific advocacy needs for the urban agriculture movement in the United States and Canada.

While CFSC does receive a portion of its funding from membership dues, its 2010 990

reveals that most of its funding comes from charitable foundations, corporations and the United States Department of Agriculture. More notable contributors include the WK Kellogg Foundation, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Center for Disease Control. Organic Valley and Annie's Homegrown are among CFSC's corporate supporters. In addition, the National Farm to School Network grants CFSC a certain amount of money to serve as the lead on all federal policy work related to Farm to School programs.

## **POLICY ISSUES**

The farm bill matters because it heavily favors big agribusiness and drives family farmers out of business. Commodity payments make the ingredients of unhealthy food cheap and abundant while the lack of crop insurance options and other federal support simultaneously make it incredibly risky, and therefore almost impossible for farmers to grow healthy fruits and vegetables that are affordable. The farm bill also matters because it is the best opportunity food system advocates have to participate in the discussion that shapes the way food is produced in this country, and push for the reforms that are so desperately needed. In preparation for the farm bill debate, CFSC organized a series of farm bill listening sessions in 2010 and 2011 involving more than 700 people and 18 partner organizations in every region of the country. These forums created a space for CFSC to hear from its membership about the impact of existing farm bill programs as well as challenges and barriers to community food security that should be addressed with federal support. Again, CFSC intends its policy work to serve as a catalyst for the development of "food systems that are healthy, sustainable, just, and democratic." The results of these listening sessions were analyzed within the context of this mission statement, and two broad categories for CFSC's 2012 Farm Bill priorities emerged: 1) Defending and expanding funding for community food security programs; and 2) Building local and regional food systems

and infrastructure.

***Improving access to healthy food for everyone, especially low income people***

According to USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), about 46.5 million people -- approximately one in seven Americans -- participated in the SNAP program (FNS, 2012). The USDA also recognizes more than 44 million people as living in "food insecure" households, which means nearly 15 percent of all Americans are not sure where their next meal will come from (Coleman-Jensen et. al, 2010). It is important to note that while SNAP plays a critical role in meeting the basic nutritional requirements of those in need, it does not go nearly far enough. First, addressing hunger cannot simply be a matter of calories. At present, fewer than 30% of farmers markets in the United States can accept SNAP benefits. This is especially troubling because federal nutrition assistance programs are charged with ensuring consistent access to fresh fruits and vegetables, and whole grains. Second, SNAP does not reach all who need it, and it only provides \$1.40 per meal, which is just not enough money to afford to eat a balanced diet.

In addition, there is an obesity epidemic in the United states -- the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that over 17 percent of children are overweight and over 66 percent of adults are overweight or obese. Obesity is particularly prevalent among low-income people because unhealthy food is cheaper and often more available than healthy food (Raloff, 2005). With extra body mass comes an increased vulnerability to diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular disease and certain forms of cancer. In 2011, USDA replaced the Food Pyramid with My Plate. These new USDA recommendations suggest that a healthy plate should be at least half full of fruits and vegetables, and another quarter should contain whole grains. However, Imhoff (2012) illustrates that if there were a "USDA subsidy plate," it would be full of animal proteins and processed foods. This demonstrates an alarming disconnect between what

the government knows we should be eating and the diet that the current food system actually promotes.

### ***Building local and regional food systems and infrastructure***

This scarcity of fresh fruits and vegetables has contributed greatly to the problem of food deserts. “Food desert” is a term that describes geographic areas where there are no mainstream grocery stores or they are inaccessible to low-income shoppers. Though there may be a grocery store located in the vicinity, low-income residents are unable to access them because of high prices and inadequate public transportation. The USDA’s more technical definition of a food desert is: “a Census tract where 33 percent or 500 people, whichever is less, live more than a mile away from a grocery store in an urban area or more than 10 miles away in a rural area. At least 20 percent of the residents must live below the federal poverty line, currently \$22,350 for a family of four” (ERS, 2012).

Using this definition, USDA’s Economic Research Service (ERS) identified 6,529 food deserts in the continental U.S. Food deserts are not yet defined for Alaska and Hawaii. Roughly 75 percent of them are urban, while the remaining 25 percent are rural. The ERS further concluded that 23.5 million people in the United States are living in food deserts today (ERS, 2009). This is one of many reasons CFSC supports the building of local food systems and the much-needed expansion of infrastructure to support them. Farmers markets, community gardens, Farm to School programs and other vehicles for local food support local economies and increase access to healthy foods, while also contributing to the overall environmental sustainability of food production. There are some existing farm bill programs that help stimulate local food economies, such as the Farmers Market Promotion Program (FMPP), the Seniors Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP), Community Food Projects (CFP) and Value Added Producer

Grants (VAPG). CFSC advocates to protect and expand the funding for these programs, but also realizes that increasing local and regional food capacity requires significant investments in infrastructure: processing facilities; animal slaughter facilities; centrally-located food hubs where foods can be stored until distributed; and new retail outlets, especially in areas where fresh food access is limited.

Within these two broad categories, CFSC has identified specific priorities upon which its 2012 Farm Bill campaign is based. Table 2 displays CFSC's 2012 Farm Bill Platform at the onset of the campaign. It is also available on the organization's website.

**Table 2: CFSC 2012 FARM BILL PLATFORM**

<p><b>Primary Priorities</b> (<i>Primary priorities are those that CFSC considers of paramount importance and on which we must play a lead role in advocacy and organizing.</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Defend and expand funding for Community Food Projects and the Farmers Market Promotion Program</b></li><li>• <b>Increase SNAP participant access to local, healthy, sustainable food enterprises</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ EBT devices to farmers markets and CSAs, pilot programs testing next-generation technology that accommodates SNAP, WIC and incentives</li><li>○ Incentives for local fruit and vegetable purchases for SNAP participants and increase the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program</li><li>○ Encourage SNAP-Ed funding for promoting SNAP use at farmers markets and CSAs</li></ul></li><li>• <b>Build infrastructure for local and regional food systems.</b> Infrastructure includes processing and aggregation, distribution facilities and transportation, regional food hubs and developments that support Farm to School and better rural/urban connections that promote healthy food systems.</li><li>• <b>Create an office within USDA to improve coordination among existing programs</b> to create opportunities for urban and rural collaboration to increase food access and create vibrant regional food systems. Build on the progress made through the Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food initiative and provide a structure for enhanced collaboration with other agencies such as HHS, Treasury, HUD, SBA.</li><li>• <b>Call for a USDA report and guidance document on how local government regulations can support access to healthy food.</b> The next step from the Food Environment Atlas that resulted from the last Farm Bill's commissioned study on food access in America, a report and database with examples and best practices would be invaluable resources for Food Policy Councils and other local advocates. As CDC has developed guidance on the role of local government in preventing obesity, USDA could explore how local zoning and land-use regulations relate to food access.</li><li>• <b>Incorporate more local product into the Department of Defense Fresh program (DoD Fresh) and USDA Foods program (formerly known as commodities) programs for school meals.</b> Find a way for schools to use these funds to purchase and/or process local products to help ensure that small- and mid-size farmers can participate in these programs. Address barriers to local purchasing in DOD Fresh program.</li><li>• <b>Track data on local food purchases necessary to evaluate Farm to School programs.</b> Improve the school meals audit process to gather data on local purchases and Farm to School programs.</li></ul> <p><b>Secondary Priorities</b> (<i>Important to CFSC's mission, but on which we expect to play a support role.</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Protect SNAP from cuts and changes to its entitlement status</li><li>• Support the Healthy Food Financing Initiative to stimulate healthy, local food retail in underserved areas</li><li>• Promote fair markets and increased competition in agriculture.</li><li>• Maintain support for socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers through USDA's Office of Advocacy &amp; Outreach</li><li>• Protect key conservation programs such as the Conservation Stewardship Program</li><li>• Protect the Beginning Farmer &amp; Rancher Development Program</li><li>• End promotion of food crops as a source of biofuels and policies that encourage overproduction and dumping of commodities</li></ul>
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Source: CFSC Farm Bill Priorities (The Community Food Security Coalition, 2012)

In order to pursue these priorities, CFSC has identified potential levers within the current farm bill, and has also worked with several members of Congress to develop marker bills. According to the American Farmland Trust:

“A marker bill is a legislative bill that is used to introduce specific measures or issues into a larger legislative debate. While not intended to ever come to a vote on the floor, a marker bill is proposed as a “placeholder” for specific aspects of a larger bill. This allows legislators to include key provisions into the larger farm bill debate while it is still at the committee and subcommittee level. The more sponsors and cosponsors that sign on to a marker bill, the greater the legislative support for the specific measures that the marker bill represents, and the greater the chance that the specific measures will make their way into the larger farm bill” (American Farmland Trust, 2007).

CFSC supports the following marker bills written to shape the 2012 Farm Bill:

- Local Farms, Food and Jobs Act (S. 1773, H.R. 3286)

Introduced by Representative Chellie Pingree (D-ME) and Senator Sherrod Brown (D-OH), the Local Farms, Food, and Jobs Act is a key vehicle to strengthening local and regional food systems. This bill would address the needs of consumers in accessing food from their local communities and the needs of farmers and ranchers producing for local and regional markets, including infrastructure and processing capabilities. Specific provisions include: expanded funding for community food security programs, including Community Food Projects (CFP) Competitive Grants Program and the Farmers Market Promotion Program; increased access of federal nutrition program participants to farmers markets, CSAs and other local, healthy, and sustainable food enterprises; incorporation of more local product into the Department of Defense Fresh and USDA Foods programs for school meals and; stronger geographic preference provision for school food purchasing. The Local Farms, Food and Jobs Act contains several no-cost policy changes and would cost a total of \$100 million if fully integrated into the 2012 Farm Bill. As of June 2012, the bill had 91 cosponsors (77 in the House and 14 in the Senate).

- Expanding Access to Farmers Markets Act (S. 1593)

Introduced by Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), the Expanding Access to Farmers Act would: provide farmers markets with wireless, mobile equipment to process SNAP benefits; require State agencies and the Food and Nutrition Service of the USDA to treat farmers markets and other open-air retailers the same as traditional retail food stores and; encourage State agencies to partner with nonprofit organizations to assist with outreach, training and administration. Despite the growing popularity of farmers markets in the United States, fewer than 30% of all farmers markets are currently equipped to accept Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits. The Local Farms, Food and Jobs Act addresses similar changes to SNAP incentive programs. This may explain why the Expanding Access to Farmers Market Act, as of June 2012, had only three cosponsors



in the Senate.

- Let's Grow Act (H.R. 4351)

Introduced by Representative Marcia Fudge (D-OH), the Let's Grow Act would support sustainable agriculture activities in American cities, promote urban farming, eradicate hunger and improve access to healthy food. Specific provisions include: Community Gardening and Urban Agriculture Grant programs; a Farm to Preschool Program; supports for the conversion of public land to usage for urban farms and community gardens and; a Fresh Incentive Program for the use of SNAP benefits at farmers markets. It complements Rep. Pingree's Local Farms, Food and Jobs Act with an emphasis on urban food access and production. As of June 2012, this bill had 28 cosponsors in the House.

- Community Agriculture, Development and Jobs Act (H.R. 3225)

Introduced by Representative Marcy Kaptur (D-OH), the Community Agriculture Development and Jobs Act would advance community agricultural development in nontraditional communities, encourage local food production, and increase the availability of fresh food in underserved communities. This bill is a comprehensive way to expand support for community agriculture and help to address the root causes and food deserts. Specific provisions include: establishment of the Office of Community Agriculture with USDA; increases in funding for the Farmers' Market Promotion Program to \$50 million per year and for the Seniors Farmers Market Nutrition Program and; creation the Community Agriculture Outreach Program with \$20 Million to run it. As of June 2012, this bill had 12 cosponsors in the House.

CFSC will use the 2012 Farm Bill cycle as an opportunity to improve access to healthy food by increasing links with family farmers. Support for community-based agriculture, linking urban and rural communities through Farm to School, SNAP redemption at farmers markets, and incentives for purchasing fruits and vegetables through federal nutrition programs all improve access to better food for everyone. CFSC will also seek to make regional food systems viable, as that is the key to building the economically, environmentally and socially sustainable future it envisions.

There have been mixed reactions to the rise of the local food movement among Agriculture Committee members on the both the Senate and House sides. Those who support the development of local food production capacity see its potential to create jobs and spur

community development. “Local food efforts are leveraging private dollars,” Senate Agriculture Committee Chairwoman Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) explained in her opening remarks of the Farm Bill hearing held about local food. “Local food systems mean a win-win for agriculture and the local economy; when we buy local, we support local jobs.” There are also several members of the committee who champion local food, namely Senators Leahy (D-VT), Brown (D-OH), Casey (D-PA) and Gillibrand (D-NY). Champions of local food legislation in the House Committee on Agriculture include Reps. Chellie Pingrie (D-ME) and Marcia Fudge (D-OH).

Those opposed to increased federal support of local food initiatives see it as a threat to conventional agriculture, and maintain that the private sector is more than capable of expanding local food production should consumers demand it. As Senate Agriculture Committee Ranking Member Pat Roberts (R-KS) said at the same hearing, “regardless of the season, consumers continue to demand more local products, and many businesses and markets are meeting producer demand without the need for taxpayer support.” While this stance does not oppose the local food movement itself, it does oppose increased federal support for it.

The other CFSC farm bill priority that has caused significant derision amongst Agriculture Committee members is the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance (SNAP) program. While many members of the Committee view SNAP as essential for combating hunger and poverty, the current budgetary climate has made this program a primary target for spending cuts. Looking to SNAP for budget cuts is particularly ironic in light of the recent study published by Moody’s (an economic research firm), which found that SNAP actually boosts the economy, reporting that every SNAP dollar spent generates a \$1.73 ripple effect in the economy. Opponents of the program cite the most recent case of a Michigan lottery-winner who still received SNAP benefits as an example of widespread SNAP fraud in support of their argument to reduce its funding. In

truth, USDA reports that SNAP has an error rate of less than one percent. Hatred of this program is so intense that the House Agriculture Committee approved about \$33 billion in cuts over 10 years from food stamp benefits, in a largely symbolic and highly partisan vote made necessary by the House budget reconciliation process. Agriculture Committee members on both the Senate and House sides have also proposed tightened restrictions, which would make it more difficult for people to qualify for SNAP and for retail stores to accept SNAP. The staunchest SNAP supporters on the Senate Agriculture Committee are Senators Harkin (D-IA) and Gillibrand (D-NY). In fact, Senator Gillibrand did not vote for the Senate's Farm Bill that came out of committee – The Agriculture Reform, Food and Jobs Act, due to the \$4 billion in cuts to the SNAP program. On the House side, the most vocal champion of federal nutrition programs is Rep. Jim McGovern (D-MA).

## **POLITICS**

### ***Targets***

In *The Democracy Owners' Manual* (2002), Jim Shultz explains that primary targets are those who have the authority to “make the actual decision to implement or not implement the change you want” (p.76). As the members of Congress who sit on the Senate and House Committees on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry draft the farm bill, they are the primary targets of this stage of CFSC's 2012 Farm Bill Campaign. As the legislation moves forward, it is likely that most members of Congress will become primary targets.

The Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry is comprised of 21 members; 11 members of the majority (Democrats) and 10 members of the minority (Republicans). The Chairman and Ranking Member are selected at the start of each Congress, and members are subsequently assigned to the Committee. Table 3, pictured below, is a chart of the current

committee Members, listed according to seniority.

**Table 3: The United States Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry**

Majority (D)	Minority (R)
Debbie Stabenow (MI), Chairwoman	Pat Roberts (KS), Ranking Member
Patrick Leahy (VT)	Richard Lugar (IN)
Tom Harkin (IA)	Thad Cochran (MS)
Kent Conrad (ND)	Mitch McConnell (KY)
Max Baucus (MT)	Saxby Chambliss (GA)
E. Benjamin Nelson (NE)	Mike Johanns (NE)
Sherrod Brown (OH)	John Boozman (AR)
Robert Casey, Jr. (PA)	Charles Grassley (IA)
Amy Klobuchar (MN)	John Thune (SD)
Michael Bennet (CO)	John Hoeven (ND)
Kirsten Gillibrand (NY)	

Source: Senate Agriculture Committee Website (2012)

The Senate Agriculture Committee is further composed of five subcommittees that concentrate on more specific issues pertaining to the committee. Each subcommittee is assigned a chairman, ranking member, and members. While each subcommittee has the ability to act on issues within its jurisdiction, most issues are addressed by the committee as a whole. This means that all committee members are CFSC targets.

The Senate committee’s counterpart in the House is the House Committee on Agriculture. That committee is comprised of 46 members: 26 in the majority (Republicans) and 20 in the minority (Democrats). As in the Senate, the Chairman and Ranking Member are selected at the start of each Congress, and members are subsequently assigned to the Committee. Table 4 is a chart of the current committee Members, listed according to seniority.

**Table 4: The House Committee on Agriculture**

Majority (R)	Minority (D)
Frank Lucas (OK), Chairman	Collin Peterson (MN), Ranking Member
Bob Goodlatte (VA), Vice Chairman	Tim Holden (PA)
Timothy V. Johnson (IL)	Mike McIntyre (NC)
Steve King (IA)	Leonard Boswell (IA)
Randy Neugebauer (TX)	Joe Baca (CA)
K. Michael Conaway (TX)	Dennis Cardoza (CA)
Jeff Fortenberry (NE)	David Scott (GA)
Jean Schmidt (OH)	Henry Cuellar (TX)
Glenn Thompson (PA)	Jim Costa (CA)
Thomas J. Rooney (FL)	Timothy J. Walz (MN)
Marlin Stutzman (IN)	Kurt Schrader (OR)
Bob Gibbs (OH)	Larry Kissell (NC)
Austin Scott (GA)	Bill Owens (NY)
Scott R. Tipton (CO)	Chellie Pingree (ME)
Steve Southerland, II (FL)	Joe Courtney (CT)
Rick Crawford (AR)	Peter Welch (VT)
Martha Roby (AL)	Marcia L. Fudge (OH)
Tim Huelskamp (KS)	Gregorio Sablan (NMI)
Scott DesJarlais (TN)	Terri A. Sewell (AL)
Renee L. Ellmers (NC)	James McGovern (MA)
Christopher P. Gibson (NY)	
Randy Hultgren (IL)	
Vicky Hartzler (MO)	
Robert T. Schilling (IL)	
Reid J. Ribble (WI)	
Kristi Noem (SD)	

Source: House Agriculture Committee Website (2012)

It is important to note however, that the final say on whether a discretionary farm bill program actually receives money rests with the Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittees of the Senate and House Appropriations Committees. These subcommittees set discretionary spending levels, and thus determine the yearly survival of many farm bill programs. Discretionary spending is the portion of the federal budget not included in the mandatory budget, which are programs required by law to provide certain benefits, such as Social Security and Medicare. This means that the Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittees can terminate funding for any programs that rely on discretionary funds. Suffice it to say that regardless of promises in the 2012 Farm Bill, no program can run if no money is appropriated to implement and run it. While CFSC is constantly monitoring Appropriations Committee hearings and markups in both

the House and Senate, it is unclear as to whether CFSC intends to target the Members of Congress who serve on these Committees as the Farm Bill process continues.

In order to understand what stake committee members have in this year's farm bill, it is necessary to explore the myriad of factors within the U.S. political system that could influence a politician's decision. The most urgent of these factors is the fact that this year is an election year. Those committee members up for re-election will have an especially strong incentive to make sure that their home states benefit from whatever legislation is passed. For example, there are several members on both the House and Senate sides from Iowa, Nebraska, Kansas and Indiana. These states are big growers of commodity crops – mainly wheat and corn. Therefore it might be beneficial to these Representatives to uphold the “BigAg” model that farm bill policy has bolstered for so long. This is one of many instances that make the farm bill an exception to the rule of partisan politics in that very often, support for this legislation is based primarily on geography. The upcoming election may also make certain Representatives particularly susceptible to special interest groups opposed to the kind of reforms for which CFSC is advocating. These opposition groups will be identified and their stake in the 2012 Farm Bill will be discussed at length in subsequent sections of this paper.

CFSC also recognizes that the only way it will ever be able to put enough pressure on public officials that can hope to rival corporate power and special interest politics is to engage its members. Though it does have a policy office in Washington, DC CFSC is a grassroots organization, with members all across the country, and its 2012 Farm Bill Campaign is largely based on the idea that the only way to affect change is to ensure that politicians in Washington hear the voices of every CFSC member.

## *Allies*

The farm bill's impact is incredibly widespread across many sectors, and there is a great number of advocacy groups from a variety of issue areas working for the same or similar legislative reforms as CFSC. While this breadth of stakeholders has the potential to stir fierce competition for available funds – especially in this time of aggressive budget cuts – CFSC makes the most of its limited resources by participating in several, broad networks and alliances. The Community Food Security Coalition has also worked closely with a few partner organizations throughout the campaign. The National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC) is one such organization. According to its website, NSAC envisions a food system in which adequately-paid family farmers produce safe, nutritious, ample, and affordable food “while protecting the environment, and contributing to the strength and stability of their communities” (NSAC, 2012). As they have similar mission statements, NSAC and CFSC policy priorities frequently overlap and they have collaborated often throughout this campaign.

The book *A New Weave of Power* (2008), by Lisa VeneKlasen and Valerie Miller provides helpful definitions that distinguish the concepts of networks, alliances and coalitions. They describe a network as a very informal arrangement in which people and groups are “brought together by a common concern or interest to share information or ideas” (p. 311). This arrangement is particularly beneficial given the fast-paced nature of politics in Washington in light of CFSC's shortage of human resources. Information-sharing is also important because potentially crucial information about a vote or the leanings of a particular member of Congress very often travels by word of mouth in a meeting that is ostensibly unrelated.

One network that has proven particularly valuable to CFSC is called Getting Our Act Together on the Farm Bill (GOAT). GOAT is a group of organizations engaged in a broad range

of farm bill issues that range from nutrition, rural development, conservation and research.

GOAT meets once a week over the phone to discuss what is happening on the Hill and on the ground within the grassroots bases of each member's organization. GOAT members also discuss important meetings they will be attending, upcoming votes and any actions they are planning to take. While CFSC does not facilitate this call, many members working at the grassroots level rely heavily on the updates CFSC provides – along with those of other DC-based members – for policy news and ideas about how to create complementary advocacy efforts in the field.

Occasionally CFSC signs on to a letter or coordinates the sending out of an action alert with other GOAT members in order to maximize its impact. As Jim Shultz points out, “it is best to adopt a structure with the least formality necessary to get the job done” (Shultz, p.125). In the case of the GOAT network, the lack of formality enables its members to act independently without creating tension within the network, while at the same time providing a space for communication that allows members to coordinate with one another in a way that is mutually beneficial.

The Community Food Security Coalition is also a member of several alliances, which VeneKlasen and Miller define as shorter-term relationships among members that are focused on a specific objective. For example, National Anti-Hunger Organizations (NAHO) is an alliance of organizations whose primary objective is to protect SNAP, TEFAP and other nutrition assistance programs from funding cuts. NAHO meets once a month over the phone to discuss the new developments in Washington and to plan some kind of collective action. This is most often a letter to specific members of Congress or an action alert to the grassroots to urge their Representatives to vote against cutting these programs. Being a member of NAHO has many advantages, including generating more resources around the important goal of protecting federal



nutrition programs and broadening the scope of CFSC's work. However, NAHO does not have its own letterhead, and is lead by Feeding America, the Food and Research Action Center (FRAC) and MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger. These organizations are very well-established and have been leaders of the anti-hunger movement for many years. Many of NAHO's actions are carried out under the umbrella of one of these organizations, and therefore limit CFSC's visibility on this issue. Also, while protecting SNAP is a priority for CFSC, it is not a primary one and there have been instances where CFSC has issued a call to action on one of its other priority areas and received criticism from some of NAHO's members for failing to mention nutrition programs.

As Imhoff (2012) reminds us, anyone who eats, pays taxes, worries about climate change, the quality of school lunches, the fate of the family farmer or the persistence of hunger and poverty in this country, has a personal stake in the farm bill. CFSC's challenge for this campaign will be to find a way to work constructively with those who have similar, but slightly differing priorities for the 2012 Farm Bill.

Aside from other advocates, CFSC may also have an ally in the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), the agency that implements all of the programs authorized in the Farm Bill. In 2009, USDA launched the Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food Initiative and has been working with the department's 17 agencies to coordinate USDA's work and investments in local and regional food systems. This program is USDA's attempt to illustrate the possibilities of using existing USDA funding to support the development of the local food movement. Kathleen Merrigan, deputy USDA secretary, is an enthusiastic supporter of sustainable agriculture and "The Know Your Farmer Know Your Food" initiative is her brainchild. However, Secretary of

Agriculture Tom Vilsack's close ties to Monsanto and strong support of corn and soy based biofuels calls USDA's commitment to local, sustainable food systems into question.

### ***Opponents***

There is an alarmingly small number of corporations with a very large share of the market within the agriculture, food processing and distribution industries. According to Food and Water Watch, the four largest companies in each industry slaughter nearly all the beef, process two-thirds of the pork, sell half the groceries and manufacture about half the milk in the United States. In addition, only two firms sell two-thirds of the corn and soybean seeds. Enormous corporations like Monsanto, Mars, Cargill, ConAgra and Nestle have profited greatly from the current structure of the food system in this country, and they spend tens of millions of dollars every year trying to influence dozens of bills under consideration by the Senate and House of Representatives. They do this through contributions to individual members of congress, traditional lobbying and sponsoring research.

Unsurprisingly, industry-funded research routinely produces results that are favorable to industry. As a result, most of the research conducted around health, environment and food safety issues produce bias results in favor of current agricultural practices to the great benefit of the corporations that profit from them. These same corporations also sponsor conferences. For example, CFSC attended a national anti-hunger conference hosted by Feeding America and FRAC that was sponsored by Walmart. While it is difficult to quantify the extent to which the content of this conference was influenced by its sponsorship, it does demonstrate the insidious nature of corporate influence on food policy.

These companies also exert influence in Washington through traditional lobbying efforts. Lobbying records analyzed by Reuters reveal that the food and agriculture industries more than doubled their spending in Washington during the past three years (Wilson and Roberts, 2012). In

the process, they largely dominated policymaking. In contrast, Reuters reported that the Center for Science in the Public Interest, widely regarded as the lead lobbying force for healthier food, spent about \$70,000 lobbying last year -- roughly what those opposing the stricter guidelines spent every 13 hours (Wilson and Roberts, 2012).

The last, most direct way those opposed to food system reform influence the legislative process is by donating directly to individual members of Congress. Marion Nestle, author of *Food Politics* (2007), asserts that about 95 percent of the funds from agricultural political action committees (PACs) go to incumbents. In other words, PAC money not only follows voting records, but it also reinforces them. This is particularly troubling in light of the recent Citizens United case in the Supreme Court, which ruled that corporations in the United States can spend as much as they want on elections. In fact, not long ago, USDA sought to establish healthier nutrition standards for public school meals that would have severely reduced the frequency with which pizza was served. However, thanks to industry push back, pizza was declared a vegetable. Senator Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), a member of the Senate Agriculture Committee who is up for re-election this year, was instrumental in bringing this about. Minnesota is home to Schwan Food Co, a private company with nearly \$3 billion in sales and 70 percent of the school frozen pizza market. Though this particular example does not pertain to the farm bill, it is just one of many examples that highlights the influence the opposition can exert on policymakers to block any changes to the food system that might affect their profit margin.

## **ADVOCACY STRATEGIES AND TACTICS**

This section closely examines the processes by which CFSC advocates have worked toward their defined objectives. It maps out the methods they have used to engage their membership, to form and function as a member of several networks and alliances and take action.

Primarily, the purpose of the Community Food Security Coalition’s 2012 Farm Bill campaign is to ensure that CFSC’s member-identified priorities are reflected in the language of the bill. Implicit within that overarching goal is the necessity to strengthen member ownership of and active involvement in CFSC’s policy agenda. My synthesis of CFSC’s overall strategy is presented in Table 5.

**Table 5: CFSC’s 2012 Farm Bill Campaign Strategy**

<b>Inputs</b>	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Outputs</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>
CFSC Policy Staff	Field and Hill lobby visits of key targets	Key targets reached and influenced to become champions/cosponsors of CFSC marker bills	<b>Immediate</b> Senate and House champions put forward language/cosponsor local food legislation
Alliances/Networks	Develop policy positions on marker bills and endorse additional bills	Draft legislative language provided for Congressional staff around CFSC priorities	Grassroots more vocal about food policy issues
Money	Tracking of marker bills and votes; up to date target information	CFSC members more directly engaged in policy debate at national level	<b>Mediam-Term</b> <b>2012 Farm Bill Says:</b>
CFSC Members	Briefings on the Hill to educate Congressional staff about local food initiatives funded through the Farm Bill		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CFP doubled to \$10M/yr mandatory</li> <li>• Geographic preference for school meals strengthened</li> <li>• Farmers markets get wireless EBT machines and technical assistance</li> <li>• Increased infrastructure for small and medium-sized farmers</li> <li>• Support for urban ag institutionalized (new office of Community Ag at USDA)</li> </ul> <p><i>Support for priorities that overlap with ours</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protecting SNAP from cuts or restructuring</li> <li>• Funding for HFFI</li> <li>• Funding for BFRD</li> <li>• Funding for section 2501</li> </ul>
	In-district engagement with Congressional targets via allies and members		<b>Long-Term</b> US food and farm policy promotes just, healthy, environmentally sustainable local and regional food systems
	Coordinate with allies to broaden support base via sign-on letters, webinars and information-sharing		
	Tracking of marker bills		
	Keep CFSC membership informed and engaged via CFSC policy newsletter, action alerts and social media		

While CFSC is not explicit about its “theory of change,” the above table illustrates that the Community Food Security Coalition’s 2012 Farm Bill campaign is an integral part of the

organization's overall mission. The short-term outcomes of this campaign are to actively engage CFSC members in food and farm policy discussions and to identify legislative champions of local food initiatives in the hopes that these two objectives will increase the likelihood of a 2012 Farm Bill that supports CFSC priorities. However, this is not the long-term goal of the campaign. Any kind of systemic change takes a long time to achieve. In fact, to see the kind of food systems CFSC envisions will most certainly require multiple farm bill cycles of insisting on policies that encourage long-term environmentally viable crop production that supports health, nutrition and living wages. CFSC's campaign around the 2012 Farm Bill is crucial, but it is only a first step. In that sense, measuring the success of CFSC's advocacy work is difficult because it stretches beyond the scope of this single campaign.

A campaign's message is a key part of any strategy, however in the case of CFSC's 2012 Farm Bill campaign, the message is unclear. All of CFSC's materials explain the potential of the farm bill very succinctly, but there is no precise statement or slogan that articulates the purpose of the campaign. Most action alerts sent out CFSC members urging them to call their Congressional representatives have an action-oriented subject line, but there is no uniformity, no one concept that appears on every CFSC publication related to the farm bill that brings all of these separate actions back to the overall goal of the campaign. The better able CFSC members are to articulate their reasons for taking action, the stronger CFSC members will be as grassroots activists.

In regards to constituency, CFSC is a member organization and those members are the constituency. In addition, anyone who signs up for the newsletter receives action alerts and updates, therefore they should be considered part of the CFSC constituency as well. However, it is important to note that many organizations become CFSC members simply to obtain a discount

for the annual networking conference, and therefore it is possible that many CFSC members do not have an interest in participating in the organization's policy work. As previously mentioned, CFSC is the administrator of a highly trafficked listserv called Comfood. CFSC sends all policy-related information to this listserv, so it is a very effective way to identify constituents who are not CFSC members or do not already subscribe the CFSC monthly policy newsletter. CFSC also broadens its base of support as a member of several networks and alliances with other organizations working on farm bill issues. In addition to building its constituency, CFSC also actively engages it in setting the policy agenda. Beginning in the fall of 2011, CFSC conducted about a dozen listening sessions in order to solicit membership input around priorities for the campaign. Over 300 people attended these sessions and the data collected served as the basis for CFSC's strategy.

The Community Food Security Coalition's preferred method of educating its members is via its electronic newsletter, which is sent out once a month. However, in an effort to maximize the impact CSFC members could have as advocates, CFSC cosponsored a webinar with the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC) – a partner organization with which CFSC works very closely. The webinar, entitled “Nonprofit Advocacy for Food & Farm Policy: Understanding Lobbying Guidelines and Restrictions,” was intended to help both CFSC and NSAC organizational members understand how to advocate for food and farm policy reform at the grassroots level within the federal law. Many 501(c)(3) organizations are unsure of what the parameters are for advocacy work and therefore choose not to engage at all. However, grassroots power is the only thing that can counter the kind of power wielded by opponents to reform with deep pockets. This webinar was intended to encourage the kind of grassroots advocacy that is so

central CFSC's strategy by differentiating between types of advocacy, and explaining how to track and measure it for federal reporting.

In addition to the calls and emails to House and Senate Agriculture Committee members generated at the grassroots level as well as district and state targeting, CFSC coordinates with the many alliances and networks in which it participates to draft sign-on letters urging committee members to support farm bill programs relevant to CFSC's mission. For example, on February 10<sup>th</sup> of this year, CFSC signed a letter along with about 100 other organizations representing a wide variety interests to urge Congress to pass a comprehensive farm bill this year. The Community Food Security Coalition also conducts lobby visits on the Hill and collaborated with Representative Pingree's and Fudge's staff on some of the language that appears in each of their bills.

Though CFSC's strategy is fairly comprehensive, it does not include a media component. This is most likely the result of a decision that was made about how best to use CFSC's very limited human resources. However, the media is an invaluable tool in maximizing the influence of a campaign, and its absence severely limits the reach of CFSC's 2012 Farm Bill Campaign.

#### **IV. ADVOCACY EVALUATION**

While the first subsection focuses on the outcomes of the campaign, the subsections that follow provide an evaluation of specific elements of the process.

##### ***Outcomes***

The Agriculture Reform, Food and Jobs Act of 2012, approved by the Senate Agriculture committee in late April, contains several CFSC priorities:

- **Community Food Projects Program** – Doubling mandatory funding for this hallmark CFSC program to \$10 million per year
- **Farmers Market and Local Food Promotion Program** - Expanding the Farmers Market

Promotion Program to include developing food hubs and doubling funding to \$20 million in mandatory funds per year for five years

- **Hunger-Free Community Incentive Grants** – A new local fruit and vegetable incentive grant program to increase purchases by SNAP customers at farmers markets and other healthy food retailers with mandatory funding totaling \$100 million over five years
- **Specialty Crop Block Grants** - Funding increased to \$70 million per year for five years
- **Healthy Food Financing Initiative** - Authorization for funding up to \$125 million to finance grocery stores and healthy food outlets in under served communities
- **Improving ease of SNAP redemption at Farmers Markets, Mobile Markets and CSAs**
  - Authority to establish pilot programs to test mobile technology and online ordering as well as ease SNAP use at Community Supported Agriculture (CSAs)
- **Seniors Farmers Market Nutrition Program** - Mandatory funding maintained at \$20 million per year.

While the inclusion this much of CFSC's farm bill platform into the bill itself is very positive, lack of tracking and reporting on the part of CFSC renders it impossible to discern the degree to which CFSC members participated in grassroots advocacy efforts. Furthermore, this is not the transformative farm bill CFSC is working towards. It cuts \$4 billion from nutrition programs that feed the neediest families, fails to provide an adequate safety net for farmers when prices are low and costs are high, and does nothing to address the power of big agribusiness over farmers and consumers. Also, support for local food systems and organic farm programs remains about one out of every thousand dollars spent by this bill. It is clear that much more work needs to be done to move toward a fair food system that works for farmers and consumers.

In order to better understand the status of CFSC's priorities in the context of the ARFJA,



table 6 provides an updated list. The asterisk symbol is used to indicate those CFSC priorities which have been included in the Agriculture Reform Food and Jobs Act of 2012 (S.3240).

Italics are used to indicate ongoing work.

As table 6 illustrates, the inclusion of many CFSC priorities are contingent on the amendment process. This is a highly volatile, unpredictable process. Favorable amendments can be defeated on the floor or, amendments meant to address CFSC issues may be objectionable to CFSC members themselves due to potentially harmful implications of the language contained within them. The amendment process is a reminder that the content of the Senate Agriculture Committee's Farm Bill cannot be used to predict what provisions the final Senate bill will contain, to say nothing of the outcomes on the House side or the result of the reconciliation process. As of now, neither chamber has a bill that could pass both the Senate and House before farm programs expire at the end of September. The uncertainty surrounding the future of the Agriculture Reform, Food and Jobs Act of 2012 makes it difficult to predict whether Congress will succeed in passing a finalized version, or even if CFSC will support it if it does.

**Table 6: Status of CFSC Priorities in the Agriculture Reform, Food and Jobs Act (ARFJA) as approved by the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry**

**Primary Priorities** (Primary priorities are those that CFSC considers of paramount importance and on which we must play a lead role in advocacy and organizing.)

**Defend and expand funding for Community Food Projects (CFP) and the Farmers Market Promotion Program (FMPP).**

- \*CFP – Community Food Project funding is doubled to \$10 million per year.
- \*FMPP – program’s scope is expanded to include support for food hub and other regional food system development and funding to \$20 is doubled million per year.

**Increase SNAP participant access to local, healthy, sustainable food enterprises.**

- \*SNAP local fruit and vegetable incentive – new grant program created that funds SNAP healthy local food incentives with total funding of \$100 million over five years.
- \*CSA connection and better technology for farm direct markets and SNAP – technology pilot provisions and language permitting SNAP program participants to use their benefits at CSAs both included
- \*Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program funding is maintained at current levels.

**Build infrastructure for local and regional food systems.**

- \*Farmers Market and Local Food Promotion Program
- *Provide mandatory funding for Value-Added Producer Grant program and Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program. There will be an amendment offered when the bill is debated by the full Senate.*
- *Farm to school provisions. There will be an amendment offered when the bill is debated by the full Senate.*

**Secondary Priorities** (Important to CFSC’s mission, but on which we expect to play a support role.)

**Protect SNAP from cuts and changes to its entitlement status.**

- The Senate bill cuts total SNAP spending by \$4.5 billion over ten years but does not make any changes in program structure or entitlement status. *There will be an amendment offered by Senator Gillibrand (D-NY) to restore SNAP funding by cutting the crop insurance programs.*

**Support the Healthy Food Financing Initiative to stimulate healthy, local food retail in underserved areas.**

- \*The ARFJA authorizes USDA to provide loans through the Healthy Food Financing Initiative (HFFI) to stimulate healthy, local food retail in underserved areas.

**Promote fair markets and increased competition in agriculture.**

- The ARFJA eliminates the direct payment and counter-cyclical commodity programs and includes payment limits and a strict definition of what it means to be actively engaged in farming to limit subsidies to the largest producers and absentee landlords. The bill does not currently address livestock market fairness. *There will be amendments offered when the bill is debated by the full Senate to tighten the commodity and crop insurance programs and to prohibit livestock packers from owning cattle prior to processing as a means to open markets and protect prices for independent ranchers.*
- Maintain support for socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers through the Office of Advocacy & Outreach. *There will be an amendment offered.*
- The Office of Advocacy and Outreach is reauthorized but the Outreach and Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers’ (known at the 2501 program) funding was cut deeply and veterans were added to those eligible for the program. *There will be an amendment to increase program funding when the bill is debated by the full Senate.*

**Protect key conservation programs such as the Conservation Stewardship Program.**

- The largest conservation cut in the ARFJA is made to the Conservation Reserve Program. Several programs are consolidated and the Conservation Stewardship Program survives, although with diminished funding. *There will be an amendment to increase funding for these programs.*

**Protect the Beginning Farmer & Rancher Development Program.**

- The ARFJA maintains the BFRDP with reduced funding. *There will be an amendment to increase funding when the bill is debated by the full Senate.*

Source: CFSC Website (2012)

In addition, a few of CFSC's primary priorities listed in table 2 have been left off the above table because they are not included in the bill, nor will they be taken up as amendments to be debated on the floor. These provisions include:

- **Create an office within USDA to improve coordination among existing programs** to create opportunities for urban and rural collaboration to increase food access and create vibrant regional food systems. Build on the progress made through the Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food initiative and provide a structure for enhanced collaboration with other agencies.
- **Call for a USDA report and guidance document on how local government regulations can support access to healthy food.** The next step from the Food Environment Atlas that resulted from the last Farm Bill's commissioned study on food access in America, a report and database with examples and best practices would be invaluable resources for Food Policy Councils and other local advocates. As CDC has developed guidance on the role of local government in preventing obesity, USDA could explore how local zoning and land-use regulations relate to food access.
- **Incorporate more local product into the Department of Defense Fresh program (DoD Fresh) and USDA Foods program (formerly known as commodities) programs for school meals.** Find a way for schools to use these funds to purchase and/or process local products to help ensure that small- and mid-size farmers can participate in these programs, and address barriers to local purchasing in the DoD Fresh program.
- **Track data on local food purchases necessary to evaluate Farm to School programs.** Improve the school meals audit process to gather data on local purchases and Farm to School programs.

Given CFSC's commitment to transforming the food system in the United States, the exclusion of these provisions may be considered a significant strategic loss. However, despite their absence from the Senate bill, it is still possible for these provisions to be incorporated into the final version of the 2012 Farm Bill. As the House Agriculture Committee begins its work, CFSC will continue to advocate for its priorities. If they are included in the House bill and survive the conference to reconcile the House and Senate versions, then the 2012 Farm Bill may be the first step to establishing food and farm policy in the United States that promotes just, healthy, environmentally sustainable local and regional food systems.

Apart from legislative wins and losses, the main point is that more people spoke up for the kind of food system they want than five years ago. In designing this campaign, CFSC began working towards the vision it wants to see accomplished in a future farm bill, maybe ten or twenty years from now, and it has started to gain support for that vision. It is unlikely that Congress will pass a radically different farm bill, but advocates must use the current farm bill cycle to start a conversation about what should be done in the future. CFSC's 2012 Farm Bill campaign has done exactly that, and therefore should be considered an unequivocal success.

### *Advocacy Strategy and Tactics*

The media wields an enormous amount of power in American democracy. Its role in shaping policies, changing public attitudes and behavior, and influencing policymakers makes a detailed media advocacy strategy a vital component of any campaign. Despite the obvious advantages to engaging the media around the 2012 Farm Bill, CFSC's work in this area was sorely lacking. It is possible that the absence of a media strategy was a consequence of the lack of human resources at CFSC's disposal to carry it out. With only two full-time staff members, it is possible that CFSC assessed its capacity and decided to rule out media engagement as a tactic in order to focus on mobilizing its own members and lobbying on their behalf on the Hill. It is true that many of CFSC's allies and network partners are engaged in media work, but in choosing not to participate, CFSC wasted an invaluable opportunity to increase its exposure. If CFSC's 2012 Farm Bill Campaign contained a media component, it would have been able to build its reputation and distinguish itself as local food advocacy group.

While not discounting the importance of more traditional forms of media, the Internet is becoming an ever more useful tool of educating and engaging the public around advocacy issues. CFSC understands this and identifies the use of social media as a primary tactic of grassroots

mobilization. Though CFSC members did receive action alerts via email and monthly policy newsletter throughout the campaign, social media outlets such as Facebook and Twitter were underutilized. The policy office mostly used these platforms to reiterate stories from the newsletter. For the most part, CFSC refrained from commenting on votes or statements made by Ag Committee members or even by fellow advocacy groups, most likely due to a lack of consensus on behalf of the Board on how to respond. Both Facebook and Twitter provide a low-cost, time-efficient way to reach a large amount of people in a way that could strengthen CFSC's existing base of support while simultaneously increasing it. Sustainable food system advocates like CFSC will never be able to compete with the massive marketing campaigns, lobbying prowess, or campaign donations the deep pockets of industry can buy. What they can and must do is use inexpensive social media techniques effectively to reach a much broader and deeper audience.

As previously mentioned, CFSC did send out many action alerts to its members, urging them to take some form of action in order to advance CFSC's policy priorities. However, CFSC is not equipped to record the number of actions taken as a result of those alerts. CFSC's inability to collect this data not only impedes its ability to determine the impact and overall usefulness of these action alerts, but also to assess the overall level of engagement of its membership. All of this information would be extremely useful both in determining the part CFSC's members played in the overall success of this campaign and developing strategies for future advocacy campaigns. Community empowerment is a central component to CFSC's vision and mission. This is reflected in CFSC's decision to hold listening sessions across the country in order to formulate its policy priorities for this campaign. The high value placed on community empowerment also manifests itself in the structure of the organization itself, namely in its various committees. As

explained in an earlier section, the Policy Committee meets via conference call once a month in order to strategize on current legislative efforts and share updates. Committee members are also meant to play a vital role in targeted outreach in specific districts and states during recesses in the federal legislative calendar. Despite its intended role, the policy committee mainly served as an information sharing mechanism and was not often utilized as an instrument of planning and implementing grassroots action. While exchanging information on these calls was useful, the policy committee was not engaged as fully as it could have been in orchestrating in-district action while Congress was in recess.

### ***Lessons Learned***

Working on CFSC's 2012 Farm Bill Campaign has taught me countless lessons about the importance of interpersonal relationships, the challenges of working in a bicoastal organization, lobbying and working in a coalition, the can be applied in the context of advocacy work elsewhere or on other policy issues. This section describes three of those lessons at length.

**Who delivers the message is almost as important as the message itself.** Jim Shultz points out that when crafting a campaign message, it is always crucial to ask who has the most credibility and persuasive power with whoever the target of a campaign may be (Shultz, 2002). In the case of CFSC's 2012 Farm Bill campaign, the answer is constituents. CFSC policy staff has met with Congressional staff in Washington, DC countless times throughout the campaign to advocate on behalf of its members and while those visits have been effective, nothing captures the attention of a Congressional representative better than a visit from one of his/her own constituents. Sharing your personal stories and struggles with your member of Congress is the most powerful form of advocacy there is and it is the strongest weapon grassroots advocates wield against the

deep pockets of special interest groups. Working on this campaign has taught me the value of organizing in-district meetings between members of Congress and their constituents whenever possible. In the event of a logistical barrier, it is also possible to schedule Hill visits with in-district organization on the phone. As opposed to calling a Representative's office and leaving a message in support of or opposition to a specific piece of legislation, this is a way to arrange a substantive conversation between a member of Congress and one of his/her constituents. These are advocacy tactics I will most assuredly keep in mind for any future campaigns.

**Participatory objective-setting can be empowering.** Because CFSC is a member organization, any advocacy in which CFSC engages is conducted on behalf of its members and its success is dependent on their participation. VeneKlasen and Miller emphasize that the process of advocacy planning is just as important as the plan itself and stress the importance of incorporation of participatory methodologies into the planning process (VeneKlasen and Miller, 2008). The listening sessions CFSC conducted in preparation for its 2012 Farm Bill campaign illustrate this very important point. This technique created a platform for discussion in which all CFSC members had the opportunity to express their views and shape the direction of this campaign. By letting its members drive the formulation of campaign objectives, CFSC empowered them and strengthened their commitment to seeking policy reform through the 2012 farm bill cycle. CFSC must faithfully represent their members' interests in order to successfully advocate on their behalf and by conducting these listening sessions, CFSC has done precisely that.

**Effective lobbying is a team effort.** As previously mentioned, CFSC participates in several networks and partnerships in order to maximize its impact. While CFSC does make many visits

to the Hill independently, there are also many occasions when CFSC makes a lobby visit with several organizations at once. By lobbying as a part of a diverse group, CFSC is able to broaden the appeal of its platform and thereby increase the likelihood of getting support from lawmakers. Lobbying coalitions also have the added benefit of pooling resources. As Jim Shultz explains, “you never know who might have some information, contact, or skill that will prove useful to the cause” (Shultz, 2002, p.162).



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