

2018 Farm Bill Fact Sheet

Preserve "Heat and Eat"



House Farm Bill Will Take Food Off the Tables of Low-income Californians

The Farm Bill (HR 2) headed to the House floor soon would cut SNAP/CalFresh for many low-income households with out-of-pocket utility expenses like heating and electricity. If enacted, the bill would prevent states from using households' (other than those with a member over age 60) participation in the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) to qualify them for a higher CalFresh benefit amount through a Standard Utility Allowance (SUA). This positive state option is commonly known as "Heat and Eat."

For decades, California has used "Heat and Eat" to reduce paperwork for struggling households and save administrative costs. **The House Farm bill would be a step backward**—increasing the hassle and burden of applying for CalFresh by requiring households to document their utility costs to continue receiving the SUA. Many CalFresh households already facing significant obstacles wouldn't be able to provide written documentation of their utility expenses, and as a result **would see their already insufficient CalFresh benefits reduced by \$62 per household on average.**¹ Many of the households that would lose benefits have members with disabilities or are working-poor households.



"Heat and Eat" works to help struggling Californians put food on the table

- "Heat and Eat" helps low-income households meet their basic needs like heating, electricity and food.
- The policy has been working well for CalFresh households and administrators for decades.
- If eliminated, many CalFresh households would see their already modest monthly food benefits cut.

What should Congress do?

Oppose The House Farm Bill proposal to end "Heat and Eat." If enacted, over 350,000 CalFresh households would face the increased hassle and burden of providing unnecessary paperwork, causing many low-income households to lose vital food assistance.²

Why This Matters

"Heat and Eat" works for California. Unfortunately, the House Farm Bill threatens the state's progress in helping low-income households afford a healthy diet. The Farm Bill should not break the long history of bipartisan commitment to ensure struggling families across the country have enough to eat. **Strengthening SNAP/CalFresh, not cutting it, is the right way forward.**

¹ California Food Policy Advocates, "The Farm Bill "Heat and Eat" Provision: Overview, Opportunities, Risks and Recommendations" available at: <https://www.cfpa.net/CalFresh/CFPAPublications/CalFresh-HeatandEatStatement-2014.pdf>

² This estimate is based on local assistance estimates included in the 2015-2016 Governor's Budget available at: <http://www.cdss.ca.gov/cdssweb/entres/localassistanceest/Jan15/EstimateMethodologies.pdf>