



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

June 14, 2012

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**Jewish Groups Deliver Nearly 18,000 Signatures to House Leadership, Administration Calling for a "Just Farm Bill"**

*Coalition pushes for anti-hunger and sustainable agricultural policies in the United States and abroad*

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** – Today, seven national Jewish groups delivered a petition with nearly 18,000 signatures to House Leadership and the Obama Administration demanding a focus on food justice in the next Farm Bill. The signatures represent a Jewish communal voice advocating for a better food system and have been collected since October by the Jewish Farm Bill Working Group, which consists of **American Jewish World Service (AJWS), the Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life (COEJL), Hazon, the Jewish Council for Public Affairs (JCPA), MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger (MAZON), the National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW) and the Union for Reform Judaism (URJ)**. The delivery of this petition is targeted to anticipate mark-up of the bill by the House Agriculture Committee in the next few weeks.

"We have seen a tremendous outpouring of support for our efforts to advance a values-inspired vision of food justice," said Ruth W. Messinger, president of American Jewish World Service. "It has been evident through the petition that our constituents understand how critical it is that the United States work to enact policies that pursue long-term approaches to eradicating hunger. We cannot wait any longer."

The working group itself represents a diverse cross section of Jewish advocacy, denominational and educational organizations coming together to call for anti-hunger and sustainable agriculture policies both in the U.S. and abroad. The group's work is based on its [Jewish Platform for a Just Farm Bill](#), a statement of principles endorsed by twenty Jewish organizations including representation from the four largest denominations (Reform, Conservative, Orthodox, and Reconstructionist). These principles include reform of international food aid policies, protection of funding for domestic food programs, particularly the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and sustainable land and energy use.

"We are taught in Leviticus to leave the gleanings of our field for the poor and the stranger when harvesting our crops," said JCPA President Rabbi Steve Gutow. "Well the Farm Bill is a way to do exactly this with our national harvest; it is our legislative opportunity to make certain that the bounty of America is brought to the tables of all Americans, rich or poor. Through programs like SNAP, we can ensure that our hungry are fed and that no child is left

to wonder when their next meal will be. Any Farm Bill that does not take care of our poor is not reflective of who we are as Americans.”

While the farm bill may seem an unlikely target for a surge of Jewish activism, this omnibus legislation, which dictates U.S. law on everything from crop insurance to food assistance to biofuels, is packed with policies that have deep connections to Jewish ethics.

“As a Jewish people, we have been thinking about what is kosher—literally, ‘fit’ —for us to eat for 3,000 years, said Cheryl Cook, chief operating officer at Hazon. “It makes sense that there is an outpouring of support in the Jewish community to create a just and sustainable food system in this country.”

Abby J. Leibman, president and CEO of MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger added, “Every five years, the Farm Bill reauthorization process gives us a chance to reexamine our national priorities with regard to food. The Farm Bill governs the kinds and levels of assistance we provide to hungry people, helps regulate what crops are planted, establishes whether sustainable farming and conservation practices will be implemented, and influences whether our food is healthy and affordable. Each and every one of us has a stake in the Farm Bill.”

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**American Jewish World Service**

*Inspired by Judaism’s commitment to justice, American Jewish World Service (AJWS) works to realize human rights and end poverty in the developing world. [www.ajws.org](http://www.ajws.org)*

**Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life (COEJL)**

*The Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life (COEJL) deepens and broadens the Jewish community’s commitment to stewardship and protection of the Earth through outreach, activism and Jewish learning. Through a network of Jewish leaders, institutions and individuals, COEJL is mobilizing the Jewish community to conserve energy, increase sustainability, and advocate for policies that increase energy efficiency and security while building core Jewish environmental knowledge and serving as a Jewish voice in the broader interfaith community.*

**Hazon**

*Hazon seeks to create healthier, more sustainable communities in the Jewish world and beyond. [www.hazon.org](http://www.hazon.org)*

**Jewish Council for Public Affairs**

*JCPA, the public affairs arm of the organized Jewish community, serves as the national coordinating and advisory body for the 14 national and 125 local agencies comprising the field of Jewish community relations. [www.jewishpublicaffairs.org](http://www.jewishpublicaffairs.org)*

**MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger**

*MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to preventing and alleviating hunger among people of all faiths and backgrounds. [www.mazon.org](http://www.mazon.org)*

**National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW)** *is a grassroots organization of volunteers and advocates who turn progressive ideals into action. Inspired by Jewish values, NCJW strives for social justice by improving the quality of life for women, children, and families and by safeguarding individual rights and freedoms. [www.ncjw.org](http://www.ncjw.org)*

**Union for Reform Judaism (URJ)**

*The Union for Reform Judaism (URJ) connects Reform Jewish communities in North America to create a dynamic network of congregants, lay leaders, clergy and professionals. The URJ includes more than 900 congregations encompassing 1.5 million Reform Jews. [www.urj.org](http://www.urj.org)*

