

# Rural Development

## 2012 Farm Bill

Equipping America's rural communities for economic growth and prosperity



The economic recession has exacerbated depopulation and declining family income trends in rural America. Small-scale entrepreneurship is the one development strategy that consistently works in rural communities. Over half of all new jobs created in the most rural areas come from small, non-farm business ventures. Rural development programs targeted at small business development have contributed to this job creation in rural areas. Despite being a key part of proven job-creation strategies, these programs have experienced disproportionate cuts for over a decade.

### 2012 Farm Bill

The 2012 Farm Bill should invest in rural small-business development by:

- Providing flexibility and incentives for regional collaboration to leverage limited resources.
- Strategically streamlining USDA Rural Development (RD) programs.
- Launching a Rural Community Prosperity Fund with mandatory funding to support entrepreneurial activities through existing RD programs.
- Funding the Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program to provide training, technical assistance, and microcredit for small businesses in rural areas.
- Opening new market opportunities for farmers by directly funding Value-Added Producer Grants.

### Why It Matters

- Public investments will ensure rural entrepreneurs gain access to important seed capital, enterprise financing, and technical assistance.
- Investments in small business development drive economic growth in rural communities.
- Economic growth will help buck depopulation and declining income trends in rural America and revitalize communities.
- If the fiscal needs of our nation's rural communities are not addressed in the next Farm Bill, they will not be addressed – it is the Agriculture Committee's authority, jurisdiction, and responsibility to address rural economic development.



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