

Farm Bill May Impact What's for Dinner

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This Dec. 20, 2013 file photo shows shoppers passing through the Sweet Auburn Curb Market in Atlanta. Look no further than your dinner plate to understand how the sweeping farm bill affects you. About 15 percent of the money in the new law, signed by President Obama Friday, will go to farmers to help them grow the food you eat. Most of the rest of the money in the almost \$100 billion-a-year law will go to food stamps that help people buy groceries. (AP Photo/David Goldman, File)

WASHINGTON (AP) — Look no further than your dinner plate to understand how the new [farm bill](#) [1] affects you.

About 15 percent of the money in the legislation signed into law Friday by President Barack Obama will go to farmers to help them grow the food you eat. Most of the rest of the money in the almost \$100 billion-a-year law will go to food stamps that help people buy groceries.

Five ways the farm law affects what is on your plate:

WHERE YOU SHOP: The law includes incentives for farmers markets and makes it easier for food stamp recipients to shop there. A new program would award grants to some farmers markets and grocery stores that match food stamp dollars if recipients buy fruits and vegetables. It has a bit of money to help finance the building of grocery stores in low-income areas that don't have many retail outlets.

THE MAIN COURSE: Most of the subsidy money benefits producers of the main row crops — corn, soybeans, wheat, cotton and rice. Most corn and soybeans in the U.S. are grown for animal feed, so those subsidies keep costs down for the farmers and the livestock producers who buy feed for their beef cattle, hogs and chickens. Corn is an ingredient in hundreds if not thousands of processed foods you buy in the grocery store.

So the steak, rice and bread you buy are all most likely to be cheaper because of

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the law, as are sweet corn and edamame, the corn and soybeans that people eat.

FRUITS AND VEGGIES: Most fruits and vegetables don't get generous subsidies like the staple crops do. But starting in the 2008 farm law, fruit and vegetable producers began getting more of the share, including block grants, research money and help with pest and disease mitigation. Money for these "specialty crops" — everything from blueberries to tomatoes to potatoes to nuts and honey — was expanded in the new law, which also provides money to encourage locally-grown food production and boosts organic agriculture.

MILK: [It's unclear if the price of a gallon of milk will be affected by the law](#) [2].

Unlike the rest of agriculture, dairy farmers have had more of a rough go in recent times, facing price collapses and shuttering dairies in the past five years. To prevent that from happening again, the bill gets rid of current subsidies for dairy and creates a type of insurance that pays out when the gap between the price farmers receive for milk and their feed costs narrows. How much the program will help remains to be seen.

DESSERT: The law leaves intact the government's sugar program, which supports prices and protects growers from foreign competition. Candy makers and other food and beverage companies long have said government protections for sugar farmers artificially restrict supplies, force consumers to pay more for sugar products and only benefit a few thousand well-off growers.

Many of those candy makers and food companies have turned instead to high fructose corn syrup, which sweetens many of the foods you find at the grocery store. That sweetener is made with corn.

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