

THE RURAL REPORT | FEB 17 2026

Updates on Federal Action and Funding Opportunities
Supporting Development in Rural Communities

Thompson Introduces Farm Bill in the House

On Friday, House Agriculture Committee Chair G.T. Thompson (R-PA) released the [text](#) of his eagerly awaited farm bill and has scheduled a markup for the week of February 23. The bill largely mirrors Thompson's package that advanced out of committee in 2024 with the support of a handful of Democrats and maintains a budget-neutral approach. It includes broad updates to agriculture and nutrition policies that haven't been formally reauthorized since the last farm bill was passed in 2018.

In addition to consternation about the changes made to nutrition programs in the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, House Democrats are opposing "poison pill" provisions in the bill, including blocking states from requiring pesticide makers to label their packaging in a way that differs from EPA guidance, undoing restrictions of livestock sales under laws like California's Proposition 12 and moving Food for Peace to USDA permanently following the dismantling of the U.S. Agency of International Development.

Make America Healthy Again advocates are also fighting to remove the pesticide labeling provision from the bill, creating a new layer of opposition that could complicate negotiations when the Senate takes up the bill, which MAHA claims could seriously weaken the Trump administration's coalition of support.

In the Senate, Ag leadership remains focused on a second round of funding for farmers struggling due to input costs and tariff impacts, though the timing of an aid package is unclear. It could be months before the Senate introduces its own version of the bill, which is expected to be more comprehensive than the House's.

Funding Opportunities

[Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development \(BUILD\) Grant Program](#)

U.S. Department of Transportation

The U.S. Department of Transportation's (USDOT) Office of Infrastructure Deployment provides grants for surface transportation infrastructure projects with significant local or regional impact. **Application deadline: 2/24/2026**

[USDA Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant Program](#)

U.S. Department of Agriculture

USDA Rural Development supports zero-interest loans and grants for current and former eligible Rural Utilities Service borrowers who then use the funds to help local businesses finance projects that create/retain jobs or support community facility projects. **Application Deadline: 3/31/2026**

[Electric Infrastructure Loan & Loan Guarantee Program](#)

U.S. Department of Agriculture

USDA Rural Development provides insured loans and loan guarantees to nonprofit and cooperative associations, public bodies, and other utilities. Insured loans primarily finance the construction of electric distribution facilities in rural areas. **Application deadline: Open**

[Water & Waste Disposal Loan & Grant Program](#)

U.S. Department of Agriculture

USDA Rural Development provides funding for clean and reliable drinking water systems, sanitary sewage and solid waste disposal, and storm water drainage to households and businesses in eligible rural areas. **Application deadline: Open**

[On-Farm Labor Housing Loans](#)

U.S. Department of Agriculture

USDA Rural Development provides low-interest loans to eligible borrowers to develop or rehabilitate rental housing for very-low- to moderate-income farm laborers. Application deadline: **Open until funds are depleted**

[Intermediary Relending Program](#)

U.S. Department of Agriculture

USDA Rural Development provides funds to local lenders or “intermediaries” that re-lend to businesses to improve economic conditions and create new opportunities in rural communities. **Application deadline: Quarterly**

[Community Facilities Direct Loan Program](#)

U.S. Department of Agriculture

USDA Rural Development provides affordable funding to develop essential community facilities in rural areas. Projects include fire and rescue stations, town halls, health care clinics, and hospitals. **Application deadline: Open**

[Community Facilities Guaranteed Loan Program](#)

U.S. Department of Agriculture

USDA Rural Development provides loan guarantees to eligible lenders to develop essential community facilities (CF) in rural areas. Examples of community facilities include health care facilities, buildings like town halls, and public safety facilities such as fire departments. **Application deadline: Open**