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Rabia Shirazi, City Harvest, 201.562.8560

Tina Posterli, City Harvest, 516.432.0987

City Harvest Cheers Farm Bill's Nutrition Title as Victory for America's Hungry

New York, NY – City Harvest (www.cityharvest.org), the world's first and New York's only food rescue organization, today applauds the 2008 Farm Bill Nutrition Title concessions, calling the approved legislations “a victory for America's hungry that will stimulate necessary reform on the local and state levels.”

The final Farm Bill, now Public Law 110-234, comes after months of Congressional discussion. And while it's possible Congress may vote to approve the original Farm Bill upon its return on June 3, such action will have no effect on the provisions included in the newly enacted Farm Bill's Nutrition Title, which makes significant strides toward hunger relief across the United States via advancement of the Emergency Food Assistance and Food Stamp Programs.

Now in its 26th year of service, City Harvest feeds hungry men, women, and children across New York City's five boroughs; each week, City Harvest helps over 260,000 New Yorkers find their next meal. In response to the Farm Bill Nutrition Title legislation, Jilly Stephens, executive director of City Harvest, issued the following statement:

“The politics of the 2008 Farm Bill are, of course, tremendous. And while this bill does not include big reforms in subsidies, we see the changes introduced by the 2008 Farm Bill's Nutrition Title as a victory for America's hungry and are hopeful it will stimulate reform on local and state levels, and encourage essential conversations in advance of Child Nutrition Reauthorization, the next piece of Federal legislation that authorizes nutrition programs including school meal programs and WIC.

“The new Farm Bill reforms are a series of small wins and we applaud the direction in which the Farm Bill is moving. We are especially pleased that the approved Farm Bill provides for \$307B in funding during 2008-2012, 68 percent of which will go to Nutrition Programs, and an increase in funding for the Food Stamp Program (now called the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) by more than \$3B over the next 5 years. It is estimated that these advancements will impact some 11 million lower income individuals. And, for the first time in the program's history, the benefits are indexed to inflation, which means that the benefit dollars can go further, which is sorely needed, particularly in the midst of rising food prices.

“As a hunger relief organization, City Harvest is leading a number of innovative programs aimed at increasing access to healthy, affordable food in low income communities such as our Mobile Markets™ and buying club initiatives in the Melrose community of the Bronx. We see this funding commitment and reforms as a substantial win in promoting nutrition across underserved communities.

“The bill also makes allowances for farmers markets, particularly those that serve lower income persons and seniors. Funding for the Seniors Farmers Market Nutrition Program, which provides coupons for seniors to use local farmers markets, was increased by more than \$5.6M. City Harvest, being at the forefront of recognizing this need, applauds this component of the bill as well.

“We further praise the bill’s push toward ‘local’ food sources as the Nutrition Title allows schools the flexibility to specify ‘local’ as a bid requirement in purchasing for their feeding programs.

“And finally, the enacted Farm Bill supports a program called the Community Food Project Competitive grant program, which will receive \$5M in mandatory funding to allow innovative community-based initiatives that pilot innovations in reaching community food security. City Harvest is proud to be a recipient of one of these grants, which will sustain our Mount Hope Integrated Community and School Food Security Project. Through this project, City Harvest has developed a Community Supported Agriculture program in the Mount Hope neighborhood of the Bronx and school gardens within two local schools. The grant also allows us to work with community residents to complete a community-led food assessment to determine the gaps in access to healthy food along with recommended solutions and supports.

“We wish to recognize these vast improvements made possible via the Farm Bill Nutrition Title and welcome its commitment to building a stronger foundation for lower income communities to access more nutritious, affordable food.”