

Oficina del
ALCALDE 
Gobierno de Puerto Rico
Municipio de Utuado
Oficina del Alcalde

December 11, 2023

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Senate Majority Leader
322 Hart SOB
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Minority Leader
317 Russell SOB
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Speaker of the House
2468 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
House Minority Leader
2433 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Majority Leader Schumer, Minority Leader McConnell, Speaker McCarthy, and Minority Leader Jeffries:

Warm greetings from the Municipality of Utuado, Puerto Rico.

Our town is nestled in the north-central region of the island, blessed with fertile lands that are conducive to agricultural production. However, Puerto Rico's heavy reliance on food imports, which account for over 85% of our consumption, leaves us acutely vulnerable to climatological or geopolitical disruptions in the food supply chain. The devastating aftermath of Hurricane Maria in 2017 served as a stark reminder of this vulnerability when the closure of ports left countless Puerto Ricans grappling with food insecurity. It is imperative that we address this unsustainable situation by incorporating a Puerto Rican Food Sovereignty Program in the upcoming Farm Bill.

We wholeheartedly endorse the request put forth by the Puerto Rican Cultural Center in Chicago, urging the inclusion of specific language in the new Farm Bill that designates 50% of all United States Department of Agriculture program and grant funding in Puerto Rico to be directed towards local farmers and community agricultural projects on the island. Furthermore, it is crucial that the Puerto Rico Food Sovereignty Program be fully functional in Puerto Rican Spanish, ensuring that small-scale and community farmers can directly avail themselves of these programs in a manner that respects their cultural and linguistic needs. By incorporating such provisions in the new Farm Bill, Puerto Rico can take significant strides towards achieving the food sovereignty it so desperately requires.

Within Municipality Utuado, we are fortunate to have dedicated farmers representing various agricultural sectors, citrus, coffee, plantain, bananas and minor fruits production. By enacting a food sovereignty clause for Puerto Rico in the Farm Bill, we not only empower our farmers but also foster the economic development of Municipality Utuado and the entire north-central region of the island.

Therefore, we firmly stand in support of the inclusion of the Puerto Rico Food Sovereignty Program in the new Farm Bill. We express our deepest gratitude for your attention to this pressing matter and eagerly anticipate your affirmative response in endorsing this vital initiative.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Jorge A. Pérez Heredia', written over the typed name.

Hon. Jorge A. Pérez Heredia
Mayor
Municipality of Utuado