PR Food Sovereignty Program Keeps Gaining Steam

Chicago, IL – The Puerto Rico Food Sovereignty Program continues to gain momentum.

Support for the proposal has thus far garnered the support of the University of Puerto Rico's College of Agricultural Sciences, the mayors of Juncos, Aguadilla, Comerío, Orocovis, Vega Baja, Rincón, Isabela, Naranjito, Loíza, Sabana Grande, Hormigüeros and Manatí. Support has also been garnered along with local organizations such as the Sustainable Agriculture Community Land Trust. Jessie Fuentes, Chicago City Council Alderperson, and Cristina Pacione-Zayas, former Illinois State Senator and current Deputy Chief of Staff of Chicago Mayor Brandon Johnson, also support the initiative. They have joined the call for the inclusion of the Puerto Rico Food Sovereignty Program in the upcoming Farm Bill.

"We are confident that support for this essential initiative will keep growing in the weeks and months ahead. This common-sense initiative seeks to maximize federal funds to help Puerto Rico recover in a sustainable and self-sufficient manner," said José Lopéz, Executive Director and co-founder of the Puerto Rican Cultural Center. "As we have repeatedly told Members of Congress and staff we have met with, our proposal would NOT cut a single cent of any current food stamp recipient. Current USDA programs on the island are clearly not working and a reprogrammed equivalent or exceeding half of all additional funds allocated in the farm bill to Puerto Rico should be directed towards building a resilient and sustainable food system for our people. We look forward to working with all stakeholders to build a robust food sovereignty program for Puerto Ricans, which should be everyone's goal and would ensure a transition from NAP to SNAP would be effective in boosting locally produced food," López added.

Food sovereignty is defined, according to the US Food Sovereignty Alliance, as the right of people to choose what type of food they want to eat and where and how they get that food.

Currently, Puerto Rico imports more than 85% of its food which leaves Puerto Ricans in a vulnerable position and without the necessary sustainability to support itself. The PR Food Sovereignty Program seeks to address this critical issue by maximizing nutritional assistance funds and allocating half of all total USDA funding for Puerto Rico to support farmers and agricultural sovereignty in a culturally competent way.

"We call on Congress to act and join the growing support of leaders on the ground and support this initiative that helps Puerto Ricans thrive, and not continue to depend on a fragile system of food importation," said Juan M. Calderón, Chief Operating Officer of the Puerto Rican Cultural Center.