

OUR MEMBER PRIORITIES

WE SUPPORT:

iowafarmersunion.org

Restoring Water Quality

Rural communities & farm families deserve clean water that is safe for our children to drink; we need a water quality plan that targets watersheds with consistent implementation & monitoring and adequate & sustainable funding.

- In 2015, *E.coli* & toxic algae blooms closed over 2 dozen state park beaches in Iowa.
- Over the past 5 years, more than 60 Iowa cities faced unsafe nitrate levels in their drinking water.
- In 2016, the USGS reported record nitrogen levels in the Mississippi River & a “dead zone” in the Gulf of Mexico that had grown to 6,800 square miles.
- The Natural Resources Trust Fund approved by voters in 2010 remains unfunded by the legislature.

Growing Local Food Systems

We can build a more vibrant and resilient farm & food economy by pursuing a policy of food independence, supporting the growth of diversified family farms, and investing in local, farmer-owned marketing & processing facilities.

- Direct-to-consumer food sales generate over \$320 million a year for Iowa farms.
- If Iowa farmers met just *half* the existing demand for locally grown food, it would create \$1.67 billion in annual sales and support 12,000 Iowa jobs.
- Food crops are a vital opportunity for the thousands of new farmers we need to recruit over the next decade.
- Better access to fresh local produce improves nutrition and health outcomes for Iowa families.

Promoting Family Livestock Farms

Market concentration & consolidation have displaced many family livestock farms; we need a plan for the rural economy that promotes and prioritizes locally-owned family farms and a high quality of life for rural communities.

- Since 1970, Iowa has lost over 90 percent of its independent family hog farms.
- Just four companies process 85 percent of cattle, 74 percent of hogs, and 54 percent of chickens.
- Contract livestock farming has resulted in unfair treatment of farmers and profits that flow to the out-of-state corporations that own the animals.
- Industrial livestock facilities pose infrastructure & environmental burdens for rural communities.

Protecting Farms from Pesticide Drift

Our farm families have a right to basic legal & financial protections when negligently applied chemicals destroy a crop, damage a farm business, or harm the health of farm families & farm workers.

- Drift poses a risk to human health, livestock, and any field crop not approved for that chemical.
- In 2016, dicamba drift damaged hundreds of thousands of crop acres and caused millions of dollars in losses to farms across 10 states.
- Contaminated food crops endanger human health and risk an average of \$25,000+ in per acre losses.
- Iowa ranks 6th in certified organic farms; 30 percent of organic farmers are beginning farmers.

The Iowa Farmers Union is a grassroots member organization of family farmers, ranchers, advocates, and consumers who work to promote and strengthen the independent family farm. Our members include corn, soybean and grain farmers, livestock producers, dairy producers, organic farmers, fruit and vegetable and specialty crop growers, and diversified market farms that sell directly to local consumers. As the oldest general farm organization in Iowa, we have served as the voice of family farmers since 1915.