

2024 Annual Convention

Special Order of Business

THE FARM BILL

Whereas, The 2018 Farm Bill expired on September 30, 2023, and Congress reached agreements to extend the current farm bill; And while extensions were necessary to ensure the continuation of essential farm policies and programs for the 2024 crop year, full reauthorization with important reforms to current farm and food policy is required to meet the needs of family farmers, consumers, and our communities.

Whereas, the delays in farm bill debate represent a failure in political leadership at a time when farmers' needs were most pressing due to deteriorating markets, weather related crises around the country, and a massively consolidating agribusiness environment which has increased the cost of production.

Whereas, The farm economy is cyclical, and commodity price and input cost volatility are among the chief reasons that family farmers are forced out of business; and further farm bills should be written with tough times in mind so that programs serve as a safety net; and further farm bills should also principally direct benefits toward family farmers. And

Whereas, Farm bills are best when they are forward-looking; and further, lawmakers must ensure the next farm bill anticipates future needs, including by strengthening farm bill conservation and renewable energy programs, which help farmers implement practices that fight climate change, build soil health, and increase resilience. And,

Whereas, The farm bill is also a food bill and the nutrition title is key to reducing hunger and poverty, and improving food and nutrition security. Therefore, be it

Resolved, The following policies and provisions should be included in the Farm Bill.:

- Advance Farmers Union Fairness for Farmers campaign priorities by:
 - Including a dedicated competition title;
 - Bolstering market price discovery and transparency;
 - Updating the Packers & Stockyards Act and creating the “Office of the Special Investigator” for competition at USDA to protect livestock producers from anticompetitive practices;
 - Reinstating mandatory country-of-origin labeling (COOL);
 - Reforming checkoff programs to be producer controlled and regularly reviewed; and
 - Spurring the development and expansion of diverse, local, and/or regional markets throughout all aspects of farm and food supply chains.
- Maintain and improve the farm safety net by:
 - Increasing loan rates and other price-based triggers to reflect higher commodity prices and input costs;
 - Establishing a dual enrollment option that allows farmers to receive the higher of the Agricultural Risk Coverage (ARC) or Price Loss Coverage (PLC) calculated payment;
 - Allowing for a voluntary base acres and yield update;
 - Making risk management products more accessible for specialty crop producers and diverse cropping systems;

- Increasing oversight of the delivery of the federal crop insurance program to ensure that family farmers and ranchers are the primary program beneficiaries.
- Strengthen conservation programs and expand renewable energy opportunities by:
 - Including strong funding that meets demand for voluntary, incentive-based conservation programs;
 - Providing crop insurance discounts to farmers for planting cover crops or for using other practices that increase resiliency or decrease risk;
 - Supporting and improving the Rural Energy for America Program (REAP); and
 - Maintaining a strong Conservation Reserve Program (CRP).
- Maintaining a strong nutrition title which should include robust funding for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), increase opportunities for local and regional procurement, and that supports the food and nutrition security of our communities;
- Supporting programs that promote and expand farmers markets, farm-to-school, and other initiatives that strengthen local, regional, and diverse market opportunities;
- Addressing farm stress and mental health in our communities, including by expanding and funding the Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network (FRSAN);
- Addressing barriers faced by urban, peri-urban, and historically underserved farmers and ranchers in accessing scale-appropriate programs, credit, and other resources;
- Rectifying county-level USDA staffing shortages, which impede program implementation, by increasing funding, hiring, training, and pay for staff;
- Strengthening the farm bill research title, especially programs that help farmers mitigate and adapt to climate change; and
- Providing all necessary funding to sustain and improve programs while streamlining farm program applications and delivery processes whenever possible.

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OPPOSING CO2 PIPELINE USE OF EMINENT DOMAIN

WHEREAS, The Iowa Farmers Union supports biofuels as a first step to a more climate friendly transportation system while acknowledging that several aspects of biofuels production (including carbon footprint questions) indicate they are not yet a long-term solution. And,

WHEREAS, Using pipelines and deep earth burial are not the only, or best, for carbon sequestration but will only perpetuate an unsustainable system; and new technologies for carbon capture and removal are being developed; and most of these make the carbon or CO2 reusable for other purposes and require much less energy. And,

WHEREAS, Viable solutions exist that do not require transporting a dangerous product through pipelines. And,

WHEREAS, One of our country's founding principles is the supremacy of property rights, which can only be abridged for uses deemed to provide significant public benefit; and the proposed pipelines are being built by outside interests and financiers who hope to exploit tax benefits for their personal gains which will also leave Iowa; and the claims of providing public benefit fail to rise to the level to justify the use of eminent domain. And,

WHEREAS, If pipeline developers are unable to negotiate satisfactory agreements with landowners in their respective paths, they should abandon these projects. And,

WHEREAS, The track record of other pipelines in Iowa has shown that instead of providing public good, they cost farmers millions in lost revenue; and their construction causes long-term damage to soil health; and drainage system disruptions are often ongoing; and crop yields suffer long term; and property values are lowered. And,

WHEREAS, The proposed pipelines will carry an extremely deadly compound which poses imminent danger if it leaks for all life, plus creating a very serious danger for emergency personnel. Therefore be it

RESOLVED, That because the public benefit falls significantly short, and because the right to secure our property is so important, the Iowa Farmers Union reaffirms its demand that the Iowa Utilities Board deny the use of eminent domain for these pipelines. Further be it

RESOLVED, That the Iowa Legislature should eliminate the use of eminent domain for carbon pipelines; in addition the legislature should also take deliberate steps to fortify landowner rights in carbon pipeline disputes; and the legislature should fortify the ability of local governments to protect their citizens, their community resources, and their natural resources.

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FARMERS' LEGAL RIGHTS IN PESTICIDE CASES

WHEREAS, research shows that pesticide exposure, including exposure to specific pesticides, is linked to several types of cancer, such as non-Hodgkin lymphoma, multiple myeloma, and prostate, kidney, and lung cancers, among others; and,

WHEREAS, major pesticide companies are facing billions of dollars in lawsuits annually regarding health damages that plaintiffs claim are caused by exposure to their products; and,

WHEREAS, these companies are engaging in a multi-state lobbying effort to grant immunity to pesticide companies in civil lawsuits filed against them for damages caused by their products; and,

WHEREAS, granting immunity to pesticide companies in lawsuits would strip Iowa farmers and rural residents of their legal rights to seek justice and be properly compensated for health damages caused by these chemicals; and,

WHEREAS, any organization that truly represents farmers must stand for the legal rights of farmers and rural communities, ensuring they have access to justice in the face of health damages caused by corporate malpractice;

RESOLVED, that the Iowa Farmers Union strongly opposes granting immunity to pesticide companies in civil lawsuits, and will work to protect the legal rights of farmers and rural residents to seek redress for health damages caused by pesticide exposure.

RESOLVED, that the Iowa Farmers Union supports increased research and action focused on improving the occupational health and safety of farmers and farmworkers, including efforts to expose harmful chemical practices and to develop safer, more sustainable alternatives to hazardous pesticides.

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AGRICULTURE AND IOWA'S RISING CANCER RATES

WHEREAS, a State is only as healthy as the citizens who live within it, and a farming community is only as strong as the farmers who comprise it;

WHEREAS, the 2024 Annual Cancer in Iowa Report released by the Iowa Cancer Registry announced that Iowa has the fastest growing rate of new cancers in the United States and the second highest cancer rate overall;

WHEREAS, with over 20,000 new cases of cancer each year in 2023 and 2024, the Iowa Cancer Registry now records almost twice as many cancer cases as it did when the registry began in 1973;

WHEREAS, water quality, and especially nitrate levels, is well-recognized by scientists as a risk factor in many high-incidence cancers—including lymphoma, breast cancer, blood cancer, and colon cancer—and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources reported 577 impaired waterways in Iowa in 2024;

WHEREAS, agricultural exposures, including pesticides, endotoxins, and diesel exhaust, have been associated with increased risk for various cancers;

RESOLVED, that the Iowa Farmers Union supports the State of Iowa in researching and addressing the implications of modern agricultural practices on the health of Iowa's farmers and the general population, with particular focus on cancer incidence and its relationship to water quality and agricultural exposures;

RESOLVED, that the Iowa Farmers Union supports the development of a renewed Nutrient Reduction Strategy to limit water pollution in the State of Iowa, to address growing public and environmental health concerns, and to safeguard both the health of our communities and the long-term sustainability of our agricultural practices.

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LOCAL FOOD MARKETING AND PURCHASING
INCENTIVES

WHEREAS, all humans eat and require nutritious food in order to live full and productive lives; and

WHEREAS, 'local food' supports the local economy, benefits the environment, promotes a safer food supply, and often contains more nutrients than non-local food; and,

WHEREAS, we define 'local food' as food grown and/or raised, or value-added products produced with food grown and/or raised for human consumption in Iowa and adjacent counties; and,

WHEREAS, there is an increasing trend of government investments in local food purchasing incentives to support local food, especially for use in schools and food assistance programs; and,

WHEREAS, we believe that any state funding directed to food banks, schools, or food assistance organizations for food purchasing should be used to source those foods directly from local farms or via food hubs; and,

WHEREAS, the Choose Iowa program, administered by the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, aims to connect consumers to Iowa-grown produce and food products, while expanding markets for Iowa farmers; and,

WHEREAS, the Choose Iowa program includes a marketing component, a grant-giving program, and a purchasing program;

RESOLVED, that the Iowa Farmers Union supports the use of government investments for local food purchasing incentives to increase demand for locally-produced food;

RESOLVED, that the Iowa Farmers Union supports increased investment in all aspects of the Choose Iowa Program of the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship to further promote local food production and consumption in Iowa, ensuring stronger markets for Iowa farmers and greater access to fresh, local food for Iowans.

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FAIR TRADE AND TARIFFS

Whereas, International trade agreements, when properly constructed, are useful vehicles that lessen world trade tensions and increase development opportunities and economic growth; and broad trade frameworks provide a forum to work with allies to address disputes; and

Whereas, Unilateral actions run the risk of inflicting long-term damage to our relationships with trading partners, making it harder to re-establish markets and expand new ones; and

Whereas, Iowa farmers and US farmers experienced extreme economic distress in 2018 and 2019 due to unnecessary unilateral actions that alienated long-term trade allies without actual results in improved trade terms; and

Whereas, the United States Department of Agriculture responded by implementing a \$28 billion relief package to farmers which was poorly and inequitably executed and resulted in many deserving farmers being ignored and many large-scale farmers unfairly gaining massive government giveaways; and

Whereas, the resulting damage to the economy led to higher input prices for farmers; and

Whereas, the resulting consolidation of farms meant many small and medium-size farmers were at an even larger disadvantage which led to many family farmers to leave their farms altogether; and

Whereas, the ability of the United States to address real unfair trade practices (monetary policy manipulations, labor and safety standard discrepancies) was ultimately damaged; and

Whereas, the reputation of the United States as a long-term reliable trading partner was greatly damaged.
Therefore be it

Resolved, that the incoming administration should seek broad international participation with trade allies to address real trade concerns, and further be it

Resolved, that tariffs only be used as a last resort to address trade disputes, and further be it

Resolved that family farmers should be fairly compensated for damages resulting from trade disputes and that benefits should be distributed to insure that large farmers do not unfairly receive excess benefits and that consolidation in farming and agribusiness is not accelerated.

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Continuing Support for Farmers in Ukraine

WHEREAS, Farmers around the world are united by a desire to grow food for their communities and live in peace;

WHEREAS, the United States made a promise to Ukraine when it signed the Budapest memorandum over 30 years ago to protect it from Russian aggression;

WHEREAS, Food security is intricately tied to national security and all people everywhere are entitled to food security as a basic human right; Therefore be it

RESOLVED, The Iowa Farmers Union stands with the people of Ukraine in their fight for freedom and democracy and urges those involved in conflicts and wars around the world to protect farmers and to preserve agricultural systems as essential pieces of world peace and security.