Pennsylvania Farm Bureau

2025 FEDERAL PRIORITIES

- *Animal Health*
- *Dairy*
- *Energy*
- *Environment / Regulatory Reform*
- *Farm Bill*
- *Labor*
- *Transportation*
- *Wildlife Management*

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Updated 06/30/25

Animal Health

BACKGROUND

Food security relies on the U.S. having a healthy supply of livestock and poultry. It is crucial that we are proactive in preventing domestic and foreign animal health diseases from entering the U.S. This means protecting points of entry in the country, educating animal agriculture producers on proper biosecurity protocols, and requiring testing for certain known contagious viruses and pathogens, researching possible future diseases. If we do not take these diseases seriously, we leave agriculture vulnerable to an outbreak. Currently, the U.S. is experiencing an outbreak of highly pathogenic avian influenza in poultry and bovine. Consumers are seeing higher egg prices at the grocery store as a result of having to depopulate poultry flocks. We acknowledge and appreciate the work being done by state and federal officials to combat HPAI and other animal diseases, but outbreaks like we are experiencing now, demonstrate the need to be proactive and implement strong biosecurity methods.

PRIORITIES

- ✓ **Increase Funding for Resources to Prevent the Spread of Livestock and Poultry Diseases:** USDA needs the funding to continue being the leader in biosecurity research to compete internationally, protect animal health, and ensure food security. The U.S. needs to protect itself from foreign animal diseases because outbreaks risk food security and cause uncertainty among animal agriculture producers. Continued animal health concerns may put certain farms out of business. This is why the industry relies so heavily on adequate staffing at USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) because they are the front-line workers to protecting the U.S. against contagious viruses and pathogens in the livestock and poultry industry.
- ✓ **Educate the Agricultural Community and the Public on the Importance of Biosecurity:** While APHIS is a key piece to preventing the spread of animal diseases, the agricultural community and the public play a significant role in enforcing biosecurity practices on farms. Farmers are by no means being paranoid by taking extra precautions and being smart about biosecurity on farms because there are major risks if biosecurity is not followed. The Amish community in Pennsylvania is one community that Pennsylvania Farm Bureau and Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture have been working to educate on biosecurity. Certain communities like the Amish may not have access to computers to research what good biosecurity plans look like, so providing them with literature or having a conversation from a farmer-to-farmer perspective goes a long way. The public also may not be aware of biosecurity plans or why farms have them, so going beyond just the agriculture community for outreach and education when it comes to animal health, is critical.

LEGISLATION *(as of June 2025)*

- ✓ Support **S.1751/H.R.3392, the *Strengthening Tactics to Obstruct the Population of Screwworms (STOP Screwworms) Act*.** Sponsored by Senators Cornyn (R-TX), Cruz (R-TX), and Luján (D-NM) and Representative Gonzales (R-TX). This bill would direct USDA to begin construction on a new sterile fly production facility in the U.S. to combat the growing New World screwworm (NWS) outbreak.
- ✓ Support **S.574/H.R.1376, the *Healthy Poultry Assistance and Indemnification* Act.** Sponsored by Senators Wicker (R-MS) and Coons (D-DE) and Representatives Costa (D-CA) and Alford (R-MO). This bill would make all poultry growers and layer operations within a HPAI control area eligible to receive payments from APHIS' compensation program, rather than only flocks that test positive.

AFBF POLICY

175 / Biosecurity, page 54, #3.10. We support preemptive planning and development of strategies to contain and control potential outbreaks of foreign animal and plant diseases. This includes assurance by a third party that adequate supplies of crop protection products or animal vaccines are available, or production capabilities are in place in case of an outbreak.

175 / Biosecurity, page 54, #3.20. We support enhanced biosecurity checks to be administered by USDA for both humans and animals at all U.S. ports of entry to prevent the introduction of foreign animal diseases.

302 / Animal Health Emergency Management Preparedness, page 113, #4. We recommend additional research for developing diagnostics and vaccines, (including mRNA, novel and emerging vaccine development) to understand the biology of organisms and determining why diseases emerge. We and the international community must give priority to other emerging infectious diseases such as African Swine Fever, foot-and-mouth disease (FMD), Exotic Newcastle Disease, West Nile Virus, vesicular stomatitis, bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), classic swine fever, porcine epidemic diarrhea virus, pseudorabies, tuberculosis, salmonella, E. coli, scrappies, avian influenza and contagious equine metritis.

302 / Animal Health Emergency Management Preparedness, page 114, #6.11. We support funding for emerging infectious animal disease research on scrapie, Johne's, porcine reproductive and respiratory syndrome (PRRS), anthrax, chronic wasting disease, porcine circovirus type 2 (PCV2), influenzas and similar respiratory diseases affecting domestic livestock and poultry, and cryptosporidiosis, which is a critical component to a national animal health emergency management system.

302 / Animal Health Emergency Management Preparedness, page 114, #6.13. We support increased surveillance and preparedness for foreign animal diseases, including increased biosecurity inspections at all points of entry and increased funding for additional security.

307 / Livestock and Poultry Health, *Cattle*, page 123, #15.1.5. We support research and eventual eradication of the screw worm.

377 / Indemnification, page 162, #6.4. We support in the event of an outbreak of a major animal disease appropriating the necessary funds to farmers for indemnification of lost animals and income until the affected farms are approved to resume operations.

MORE INFORMATION

USDA's APHIS' Website Page on Livestock & Poultry Diseases

FAQs

- *Does the U.S. have any current outbreaks of NWS?*
    - As of 06/30/2025, there are no cases of NWS in the U.S. thanks to USDA Secretary Rollins proactively implementing a 5-pronged plan to combat NWS.

Dairy

BACKGROUND

Dairy is an important part of the agriculture industry, and it plays a critical role in Pennsylvania's (PA) economy by generating $14.7 billion in annual revenue and more than 52,000 jobs. With 500,000 cows producing more than 10.2 billion pounds of milk annually, PA ranks seventh in milk production and second nationally in the number of dairy farms. Unfortunately, the dairy industry has experienced great challenges in the past decade from whole milk being removed in schools, the rise of plant-based dairy alternatives, the COVID-19 pandemic causing farmers to have to dump milk, and the most recent H5N1 outbreak in bovine. All of issues coupled with record high input costs, the United States (U.S.) has seen a noticeable decline of dairy farms over the past decade. In 2024, the U.S. lost over 1,400 dairies with Pennsylvania losing 60 farms.

PRIORITIES

- ✓ **Whole Milk in Schools and Nutrition Programs:** The *Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010* prohibited schools from offering whole and two percent milk to students to combat childhood obesity. Currently, schools and government nutrition programs such as the Women, Infant, and Children (WIC) supplemental nutrition program are allowed to offer one percent and/or fat-free milk. Pediatricians, however, have agreed that without whole milk, children are losing out on the 21 essential minerals and 13 vitamins necessary for healthy development. Additionally, medical

research has shown that whole milk has several health benefits such as strong bone density, a healthier immune system, reducing cardiovascular risk, lowering blood pressure, reducing hunger cravings, reducing type 2 diabetes risk, and increasing sleep quality. In fact, a study showed that children consuming whole milk had 40% less risk of being overweight. Moreover, school meals are an opportunity for students who come from a low-income family to receive fresh and nutritious food and beverages. Parents who are struggling to put a meal on the dinner table at night typically cannot afford whole milk because it is the most expensive yet most nutritious type of milk.

- ✓ **Accurate Labeling of Dairy Products:** Traditional milk from a mammal has certain nutritional benefits that are not found in other beverages, which is why it is important to recognize the makeup of a product. In grocery stores, plant and nut based dairy alternatives are being shelved directly next to products derived from a mammal. This is a concern because the average consumer does not take the time to read the label on the back of the product to understand the difference in nutritional benefits. Consumers should have the confidence that the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is enforcing the established standards of identity (SOI). FDA's SOI for milk, for example, reads: "Milk is the lacteal secretion, practically free from colostrum, obtained by the complete milking of one or more healthy cows." Farm Bureau's goal in labeling of products is never to downgrade one product to boost another product. Rather, a consumer has the right to know what they are buying based on the front label of a product.
- ✓ **Mandatory and Audited Cost Surveying for Make Allowance Changes:** Farm Bureau does not support make allowance changes until Congress requires mandatory and audited surveying under the Federal Milk Marketing Orders (FMMOs). We recognize the administrative costs behind this survey, but it is a necessary step to ensuring the price and value of milk is accurate. Make allowances must be adjusted, and by using the mandatory cost surveying USDA will determine the exact and appropriate adjustment.

LEGISLATION *(as of June 2025)*

- ✓ Support **S.222/H.R.649, the *Whole Milk for Healthy Kids Act*.** Sponsored by Senators Marshall (R-KS), Welch (D-VT), McCormick (R-PA), and Fetterman (D-PA) and Representatives "GT" Thompson (R-PA) and Schrier (D-WA). This bill would allow whole, reduced-fat, low-fat, and fat-free flavored and unflavored milk in school cafeterias.
- ✓ Support **S.581/H.R.295, *the Fair Milk Pricing for Farmers Act.*** Sponsored by Senators Gillibrand (D-NY) and Susan Collins (R-ME) and Representatives Langworthy (R-NY) and Morelle (D-NY). This bill would require manufacturers to report dairy processing costs every two years, which would help dairy farmers make sure that their prices accurately reflect the costs of production.

- ✓ Support **S.420, the *Dairy Business Innovation Act.*** Sponsored by Senators Baldwin (D-WI) and Blackburn (R-TN). This bill would increase the Dairy Business Innovation Initiative program's annual authorization from $20 million to $36 million.
- ✓ Support the reintroduction of the ***Defending Against Imitations and Replacements of Yogurt, Milk, and Cheese To Promote Regular Intake of Dairy Everyday (DAIRY PRIDE) Act*** from the 118th Congress. This bill would prohibit the sale of any food that uses the market name of a dairy product (such as milk, yogurt, or cream cheese) unless the food (1) is the milk of a hooved animal, (2) is derived from such milk, or (3) contains such milk as a primary ingredient.

AFBF POLICY

111 / School & Government Purchasing Programs, page 16, #2.4. We support requiring schools to offer all pasteurized fluid milk and milk products, including flavored and unflavored whole milk, as part of the school lunch program without losing federal subsidies.

160 / Nutrition, page 49, #1.10. We support the inclusion of whole milk in food and nutrition programs.

238 / National Dairy Program, *Labeling and Standards of Identity,* page 87, #2.1.2. We support banning the sale of artificial or imitation dairy products not labeled imitation.

238 / National Dairy Program, *Changes in FMMOs*, page 87, #1.2.1.22.2. Changes to make allowance provisions that would accomplish the following: Make processing cost surveys of plants mandatory and audited by USDA to ensure the accurate data.

FAQs

- *Why did whole milk in schools get removed?*
  - *The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010* incorrectly linked whole milk's 3.25% fat content to childhood obesity. There is bipartisan agreement among Republicans and Democrats that whole milk should be reinstated in schools and nutrition programs, aligning with current medical research and pediatricians' recommendations.
- *Are students at least drinking the 1% and fat free milk currently being offered?*
  - No, parents and schools report students not drinking the milk currently being offered because its flavor and nutrition have been stripped away. As a result of students not opting for milk, we are seeing a food waste problem because they take it and throw it in the trash. Furthermore, students not drinking milk in schools has led to the U.S. losing generations of milk drinkers. USDA's Economic Research Service has shown the decline of fluid consumption trend since 1970 with sharpest decline in the 2010s.
- *Flavored milk has a lot of sugar in it. Why would Farm Bureau be advocating for unflavored and flavored whole milk to be reintroduced in schools?*

- Milk bottlers strive to make flavored milks with natural flavorings and as little added sugar as possible. Moreover, many athletes consume chocolate milk because it has proven to be an excellent recovery drink as it replenishes necessary vitamins and is an excellent source for muscle repair.

MORE INFORMATION

AFBF's Website Page on Dairy

- *Can USDA require and audit cost surveying, rather than having Congress pass legislation?*
  - No, USDA does not have the authority to make this change due to the cost it would incur. However, Farm Bureau believes the data the surveying would provide is crucial for accurate make allowance changes.

Energy

BACKGROUND

Farm Bureau advocates for policies that will create a diverse, domestic energy supply to fuel America's economic growth and prosperity while strengthening our energy security. We oppose the green energy goal of reaching a 100% clean electricity grid by 2035 and net zero emission status by 2050 as it would have adverse effects on agricultural land and the economy. Rather, Farm Bureau supports the development and implementation of a comprehensive domestic energy policy, which includes conservation, efficiency, exploration, research, and proportional use of subsidies to provide for the production of traditional and renewable energy sources. However, further action is needed to address the vulnerabilities of the U.S. energy sector and the resulting impacts on our nation's farmers and ranchers.

PRIORITIES

- ✓ **Protect Farms from Commercial Solar & Wind:** Today's farmers and ranchers are producing more with less. Farmers are used to facing land use pressure from warehouses and housing developments, now solar and wind can be added to that list. Land is valuable to our farmers, especially productive soil. Keeping fertile farmland productive is also going to help U.S. agriculture remain competitive. It is concerning when commercial solar and wind companies start offering significant amounts of money to install solar panels or windmills on productive agricultural land. While their offers may be tempting, the installation process severely damages the soil and prime agricultural land then becomes out of commission. With solar installations on the rise in Pennsylvania and across the nation, finding a balance between solar energy

development and production agriculture is more important than ever. Solutions like agrivoltaics have opened the opportunity for farmers to continue farming with solar panels being installed.

- ✓ **Balancing Renewables and Conventional Energy Sources:** Record-high input costs are taking a toll on family farms, so finding ways to save on costs like energy bills is essential to long-term sustainability. In recent years, there has been a movement for Americans to convert their vehicles and equipment to electric as a way to help reduce carbon dioxide emissions. Above all, affordability and accessibility need to remain at the forefront in discussions surrounding the promotion of electric vehicles and equipment. While Farm Bureau generally supports renewables, it needs to be left up to the consumer. Consumers know what will work best for them. In rural communities, electric vehicles or equipment are not ideal because the infrastructure is not there to support those renewables yet. Additionally, there is certain work on farms and ranches that must be done using conventional fuel powered machinery. A diverse energy supply is a great asset to farmers and currently that includes renewable energy as well as conventional energy sources.

- ✓ **Implementing Year-Round E15 Sales:** Farm Bureau has long supported Congress authorizing the sale of E15 year-round. This will benefit consumers by reducing greenhouse gas emissions, creating jobs, and providing for a lower-cost fuel option. Under current regulations, most conventional gasoline retailers have to secure specialty gasoline blendstocks to continue selling E15, a gasoline blend that is 15% ethanol, from June 1 to September 15 each year, when summer gasoline specifications are in effect. Although, with the blendstocks largely unavailable, the expansion of E15 has been severely restricted. E15 gasoline would lower the price at the pump 3 to 10 cents per gallon compared to conventional gasoline. Developing a domestic energy source gives the U.S. a competitive advantage and reduces energy market volatility concerns.

LEGISLATION *(as of June 2025)*

- ✓ Support S.593/H.R.1346, the ***Nationwide Consumer and Fuel Retailer Choice Act***. Sponsored by Senator Fischer (R-NE) and Representatives Adrian Smith (R-NE) and Craig (D-MN). This bill would extend the Reid vapor pressure (RVP) volatility waiver to enable the year-round, nationwide sale of ethanol blends up to 15 percent.

AFBF POLICY

179 / National Security, page 59, #2.13. We support a national comprehensive energy policy that will reduce the nation's dependence on foreign sources of energy.

401 / Electric Power Generation, page 167, #4.3. We oppose any restrictions on fossil fuels as a source of energy in agriculture, residential, and commercial industries.

402 / Energy, page 171, #2. We support the development and implementation of a comprehensive domestic energy policy, which includes conservation, efficiency, exploration, research, and proportional use of subsidies to provide for the production of traditional and renewable energy sources. However, further action is needed to address the vulnerabilities of the U.S. energy sector and the resulting impacts on our nation's farmers and ranchers.

402 / Energy, page 172, #4. We favor all types of energy sources; however, we oppose federal and state subsidies that unduly skew the market toward solar and wind energy electric power generation.

402 / Energy, *Solar Energy*, page 174, #14.1.6. We support prioritization of solar projects with a verified shared agricultural use component.

506 / Waste Disposal and Recycling, page 213, #1.18. We support the requirement and consumer education of disposal plans at the end of life for materials being used for alternative energy sources, such as batteries for vehicles, solar panels and wind turbines.

439 / Taxation, *Environmental and Renewable Energy Tax Issues,* page 191, #7.1.13. We support all electric passenger vehicles be exempt from any current or future tax credits.

404 / Renewable Fuels, *Biofuels*, page 175, #2.1.7. We support legislative and regulatory approval for an increased octane fuel standard utilizing higher blends of ethanol to help automobile manufacturers meet fuel efficiency standards and reduce their carbon footprint.

404 / Renewable Fuels, *Biofuels*, page 176, #2.1.15. We support a requirement to use only domestically produced feedstocks for biofuel and SAF tax credits, if such credits exist.

FAQs

- *Farm Bureau has ample policy on private property rights, so how can you tell people what they can and cannot do with their land?*
    - Property owners have every right to make the decision on whether to install renewables on their land, but they should also be aware that their soil nutrients will never be the same.

MORE INFORMATION

AFBF's Website Page on Energy

Environment / Regulatory Reform

BACKGROUND

Thirty years ago, U.S. agriculture would have needed nearly 100 million more acres to match today's production level. U.S. farmers are producing more food, renewable fuel and fiber than before, while using less water, protecting against erosion and conserving more soil, avoiding nutrient loss, increasing wildlife habit and improving biodiversity. Farmers continue to be the front-line environmentalists whose voluntary investments and utilization of conservation programs have led to cleaner air and water for all Americans, as well as increasing preservation of land. At the same time, it is important to recognize that while farmers are willing to do their part to implement climate-friendly, sustainable practices, they must not be expected to fully shoulder environmental responsibilities that should be properly distributed over a broad cross-section of industries.

PRIORITIES

- ✓ **Increase Public Awareness of Farmer's Voluntary Conservation Practices:** From climate-smart farming practices to voluntary management of forests, grasslands, wetlands and croplands, farmers are not only reducing their footprint but also are actively absorbing carbon from the atmosphere. Consider these facts about American agriculture in relation to environmental sustainability:
    - Only 10.2% of the total U.S. GHG (greenhouse gas) emissions are contributable to agriculture.
    - Combined, U.S. agriculture, land use, and forestry are a net sink for carbon emissions.
    - 140 million acres (15% of all farmland) are enrolled in USDA conservation programs.
    - Over the last decade, nearly 3 trillion pounds of corn have been used to produce clean, renewable ethanol for blending into motor fuels.
- ✓ **Streamline Permitting and Reduce Red Tape:** Farmers and ranchers have one of the most important jobs – to feed the world. Nobody wants permitting nor regulations to jeopardize food security, so Congress and government agencies must acknowledge the hard work of the agriculture community and their voluntary efforts to conserve nature's habits. The more permits and regulations in place mean higher grocery prices at the store or family farms going out of business. At the end of day, we need bipartisan and commonsense solutions that will reduce regulatory burdens and make permitting timely and effective to keep farmers farming so they can continue to provide the food, fiber, and fuel for this country and abroad.
- ✓ **Work with EPA and the Corps to Establish a New and Practical Definition of Waters of the United States (WOTUS):** The EPA's WOTUS definition has been a longstanding contentious topic with industry stakeholders as any activity that occurs within a WOTUS requires a permit, which can take years to obtain and cost thousands of dollars. Over the years, the EPA and the Corps

have attempted to expand the definition of WOTUS to regulate land features that occasionally get wet. They employed an ambiguous and subjective "significant nexus" test, claiming any such feature with a "significant nexus" to a WOTUS is itself regulated. The Supreme Court's (SCOTUS) May 2023 decision in *Sackett v. EPA* forced EPA and the Corps to revise their 2023 rule that replaced the 2020 Navigable Waters Protection Rule due to many violations of the Clean Water Act. After *Sackett*, the Corps had an opportunity to write a clear and easy to understand WOTUS Rule, but instead they chose to simply eliminate the "significant nexus" test and ignore other concerns raised by the Justices and industry stakeholders across the country. Thus, Farm Bureau greatly appreciated EPA's Administrator Zeldin's March announcement that EPA and the Corps are working to revise the current WOTUS definition and requested stakeholder feedback to do so. AFBF's suggestions for the next WOTUS definition, which PFB supports, can be found here.

- ✓ **Protect Farms from PFAs Liability:** Per- and Polyfluorinated Substances (PFAS), known as "forever chemicals," are compounds that do not easily break down over time and can be transported through rain runoff, which means they have been found in surface water and groundwater aquifers. Since farmers are simply "innocent receivers" of PFAS, it is important that farmers are not held responsible for the presence of PFAS chemicals that they did not produce or intentionally use. Perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and Perfluorooctane sulfonic acid (PFOS) have been voluntarily phased out by U.S. manufacturers for the most part but are still in limited use in products ranging from stain-resistant clothing and furniture to cookware and food packaging. Another source of PFAS contamination on farms comes from the use of soil amendments (biosolids, paper byproducts), a practice that has long been supported and encouraged by the EPA.

LEGISLATION & REGULATIONS *(as of June 2025)*

- ✓ Support the reintroduction of the ***Relief for Farmers with PFAs Act*** from the 118th Congress. This bill would direct USDA to establish a grant program to help states address contamination by PFAS on agricultural land and commercial farms.
- ✓ Support the reintroduction of the ***Agriculture PFAs Liability Protection Act*** from the 118th Congress. This bill would exempt farming from any PFAs liability.
- ✓ Concerned about EPA's ***National Primary Drinking Water Regulation (NPDWR)*** from April 2024. This regulation established maximum contaminant levels (MCLs) for six PFAS and requirements for public water systems. The MCL for the listed PFAs is 4 parts per trillion—the lowest level achievable with current technology. This MCL is 25 times lower than what the World Health Organization has proposed. While Farm Bureau shares the health and safety concerns over PFAS, this rule sets an extremely low and unrealistic standard for chemical contamination. Small rural communities will be hit hardest by these new standards because they lack the resources of large cities.

- ✓ Oppose EPA's ***Designation of Perfluoroctanoic Acid (PFOA) and Perfluorooctanesulfonic Acid (PFOS) as CERCLA Hazardous Substances*** rule from April 2024. This rule designated two widely used PFAS chemicals as hazardous substances under CERCLA, which is the law that provides a federal "Superfund" to clean up uncontrolled or abandoned hazardous waste sites as well as accidents, spills, and other emergency releases of pollutants and contaminants into the environment. While EPA stated that the intent of this rule is to hold the producers and users of these chemicals accountable, there is no language in this rulemaking that protects innocent landowners, like farmers, who passively receive these chemicals. A Superfund designation could also devastate land values and leave farmers with land that they are unable to use.

AFBF POLICY

503 / Climate Change, page 207, #2.14. We support initiatives, research and education that promote soil health, water quality and soil/water conservation, to be implemented on a voluntary basis.

503 / Climate Change, page 208, #3.3. We oppose any law or regulation requiring reporting of any GHG emissions by an agriculture entity.

547 / Water Quality, *Clean Water Act (CWA) Framework and Agricultural Water Quality Programs*, page 241, #3.8. We oppose EPA's 2023 final WOTUS Rule and any future WOTUS Rule that undermines the intent of the Sackett v. EPA ruling.

547 / Water Quality, *Chemical Contaminants*, page 246, #7.2.4. We support collaboration of agencies, universities, and the private sector to develop proactive solutions and technologies to reduce the human health and environmental risks of emerging contaminants such as PFOS/PFAS.

547 / Water Quality, *Chemical Contaminants*, page 246, #7.2.5. We support establishing an indemnification program and funding to properly compensate farmers', producers' and/or landowners' financial losses associated with emerging contaminants such as PFOS/PFAS.

547 / Water Quality, *Chemical Contaminants*, page 246, #7.2.6. We support eliminating any liability of agricultural producers and agricultural retailers/applicators for contamination by PFAS or forever chemicals on agricultural commodities or land.

FAQs

- *Does Farm Bureau support banning PFAs?*
  - Farm Bureau has policy covering the liability, research, and contamination aspects of PFAs but does not have policy regarding banning it.

- Would Farm Bureau support the word "navigable" back in the WOTUS definition?
  - We are open to any options that would align with the *Sackett* decision, while 'navigable' worked back in the first Trump Administration, there may be stronger and clearer verbiage to use now.

MORE INFORMATION

AFBF's Website Page on Regulatory Reform

AFBF's Website Page on Sustainability

Farm Bill

BACKGROUND

The first farm bill was passed in 1933 as part of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal. It was a reaction to help alleviate farmers and consumers from the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl. The farm bill impact extends beyond the farm by protecting our nation's food supply, providing access to nutrition for families facing hunger, advancing conservation efforts, and spurring innovation through agricultural research.

The current farm bill, the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018, consists of twelve titles and is set to expire on September 30, 2025. In the 118th Congress, substantial progress was made in the House Agriculture Committee as H.R.8467, the *Farm, Food, and National Security Act of 2024* otherwise known as farm bill passed out of committee on a bipartisan vote of 33-21. Unfortunately, politics got in the way of a strong bipartisan piece of legislation, which made an extension necessary to avoid serious disruptions. Most recently, Congress has added some farm bill programs to their reconciliation package, the *One Big Beautiful Bill* Act (OBBBA). While Farm Bureau appreciates Congress including these farm bill programs in the *OBBBA*, a comprehensive and modernized farm bill is still needed this year as much has changed since passage of the 2018 farm bill.

PRIORITIES

- ✓ **Increase baseline for farm bill program spending:** The farm economy is in a dire condition. We are seeing echoes of an 80s farm crisis. USDA's Economic Research Service has also

predicted the U.S. is going to be a net importer of agricultural goods for the third year in a row. If we are going to turn this around, Congress needs to allocate appropriate and modernized funding to the farm bill that matches the needs of farmers.

- ✓ **Maintain a unified farm bill which keeps nutrition programs and farm programs together:** Farm Bureau recognizes that for farm bill to remain bipartisan as it has been historically, then we must keep nutrition and farm programs together. Farmers support nutrition programs because it is another outlet for their products, but we must find a fair balance between farm and food programs, so the farm bill effectively supports producers, processors, and consumers.

- ✓ **Prioritize risk management tools and funding for both federal crop insurance and commodity programs:** Agriculture is one of the most unpredictable industries. Congress needs to give farmers the confidence that if things go awry, they have a support system to protect them from those unplanned scenarios. Farmers rely on farm bill for the safety nets and risk management programs, so we have to make sure the funding is reflective of the modern-day concerns and natural disasters that have occurred.

- ✓ **Ensure adequate USDA staffing capacity and technical assistance:** For U.S. agriculture to remain competitive, we must have a stable workforce at USDA to support our farmers' day-to-day operations. Especially with recent outbreaks of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI), having the necessary staff to perform research and testing to prevent more disease outbreaks, is critical to food and national security. Farmers also need to know that if they call about their FSA loan, someone will be there to answer the phone and direct them to the correct person. Agriculture is about teamwork, and USDA staff is apart of the team that keeps their operation running smoothly.

- ✓ **Include a legislative fix for Proposition 12 (Prop 12):** In 2018, California's (CA) voters passed a law called Prop 12 that requires veal, pork, and egg raised in confined areas to have a certain space minimum. AFBF, National Pork, American Veterinary Medical Association, American Association of Swine Veterinarians, and USDA Secretary Rollins have all agreed that Congress must find a bipartisan legislative fix and soon. Farm Bureau was supportive of Representative "GT" Thompson's legislative fix in the 118th Congress (Section 12007 of H.R.8467). Section 12007 of H.R.8467 clarified that states and local governments cannot impose standards of production, as a condition for sale or consumption, on livestock produced outside of their borders. This protects a producer's right to participate in a national market without having to adhere to a patchwork of costly compliance requirements. It also protects the rights of states and local governments to impose production standards as they see fit, but only for livestock raised within their own borders.

AFBF POLICY *(Note: AFBF has ample policy on farm bill, these are just highlights).*

239 / National Farm Policy, page 90, #2.10. We support a consistent, long-term, market-oriented farm policy that will: Expand accessibility to risk management programs and disaster relief programs within the farm bill to support financial stability for producers.

239 / National Farm Policy, *Farm Bill Principles,* page 93, #8.2.7.1.1. We support a robust crop insurance program, with no reductions in premium cost share. We oppose means testing, income limits, or add in's, such as required production practices, that might limit the availability or adversely impact risk pools.

239 / National Farm Policy, *Farm Bill Principles,* page 93, #8.2.7.1.2. We support expansion of insured commodities including specialty crops. Given limitations of process in adding new commodities, examine ways in which to encourage swifter adoption of policies.

239 / National Farm Policy, *Farm Bill Principles,* page 93, #8.2.8.1.1.3. We support the inclusion of wildlife damage as an eligible loss of production under the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) similar to that of RMA policies.

239 / National Farm Policy, *Farm Bill Principles,* page 94, #8.2.8.2.1.3. We support prioritizing direct and guaranteed loan program funds to applicants who are young or beginning or applicants who are temporarily financially distressed due to adverse ecological or industry factors.

239 / National Farm Policy, *Farm Bill Principles,* page 94, #8.2.8.2.1.1. We support streamlining loan programs and ensuring loan amounts keep pace with farm-level expenses.

239 / National Farm Policy, *Farm Bill Principles,* page 94, 8.2.8.3.1.4. We support broadband programs prioritizing resources for rural communities most in need of connectivity.

239 / National Farm Policy, *Farm Bill Principles,* page 94, #8.2.8.3.1.5. We support increased access and incentives to provide safe and adequate childcare in rural communities.

358 / Inspection and Grading of Meat, Poultry, and Seafood Products, page 147, #9. We recommend that any product that is USDA- or FDA-approved can be sold anywhere in the United States.

MORE INFORMATION

AFBF's Website Page on Farm Bill

FAQs

- *Does Farm Bureau support the One Big Beautiful Bill Act that includes investments into some farm bill programs?*
  - Farm Bureau supports the agriculture and tax provisions of the *One Big, Beautiful Bill Act*.

- *What does Farm Bureau think of a majority of the farm bill being dedicated to nutrition programs?*
  - Farm Bureau supports keeping nutrition and farm programs together. Farm Bill is unique from the standpoint that it touches every single American. Nutrition programs feed individuals who may be going through a tough time in their life. We also ask though that Congress pays equal attention to both nutrition and farm programs because farmers will not be able to supply the food within the nutrition programs without strong safety nets.

- *Won't a legislative fix to Prop 12 reverse everything for producers who have converted their operation to be Prop 12 certified?*
  - No, the legislative fix that was proposed in the 118th Congress by Representative "GT" Thompson (Section 12007 of H.R.8467) would have simply resolved the Interstate Commerce concern. Representative Thompson's solution said if it was USDA or FDA approved, then it could be sold anywhere in the U.S. This allowed CA to continue enforcing Prop 12, but it gave the consumer the option to choose and for the free market to work as it should.

Labor

BACKGROUND

It has been over 30 years since the U.S. has passed meaningful legislation to improve agriculture producers' ability to maintain a reliable workforce. It is difficult to find domestic workers who are willing and able to complete agricultural producers' physically demanding jobs. The lack of a reliable domestic workforce, constantly increasing wage rates, an overwhelming regulatory escape, and an unworkable H-2A visa program are all reasons why a new approach is needed regarding agricultural labor. A more dependable agricultural workforce will enable the industry to help curb the current record-high inflation and ensure American consumers get their products in a cost-effective and timely manner. An alarming prediction by USDA's Economic Research Service showed the U.S. being a net importer of agricultural goods for the third year in a row in fiscal year 2025. This can be linked to not having a reliable agricultural workforce.

PRIORITIES

- ✓ **Add a Year-Round Visa Program:** The U.S. labor market remains very tight, with an unemployment rate of 4.1% in October 2024, so it shouldn't be a shock that usage of the H-2A program remains high. The H-2A program is a six-month, seasonal visa program for agriculture producers to use if they cannot find labor from domestic workers. This does not reflect the agricultural workforce accurately as farmers of all sizes and commodities are working 365 days a year. Dairy and mushroom farmers are considered year-round producers, which means they are not eligible to use the H-2A agricultural visa program. Keep in mind that dairy and mushrooms are two of Pennsylvania's (PA) top commodities. Dairy cows need milked two to three times a day no matter the conditions, so farmers must have a reliable workforce otherwise there will be serious health issues with the animals. PA leads the nation in mushroom production, yet labor remains a struggle for growers. For the dairy and mushroom industry to remain leading commodities in the Commonwealth, Congress must work together and incorporate stakeholder feedback to create a year-round visa program for agriculture.
- ✓ **Reduce Red Tape in the H-2A Program:** In April 2024, the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) issued over 3,000 pages of new regulations in just 18 months. Agricultural employers are already experiencing the stress of high input and labor costs, and recently they have been trying to keep up with an ever-changing regulatory environment. Not only is this a problem for employers, but the consumer is also impacted by those higher labor costs. Additionally, the H-2A program requires employers to provide employees with housing and transportation. While employers have difficulty justifying this requirement, the housing inspection process has been a mounting concern for H-2A users. Farmers appreciate the men and women who choose to work on their farms, and they do not take lightly the responsibility of caring for them. H-2A employers though are experiencing excessively oppressive housing inspections. Not having a lid on a trash can to a slit in a screen door to a couple flies being called an insect infestation are all examples of what DOL will fine H-2A employers during their housing inspection. DOL should be looking out for major and serious problems, during H-2A housing inspection, rather than searching every inch of the house and fining these family farms. Unfortunately, the housing inspection and regulatory fees have forced some H-2A employers to quit using the program. When they quit the program, it also does not mean that they have a dependable workforce on standby.
- ✓ **Pause the Adverse Effect Wage Rate:** The Adverse Effect Wage Rate (AEWR) is the H-2A program's minimum wage, and it is determined by DOL using the data collected in the Farm Labor Survey. The purpose of the AEWR is to ensure guest worker wages will not weaken the wages of domestic workers. Fundamentally, the AEWR does not make sense since there are not nearly as many domestic workers as foreign workers in agriculture. The 2025 AEWR increased 4.5 percent from 2024. PA's 2025 AEWR is $17.96, which was 76 cents or a 4.4 percent increase from 2024. With labor costs accounting for 38 percent of total production expenses in the fruit

and vegetable sector, this increase is no small part of the budget. As the AEWRs continues to rise, it is making it more difficult for American farmers to stay in business. Furthermore, in March 2023, DOL implemented a final rule to change the methodology used to calculate the AEWR for the H-2A program. AFBF opposed the rule due to unnecessarily complicating the AEWR and adding additional expenses onto the already costly H-2A program.

LEGISLATION *(as of June 2025)*

- ✓ Support H.R.1624, the ***Supporting Farm Operations Act***. Sponsored by Representative Moolenaar (R-MI). This bill would freeze the Adverse Effect Wage Rate (AEWR) for H-2A migrant farm workers at the 2023 rate through the end of 2026.
- ✓ Support the reintroduction of the ***H-2 Improvements to Relieve Employers (HIRE) Act*** from the 118th Congress. This bill would codify visa interview waiver authority for H-2 workers and extend the validity of a company's visa petitions and labor certifications.
- ✓ Support the reintroduction of the ***Farmworker Access and Waiver Act (FAWA)*** from the 118th Congress. This bill would waive the interview requirement for returning H-2A visa workers who were previously approved.

AFBF POLICY

135 / Agricultural Workforce, *Agricultural Visa Programs*, page 27, #19.1.3. We support a visa program that is uncapped and open to all segments of agriculture and flexible enough to provide for the differing needs of farmers and ranchers. We may accept visa caps for a year-round program as long as they do not restrict farmers and ranchers from using the visa program and getting their labor needs met.

135 / Agricultural Workforce, page 25, #14.2. We support clear and reasonable housing inspection criteria for H-2A housing.

135 / Agricultural Workforce, page 25, #14.3. We support clear criteria for H-2A housing fines and a warning system before fines are issued.

135 / Agricultural Workforce, *H-2A Visa Program, Wages,* page 29, #20.1.1.2. We support elimination of the Adverse Effect Wage Rate. Until then, we support seeking legislative proposals that would cap year-over-year increases and account for regional variability with competitive labor rates. Additionally, changes in the H-2A program wage rate methodology should reflect a correlation to the state minimum wage.

135 / Agricultural Workforce, *H-2A Visa Program, Wages,* page 29, #20.1.1.4. We support the abolishment of the Adverse Effect Wage Rate methodology regarding disaggregation for the temporary employment of H-2A nonimmigrants in non-range occupations in the United States finalized in March 2023.

FAQs

- *What Congressional committee has jurisdiction over this issue?*
  - The House and Senate Judiciary Committees have jurisdiction over the H-2A program as it is a visa. However, the politics of those committees get in the way of implementing meaningful reform. We were pleased to see House Agriculture Chairman "GT" Thompson's efforts though in his creation of the bipartisan Agricultural Labor Working Group in the 118th Congress.
- *Will Farm Bureau support a year-round visa program with a cap on the number of visas?*
  - Farm Bureau will support a year-round visa program with a cap so long as the proposed cap is realistic and meets the needs of farmers and ranchers.
- *Why is Farm Bureau is in support of capping the AEWR when inflation is so high?*
  - Farmers respect and rely on their employees and are committed to paying a fair wage, but the mandated wage calculations make it hard for farmers to remain competitive. Wage increases often unintentionally harm the very people they are designed to help, as farmers who are priced out of the labor market shift to less labor-intensive crops or discontinue operations altogether. Moreover, H-2A workers are coming to America because wages here are already dramatically higher than in their home countries. In some cases, they make 13 times more per hour. For example, in California the AEWR is $19.97, while Mexico's is $1.50.

MORE INFORMATION

AFBF's Website Page on Labor

Transportation

BACKGROUND

Reliable highways, bridges, railways, locks and dams, harbors, port facilities, and general aviation airports are critical to agriculture. Deteriorating rural infrastructure threatens the competitive leadership of American agriculture. Our international competitiveness depends on our ability to produce our products and get them to market. Unfortunately, investment in rural communities and overall infrastructure has not always kept pace with need. Transportation infrastructure is one of the most obvious needs in rural communities. A dependable transportation system allows businesses to receive raw materials and deliver final products in a timely manner. Farm Bureau

supports the development of a long-range national transportation policy that views transportation as a holistic system servicing the needs of both passengers and freight across all modes and recognizes the importance of connectivity between modes.

PRIORITIES

- ✓ **Improve the Quality of Interstate Highways:** Safe roadways are vital for delivering agricultural products and receiving necessary raw materials to keep America clothed and fed. Interstate commerce is a key part of our economy, so it is the Department of Transportation's (DOT) responsibility to consistently ensure drivers are traveling on safe highways. The quality of the nation's highways, especially in Pennsylvania, is atrocious. The Federal Highway Trust Fund has the monies necessary to resurface, rehabilitate, repair and reconstruct interstate highways, so Congress must oversee that those funds are being used appropriately and projects are being completed in a timely manner.
- ✓ **Increase Supply Chain Efficiency:** While funds may be getting distributed, Congress and DOT should also be monitoring duration of the projects and working to complete construction as quickly as possible, while still maintaining quality work. Construction projects on highways that lasts for years is not the solution either, so we encourage Congress to streamline the process for permitting, funding, and construction of federal aid transportation projects. As stated above, all modes of transportation are crucial for agriculture, so maintaining proper communication with all stakeholders in the industry will help determine the most effective and efficient method for our supply chain.
- ✓ **Reduce Regulations for Delivering Agricultural Products:** Often, whether it be maritime transportation, railways, or highway transportation, regulations are what delay agricultural producers from delivering or receiving their goods. American agriculture's competitiveness on a global scale relies on how fast we can import and export agricultural goods, so it is imperative to reduce as much red tape as possible while still ensuring the safety of those responsible for transportation.

LEGISLATION *(as of June 2025)*

- ✓ Support the reintroduction of the ***Rails to Trails Landowner Rights Act*** from the 118th Congress. This bill would aim to protect landowners by requiring their consent and just compensation before abandoned railroad corridors can be converted into public trails, thereby rebalancing property rights in the "railbanking" process.

AFBF POLICY

125 / Highways, page 18, #1.10. We support legislation with continued emphasis on the development of secondary, farm-to-market roads and adequate funding for roads and maintenance

of bridges.

125 / Highways, page 18, #1.11. We support allowing more flexibility in the use of federal highway construction funds at the state level for the purpose of maintaining primary and secondary roads.

125 / Highways, page 18, #1.13. We support the U.S. Department of Transportation amending its definition of “rural” from “an area that is outside an urbanized area with a population of less than 200,000” to “an area that is outside an urbanized area with a population of less than 100,000”.

125 / Highways, page 18, #1.17. We support federal legislation allowing vehicles with farm plate registrations to travel throughout the 48 contiguous states with no distance limitations.

125 / Highways, page 18, #1.29. We support exempting farmers and custom agriculture services from requirements to obtain commercial driver’s license (CDL) when transporting agricultural products including forestry products.

125 / Highways, page 19, #1.50. We support increasing the interstate road weight limits for properly equipped vehicles.

125 / Highways, page 20, #1.55. We support the transportation of farm equipment on interstate highways if no safe or viable alternative route is available.

125 / Highways, page 20, #1.64. We support legislation that eases requirements and restrictions on CDL procurement including allowing a CDL learner's permit at 17 years of age, especially for seasonal agricultural employees.

126 / Maritime Transportation, page 21, #4. We support improved infrastructure at all U.S. ports, including inland seaports, to better facilitate the loading of all sizes of ships.

127 / Railroads, page 21, #6.1. We support expansion and improvement of the railroad system to reduce fuel consumption, to lessen road maintenance and to lower the cost of shipping agricultural products and supplies.

128 / Transportation, page 24, #14.1. We oppose legislation that would mandate excessive increases in Corporate Average Fuel Economy Standards (CAFE) for passenger vehicles and light-, medium- and heavy-duty trucks.

MORE INFORMATION

AFBF’s Website Page on Infrastructure

FAQs

- *How important is the rail system to agriculture?*
  - The rail system is crucial for agriculture. In a typical year, railroads haul around 1.6 million carloads of grain and other farm products and more than 1.7 million carloads of food products. On a weekly basis, railroads carry more than 60,000 carloads of agricultural goods.

- *How does a port strike impact agriculture?*
  - Recently, there have been a couple threats of port strikes. This would impact agriculture greatly. For example, in September 2024, the International Longshoremen's Association (ILA) and the United States Maritime Alliance (USMX) were close to not coming to an agreement before their contract expired. This port strike would have put $1.4 billion worth of agricultural imports and exports at risk.

Wildlife Management

BACKGROUND

Preserving natural surroundings for America's wildlife has long been a priority for America's farmers and ranchers. Wildlife, though, has the potential to decimate crop yields and harm livestock. Skyrocketing input costs and unworkable depredation programs in tandem with decreased hunter numbers creates a problem that farmers simply cannot afford. USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA) reports Pennsylvania among the top states experiencing crop losses due to wildlife damage. According to their data, Pennsylvania suffered over $20 million in losses on corn in 2017, the highest reported number in the nation. That same study showed that Pennsylvania farmers suffered more than $15 million in losses to soybean crops in 2017. In 2022, USDA's Animal Health and Plant Health Inspection Service's (APHIS) wildlife damage management program reported that predators cause an estimated $232 million in losses to livestock producers annually and bird damage to crops exceeds $150 million each year.

PRIORITIES

- ✓ **Reform the Endangered Species Act (ESA):** The ESA is long overdue for a meaningful update that recognizes farmers' voluntary efforts to restore and enhance habitats. There are countless examples of effective voluntary conservation programs and practices that are being implemented at the state and local level. Today, more than 140 million privately owned farm and ranch acres are enrolled in voluntary federal conservation programs, providing habitats for countless animals and insects. Endangered and threatened species protection can be

more effectively achieved by providing incentives to private landowners and public land users rather than by imposing land use restrictions and penalties. Farm Bureaus across the country have played a leading role in education, outreach and goal setting to protect at-risk species such as the Monarch butterfly. Unfortunately, ESA listings often entangle farmers and ranchers in bureaucratic red tape rather than providing a path to achieve shared conservation goals.

- ✓ **Reform the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA):** Similar to the ESA, the MBTA is long overdue for reform. Farmers and ranchers' livestock, poultry, and aquaculture are being greatly harmed by some of the birds on the Migratory Bird Act. The goal is not to abolish the protections for these birds under the MBTA, but Congress does need to find a solution that streamlines the depredation process and adds flexibility for when farmers are losing their animals from mismanagement of these birds.
- ✓ **Increase Incentives and Education for Youth Hunting:** There have been several reports showing the number of registered hunters across the nation on a sharp decline in the past decades. This can be attributed to the rise of urbanization, farmland being lost to solar and warehouse developers, people's schedules getting busier, and limited access to hunting land. It was reported that the peak of registered hunting licenses in the U.S. was in the 1980s, while 2023 reported to have around 15.9 million hunting license holders. Pennsylvania is ranked 23rd nationally with over 950,000 hunting license holders. Hunters are a key player in conservation practices and wildlife management, which is why Congress should be do everything they can to promote and educate our youth on hunting.

LEGISLATION *(as of June 2025)*

- ✓ Support H.R.1897, the ***Endangered Species Amendments Act***. Sponsored by Representative Westerman. This bill would make major critical reforms to the ESA by establishing clear statutory definitions, focusing on species recovery and streamlining the ESA permitting process. Some of highlights of this much needed reform bill include:
    - Codifies the listing work plan structure to establish flexible deadlines.
    - Streamlines the approval of voluntary conservation agreements and incidental take permits by removing duplicative permitting processes.
    - Gives regulatory certainty that critical habitat will not be designated if a private landowner is working to implement a plan that conserves the listed species in question.
    - Allows states to develop and submit recovery strategies for species that are candidates for listing or listed as threatened.
    - Requires federal agencies to establish objective, incremental recovery goals for threatened species and provide regulatory relief as recovery goals are met.
    - Requires agencies to act on five-year review determinations of listed species.

- ✓ Support **S.1823/H.R.2462, the *Black Vulture Relief Act***. Sponsored by Senator Mullin (R-OK) and Representatives Rose (R-TN) and Soto (D-FL). This bill would allow livestock producers to take black vultures without a permit if the bird is causing death or injury to their animals.

AFBF POLICY

151 / Education, *Primary and Secondary Education,* page 40, #2.3.3. We oppose federal funding being withheld from school districts because of hunting, shooting sports, angling or archery programs.

567 / Wildlife Management, page 263, #6.1. We support compensation to farmers and ranchers for damages caused by wildlife.

567 / Wildlife Management, page 263, #6.2. We support farmers having the right to protect their crops and livestock from destruction by wildlife and migratory birds, on both private and public lands.

567 / Wildlife Management, page 263, #6.7. We support adjusting hunting seasons in certain areas to help control damage caused by wildlife and migratory birds.

567 / Wildlife Management, page 263, 6.10. We support removal of resident Canada geese, black vultures, caracara, sandhill cranes, crows, ravens, cormorants, and barn swallows from protection under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

567 / Wildlife Management, page 264, #6.25. We support a streamlined process for permits to take nuisance animals.

567 / Wildlife Management, page 264, #6.28. We support entities involved with agricultural production of food, fiber, horticultural and energy products being involved in technical reviews of the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation.

567 / Wildlife Management, page 264, #6.29. We support the Risk Management Agency continuing to process wildlife damage claims.

567 / Wildlife Management, page 264, #6.30. We support an amendment to the Migratory Bird Treaty Act to provide USDA Wildlife Services with authority to issue depredation orders but only for agriculture and livestock, similar to that held by FWS.

567 / Wildlife Management, page 264, #6.31. We support, when feasible, USDA conservation programs having multispecies plant mixture options that are palatable to deer.

FAQs

- *How is PFB's relationship with the various hunting organizations?*
    - Within the past two years, PFB has worked particularly hard are building and re-building our relationships with hunting organizations. We recognize that to control the crop and livestock damage that farmers are facing, we need to work collaboratively with the sportsmen community to achieve effective wildlife management policy for all.

MORE INFORMATION

AFBF's Website Page on Wildlife