

77. GOVERNMENT FARM POLICIES

We believe United States agriculture should be an integral part of the solution for hunger, energy, environment, food security, our balance of trade, and national security. In order to accomplish these goals, the farm bill must address world competition, humanitarian need, and world trade obligations. A stable, safe agricultural production system is essential to the United States' economy and national security.

To accomplish this objective, we believe:

1. Consumers should have a reliable, abundant, safe, and nutritious food supply.
2. In enhancing U.S. agriculture's competitiveness in the world market.
3. In minimizing world hunger and nutrition deficiencies.
4. In creating a long-term, competitive, desirable agricultural growth industry.
5. In improving the quality of rural life by increasing rural economic development.
6. In providing revenue protection to farmers thus protecting net farm income.
7. The market should give accurate economic signals to consumers and farmers.
8. There should be less reliance on government and more on the market.
9. Improvements to the environment can be achieved through expanded soil conservation, water and air quality initiatives, and advanced technological procedures that are science-based and are economically feasible.
10. Farmers should be compensated for their positive impact on habitat, wildlife, and the environment.

We oppose:

1. Severing the essential link between the nutrition title and the commodity title of the Farm Bill.
2. Any type of government supply control or acreage reduction program, with the exception of conservation programs.
3. A Farmer Owned Reserve for agricultural commodities.
4. The extension of Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) commodity loans beyond the current nine-month term.

We support:

1. Appropriate income assistance until reforms in taxation, regulation, and market access and growth are achieved.
2. Maintaining the sanctity of contracts established in the farm bill.
3. Allowing tenants with multiple landlords to treat each farm as a separate entity for compliance with the farm bill.
4. Not holding tenants responsible for landlord's actions of farm program payments and eligibility. This should hold steady as long as the tenant had no involvement in what took place. The farm in question should go through the hearing process but other farms should not be affected. Actions by a landlord should not place any tenant farm program payments in jeopardy. The tenant should be able to maintain eligibility for all farms.
5. The ability of landlords to refuse payment from the farm program and allow tenants the ability to obtain complete payment from the farm program (even if a combination lease exists between the landlord and tenant).
6. The elimination of any United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) requirement to report the specific cash rental amounts outlined in lease agreements between a landlord and a tenant in an effort to protect a farmer's right to privacy. We do, however, support the requirement to report the type of lease agreement.
7. Strengthening the criteria for non-landowner persons eligible for farm program payments by requiring a significant contribution of active personal management in the farm decision-making process and labor in the farming operation. The current exemption for crop share landowners should be continued.
8. Farmers ability to improve existing drainage systems without being penalized. Land that has been in production, including pasture, should be exempt from the sodbuster and swampbuster provisions.

9. The implementation of more efficient processes, systems, and procedures in order to consolidate and simplify farm program participant visits to the USDA.
10. Consolidation of the power of attorney form to enable the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and Farm Service Agency (FSA) to honor the same power of attorney forms.
11. Open enrollment of land in the farm program that was not previously in the program and has changed tenancy or ownership during the duration of the farm bill.
12. Government agencies serving farmers by adjusting hours to accommodate the needs of farmers with off-farm employment and increased use of internet for electronic filing.
13. The means to implement and administer programs being in place prior to starting dates for new programs.
14. Adding alfalfa and grassland forages as covered commodities.
15. Requirement changes to the Conservation Stewardship Program that would allow government owned land into the program if it is leased by a farmer for the duration of the contract period.
16. Allowing a compliant entity to be eligible to participate in USDA programs on all parcels that are not in violation of swampbuster or sodbuster regulations.
17. The payment of CSP grants for all entities as direct deposits in the same manner as other FSA or CRP payments, not as System for Award Management (SAM) payments as is done at present.
18. Eliminating the requirement for reporting non-program grass waterways/fallow areas that are baled for forage. If eliminating the forage reporting on non-program acres is unachievable, we support reporting acres only at the time when the principal field crop is reported.

Future Farm Policy

IFB members believe the farm bill must be WTO-compliant, provide price and revenue protection for farmers, and link nutrition and commodity programs. Crop insurance remains our top priority in the farm bill. The bill must continue to feature commodity program choice - revenue and price - and encourage production and stewardship decisions that attract public support. We support robust conservation programs that will help farmers achieve state nutrient loss reduction goals.

Crop Insurance

We support:

1. Maintaining the current level of federal risk premium support.
2. A livestock disaster program for multi-year disasters with improved coverage levels and partially subsidized premiums.
3. Maintaining producer privacy on indemnity payments.

Commodity Programs

We support:

1. A floating commodity loan program that increases loan rates, addresses conservation goals and the credit needs of beginning farmers.
2. Farm program payments should be based on the location of the land, not administrative county.
3. A one-time sign up for the farm program that is automatically renewed each year for the duration of the program if there are no changes in the farming operation.
4. Adjusting the current yield and price formula to calculate ARC-CO payments.
5. The option to update yields, reallocate base acres, and reclaim base acres from expiring CRP acres returning to production.
6. Making more timely commodity program payments based on calendar or fiscal year, not marketing year.

We oppose any expansion of conservation compliance provisions to commodity program participation.

Conservation Programs

We support:

1. An increase in Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acreage.
2. Annual updates to county soil rental rates that better reflect current rental market payments and minimize impact on tenant farmers.
3. Limiting the size of pollinator tracts with an emphasis on smaller tracts.

4. A conservation program to retire environmentally sensitive land for a period of 3 to 5 years.
5. NRCS and FSA continuously updating cost-share conservation programs to specifically reward practices that allow farmers to address Illinois Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy (NLRs) goals.
6. CRP recipients should have to demonstrate that they are “actively engaged,” as farmers do for other farm programs.

Trade Programs

We support a fully funded Market Access Program (MAP) and a fully funded Foreign Market Development (FMD) program in the next farm bill.

Credit Programs

We support:

1. Raising the loan limit and simplifying the process for FSA beginning farmer loans.
2. Allowing farmers to re-apply for FSA beginning farmer loans to diversify their operations.
3. Waiving the requirement for beginning farmers to provide three years of financial statements.
4. Eliminating the “graduation clause” that raises interest rates or requiring the applicant to close a loan when a beginning farmer’s financial condition improves.
5. Increasing the FSA current loan guarantee limit.

National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS)

We support:

1. Shorter NASS surveys to improve farmer response rates and survey accuracy.
2. Oversampling operators instead of landlords.

Dairy Programs

We support:

1. Classifying milk as a commodity for federal crop insurance purposes.
2. Revenue protection insurance with risk premium support.
3. Updating the Margin Protection Program to better reflect feed costs and provide better coverage.