



FAMILY FARMING and the 2023 FARM BILL 2023 SPECIAL ORDER OF BUSINESS

The current farm bill expires on September 30, 2023, and our farm policy is due for important reforms. Farm bill reauthorizations serve as a periodic opportunity to debate and consider the policies that shape our farm economy, food system, and communities. Family farmers, ranchers, consumers, and our communities all benefit from a strong and resilient farm and food system. The farm bill helps to ensure our rural and agricultural economies thrive.

The farm economy is cyclical, and commodity price and input cost volatility are among the chief reasons that family farmers and ranchers are forced out of business. Farm bills should be written with tough times in mind so that programs serve as a safety net. Furthermore, farm bills work best when they are forward-looking; lawmakers should ensure the next farm bill anticipates future needs. These needs include strengthening farm bill conservation programs, which play a critical role in helping farmers implement practices that fight climate change, build soil health, and increase resilience. The farm bill is also a food bill. The nutrition title is key to reducing hunger and poverty, and improving food and nutrition security.

Farm bill programs are primarily implemented by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). In 2022, USDA had 5,300 fewer staff than in January 2017. Staffing shortfalls impede program implementation and must be rectified.

The following policies and provisions should be included in the 2023 Farm Bill.

- Advance NFU's *Fairness for Farmers* campaign priorities in the 2023 Farm Bill. Reforms should include:
 - A dedicated competition title;
 - Bolstering cattle market price discovery and transparency;
 - Creating the "Office of the Special Investigator for Competition Matters" at USDA to strengthen enforcement of the Packers & Stockyards Act (P&S Act);
 - Strengthening of P&S Act rules to better protect livestock producers from anticompetitive practices;
 - Reinstating mandatory country-of-origin labeling (COOL);
 - Improving the Livestock Mandatory Reporting (LMR) Act to ensure data is consistently and fully available;
 - Reforming checkoff programs to be producer controlled and regularly reviewed; and

- Spurring the development and expansion of diverse, local, and/or regional market opportunities through farm and food supply chains, including production, processing, distribution, retail, and storage.
- Maintain and improve the farm safety net through the commodity and crop insurance titles by:
 - Increasing loan rates and other price-based triggers to reflect higher commodity prices and input costs;
 - Allowing for a voluntary base acres and yield update;
 - Making risk management products more accessible for specialty crop producers and diverse cropping systems;
 - Maintaining livestock risk protection (LRP) and authorizing a new program, similar to LRP, that allows for market risk protection for crops; and
 - 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.
- Address climate change, strengthen conservation programs, and expand renewable energy opportunities, including by:
 - Increasing funding for voluntary, incentive-based conservation programs and conservation technical assistance;
 - Expanding incentives for farmers to adopt climate mitigation and adaptation practices that build on-farm resilience and reduce emissions;
 - Providing crop insurance discounts to farmers for planting cover crops or for using other conservation practices that increase resiliency or decrease risk;
 - Building on programs that support biofuels infrastructure development;
 - Supporting and improving the Rural Energy for America Program (REAP)
 - Ensuring a strong Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) by maintaining the current CRP rental rate calculation and increasing Grassland CRP minimum enrollment; and
 - Allowing annual crop strips left unharvested to qualify as buffer strips.
- Expand and enhance permanent disaster assistance programs by:
 - Reducing implementation delays and equitably and appropriately targeting support to farmers and ranchers who have suffered losses;
 - Creating a “conservation disaster fund” that automatically triggers conservation program eligibility for producers that qualify for disaster assistance; and
 - Establishing a permanent disaster assistance program that supplements crop insurance indemnities when widespread disasters occur.
- Strengthen the dairy safety net by:
 - Supporting dairy growth management principles to stem the loss of family dairy farms; and
 - Strengthening the Dairy Margin Coverage (DMC) program, which, with improvements, can serve as a useful risk management tool.

- Other important policy priorities and reforms include:
 - Increasing the overall farm bill baseline and funding;
 - Increasing the definition for beginning farmer and rancher from 10 to 15 years;
 - Maintaining a strong nutrition title that supports the food and nutrition security of our communities and that increases opportunities for local and regional procurement;
 - Strengthening the research title, with a focus on research, outreach, and education to improve on-farm climate mitigation and adaptation;
 - Expanding and funding the Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network (FRSAN);
 - Addressing ongoing staffing shortages at USDA, including staff attrition and inadequate pay for field staff;
 - Requiring USDA to take department-wide steps to streamline program applications forms and processes to make its programs more accessible;
 - Streamlining access to USDA programs and hiring sufficient staff to service technical and administrative requirements of each program to assure timely, competent, and beneficial participation for family farmers; and
 - Include in federal contracting language the means to adjust contract amounts in response to inflationary pressures.