

## Competition and Creating a Diverse Marketplace

Pricing power in the food system is in the hands of corporations that control most of the sectors of the agricultural economy. Consolidation and monopolization run rampant in grocery retail, meat processing, fertilizer, farm equipment, and more. The lack of competition in the marketplace has put farms out of business, squeezed the remaining family farmers, and harmed our communities.

Our priorities include:

- Promoting Local Food
  - Ensuring that locally produced food and locally owned retail outlets can compete with corporate chains and brands, either through promotion programs, consumer education, and grants.
  - Expanding funding and support for domestic marketing education for local farmers through the Department of Agriculture (USDA).
- Expanding Food Infrastructure
  - Boosting local and regional meat processing infrastructure.
  - Emphasizing use of local procurement programs at the state and federal levels.
- Promoting Competition
  - Working with existing state laws and creating new laws enforcing agencies to investigate anticompetitive practices in the agricultural marketplace.
  - Encourage enforcement of federal antitrust laws concerning agricultural industries.
- Food and Product Labeling
  - Requiring that labeling of food products not mislead the consumer about the contents, origin, or production method, especially for lab cultivated synthetic meat products.
  - Standing in opposition to the production and sale of lab-grown meat products in Illinois.
- Labor
  - Investigating, enforcing, and ensuring compliance with fair and safe labor practices across the agricultural sector.

## Farmland Access and Viability

We must ensure that current family farmers and the family farmers of the future have equitable access to the resources they need to succeed, including farmland, capital, infrastructure, and technology. Without generational access to land, it is very difficult for the next generation to farm high quality and affordable land.

Our priorities include:

- Access to Farmland for Beginner Farmers
  - Incentives through crop insurance, and other programs for beginning farmers
  - Education for beginning farmers through USDA.
  - Beginning Farmer Tax Credit.
- Farmland Protection
  - Support the development of a state purchase of agricultural conservation easements program. This could be furthered by harnessing financial resources through USDA's NRCS conservation programs.
  - Propose legislation encouraging dual usage of solar and food production, as proposed solar developments are putting great pressure on landowners to remove highly productive farmland from productions (Agrivoltaics).
  - Support a State Land Conservation Income Tax Credit to Protect Working & Natural Lands with voluntary conservation easements.
- Eligibility of Rezoned Urban and Rural Areas
  - Spur locally owned and operated urban farm operations in areas that are no longer in industrial, residential, or commercial use.
  - The return of publicly owned lands with stalled projects back to farming and agricultural purposes in support of local communities.
- Transition/Succession Planning, as offered through Illinois FarmLink
  - Prioritize education and mentorship of beginning farmers and connecting them with opportunities to buy or lease farmland.
- Access to Capital
  - All family farmers, particularly new and beginning farmers and socially disadvantaged farmers, need better access to lending resources and information.
- Uplift Urban Agriculture
  - Promote equitable access to training, educational, and financial resources for urban producers.
  - Help individuals or groups of farmers, particularly beginning and BIPOC farmers, to be able to own equipment or have access to infrastructure (cold storage, processing, technical assistance, etc.).
- Estate Tax Exemptions

## Illinois Farmers Union Policy Priorities

- Lawmakers should consider the scale of family farm operations as well as inflation when setting thresholds for Illinois estate taxes and establish true exemption thresholds.
- The Illinois estate tax exemptions should mirror federal estate tax exemptions.
- Addressing Systemic Racism
  - Enact state level policies, especially for beginning farmer programs, that can help to right historical wrongs.
- Insurance Coverage
  - Support robust and accessible insurance programs including specialty crop, traditional crop, farm, business, health, and vehicle, and livestock.
- Crop Diversification
  - Promote crop diversification on Illinois farms through investments in local and regional specialty crop storage, processing, and marketing.

## Stewardship

Good stewardship of our environment must be a priority. The state of Illinois should prioritize initiatives to address climate change and help strengthen family farmers' ability to help in that cause. Dedicated funding and investment from the state is needed to make this effort sustainable and successful.

Our priorities include:

- Increased support for Soil and Water Conservation District operations funding to facilitate better use of federal soil and water programs.
- Greater adoption of climate-smart practices that improve farmers' financial bottom line without adding further risk to farms.
  - Increase funding for Cover Crops Premium Discount Program to boost participation.
- Additional support for voluntary, incentives-based programs that also provide technical assistance to family farmers.
- Full funding for the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program to support on-farm research.
- Advancing further studies of verification programs and initiatives to assess the usefulness of climate-smart programs.
- Publication of a statewide report on the efficacy of strategies to reduce nutrient loss from non-point sources.

- Responding to concerns about negative environmental effects of agriculture operations.
- Ensuring that the proliferation of carbon and other emissions credits programs does not unfairly favor agribusiness over family farmers.
- Ensuring USDA honors contracts with farmers and ranchers, regardless of changes in administration.

## Community Vitality

Our farming communities, in rural and urban areas alike, face many of the same challenges. Continued shifts of wealth and labor out of our agricultural communities weakens the future viability and vibrancy of our neighborhoods. We need to improve access, availability, affordability, and leadership for:

- Health care
  - Support affordable and effective health care and disability insurance options, including offerings on Get Covered Illinois.
  - Consider the effects of reliance on off-farm employment for health insurance.
  - Reliable access to health providers in rural and urban areas.
- Mental health resources
  - Recent progress on mental health awareness is promising but stigma remains a concern.
  - The underlying issue of farm debt loads on mental health needs to be addressed.
- Grocery, retail, and pharmacies
  - Restoring SNAP benefits and increasing accessibility for retailers to participate.
  - Supporting the return of funding for SNAP education programs through Extension.
  - Support state programs to boost locally owned grocery retail options, such as the Illinois Grocery Initiative.
- Education
  - A lack of adequate state funding for schools threatens the vitality of our communities.
- Childcare
  - Address the need for childcare to help enable family farmers to keep farming as a source of income.
- Housing for farmers, farm workers, and their families