



Policy Manual

2024 Michigan Farmers Union Annual Meeting

Policy of the Michigan Farmers Union

Presented for consideration by membership assembled for the Annual Meeting

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Family agriculture is the base of viable rural communities and strong society, and is the keystone of our policy. We remain dedicated to strengthening the family farm system to ensure its survival and prosperity.

The recommendations set forth in these policies are designed to reaffirm the family farm structure as the primary agricultural system, to assure rural and urban stability, national prosperity, the preservation of human and natural resources, and the dignity of the individual and family.

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1 **Local Policy Recommendations**

2 **1. Family Farm**

3 A family farm or ranch is a producing agricultural unit that is owned and operated by a farm
4 family, with the family providing a significant amount of the labor, assuming the economic risk, making
5 the management decisions and depending primarily on farming for a living. Size of operation should not
6 be construed as a substitute for fair and profitable prices for farm products.

7 The family farm should fit the federal definition of “family farm,” that provides the family with
8 an income. We are opposed to the industrialization of agriculture with its attendant environmental hazards
9 in our local communities.

10 **2. County Committees**

11 We strongly support the integrity and independence of farmer elected committees and support
12 their continuance for F.S.A. and County Conservation Districts in every county with agricultural
13 production. We urge producers to seek election to these Boards through which farmers may appeal
14 differences on conservation plans or on highly erodible lands.

15 **3. Local Food Policy Councils (LFPC)**

16 We support the creation of regional and LFPC’s throughout Michigan to identify policy agenda
17 items that include increasing food access to preserving land for agriculture, to ensuring fair wages for
18 everyone in the food system, including restaurant, food, and farm workers. We support membership from
19 all spheres of influence—from schools and institutions, to municipalities, to county government, to state
20 and federal government to ensure a more sustainable and economically viable food system.

1 **State Policy Recommendations**

2 **1. Agricultural Recreation**

3 As Michigan's second most economically important industry, agriculture has an opportunity to
4 expand its value statewide with increased tourism/recreational opportunities taking place on family farms.

5 We support the Pure Michigan Agriculture program.

6 We recommend that the Michigan Tourism Commission study the effects of local zoning on
7 agricultural tourism and provide recommendations for the most effective use of logo signage and other
8 measures designed to promote and enhance agricultural tourism/recreation in Michigan.

9 **2. Agricultural Education**

10 We support the inclusion of courses or curriculum that teaches the origin of food in all grades to
11 increase understanding of the origin of our food. Organizations such as FFA, Food Corps, Farm to
12 Institution, Ag in the Classroom, Conservation Districts, and 4-H as specific educational resources for this
13 purpose.

14 **3. Bovine T.B. & Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD)**

15 We support the state's efforts to eradicate Bovine Tuberculosis from both domestic livestock and
16 free ranging wildlife. However, there has been insufficient control of game farm animals that frequently
17 escape into the wild where they pose a danger to both their native counterparts and livestock for spreading
18 both T.B. and, potentially, CWD. The latter has already been found in Wisconsin.

19 We strongly urge the state to continually test for CWD in naturally ranging white-tailed deer and
20 any other mammal exhibiting suspicious symptoms. Furthermore, we demand that the state undertake a
21 vigorous program of ongoing inspection of mammalian game farms and enforce compliance with security
22 measures to prevent escapes. Costs for this program should be borne by a permit system paid for by all
23 game farms in the state. Costs to depopulate and dispose of any animals/flocks/herds discovered to be
24 contaminated with TB, CWD and any other disease posing an unacceptable threat to wild or domestic
25 animals will be charged to the game farm owner.

1 **4. Conservation District Committees**

2 We believe the elected directors on county conservation district boards should share a passion for
3 protecting the natural resources of their county and should represent a diversity of conservation interests.

4 The procedure for voting for Directors of County Conservation Districts has been changed to
5 allow anyone of legal voting age who is a resident of the District to vote and/or run for office. Persons
6 who own no land or property now have the right to vote and hold office. Furthermore, absentee ballots are
7 only available by picking them up at the District office in person and cannot be mailed to eligible voters.

8 Control over the use of the land can be put into the hands of persons with no concept of land use
9 practices needed to farm the land or harvest the forests.

10 We support returning the election of District committee members to the previous format and urge
11 the state to allocate adequate funds for the operation and management of the District offices.

12 **5. Direct Marketing**

13 We endorse the use of roadside stands, or Farm Markets, and Farmers Markets as a means by
14 which farmers can attain a fair share of the retail food dollar. Since 2001, the number of Farmers Markets
15 in Michigan has grown to more than 300 and in 2006 the Michigan Farmers Market Association
16 (MIFMA) was established as a statewide association to promote local food consumption in Michigan by
17 connecting more farmers to consumers through Farmers Markets.

18 With MIFMA, we define a Farmers Market as a public and recurring assembly of farmers or their
19 representatives selling direct-to-consumer food and products which they have produced themselves. In
20 addition, the market may include a variety of vendors as determined by market management for the
21 purpose of facilitating personal connections that create mutual benefits for local farmers, vendors,
22 shoppers, and communities.

23 We oppose local ordinances that would restrict any activities that prohibit these markets.

24 We support maintaining and/or expanding funding for food assistance programs that can be, or
25 could be in the future, redeemed at Farmers Markets, including the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance

1 Program (SNAP); the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP)
2 referred to as WIC Project FRESH in Michigan; the Senior FMNP referred to as Senior Project
3 FRESH/Market FRESH in Michigan; WIC Cash Value Benefits; Prescription for Health style programs;
4 and Hoop houses for Health.

5 We support programs and collaborate with organizations that work to increase consumers' access
6 to nutritious, locally produced foods through Farmers Markets, including Fair Food Network's Double Up
7 Food Bucks program partially funded through the Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive (FINI) program and
8 Michigan Nutrition Network's SNAP-Ed nutrition education program.

9 We support federal and state initiatives that increase the capacity of or reduce the barriers for
10 farmers and farmers markets implementing food assistance programs.

11 We support maintaining and/or expanding the funding essential to direct marketing including, but
12 not limited to, the Farmers Market and Local Food Promotion Programs, Specialty Crop Block Grant
13 program, the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program, and the Value-Added Producer
14 Grant, and the establishment of permanent funding for these programs.

15 **6. Farm Chemicals**

16 We support the state law requiring chemical companies to use reusable containers and to provide
17 collection points for safe disposal.

18 **7. Industrial Hemp**

19 Industrial hemp is defined as “a plant of the genus cannabis and any part of that plant, whether
20 growing or not, with a delta-9 tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) concentration that does not exceed 1.0
21 percent on a dry-weight basis...regardless of moisture content.” In other words, the only difference
22 between marijuana and industrial hemp is their concentration of THC, the primary psychoactive substance
23 in marijuana. Ingesting industrial hemp products will not get you “high,” thus eliminating any risk of
24 abuse.

1 The passage of Michigan’s Prop 1 (Michigan Regulation and Taxation of Marijuana Act) is an
2 example of the recent uptick in state and federal legislation aimed at legalizing industrial hemp. The 2018
3 Farm Bill authorizes hemp as a supplemental and alternative crop, allowing federal agencies to assess the
4 economic viability of its production and sale. The Farm Bill also authorizes, at the federal level, multi-
5 faceted research into hemp production. As a federal law, the bill even permits the interstate commerce of
6 hemp, clearing up concerns about traveling with or transporting hemp CBD products.

7 Given that an industrial hemp crop harvested for seed and fiber can be competitive with
8 traditional field crops, producing average net returns of \$200-\$400 per acre, and given that Michigan
9 producers are searching for alternative options to augment their farm income, we support the swift
10 implementation of rules and regulations for this alternative endeavor.

11 **8. Master Planning to Encourage Food Production**

12 A master plan is a policy document that guides the physical development of a community. In
13 Michigan, a master plan can be adopted by the municipality’s planning commission – an appointed
14 administrative body. Although a planning commission has no authority to adopt an ordinance or any other
15 document that could be enforced with penalties, the planning commission can recommend a zoning
16 ordinance or zoning amendment to its legislative body. Therefore, we encourage planning commissions to
17 identify and designate vacant and abandoned lots as community gardens and allow residents to grow
18 fresh, healthy, and nutritious food for their own consumption.

19 **9. Solar and Wind Clean Energy Siting**

20 We support the research and use of agrivoltaics.

21 We support utilization of the least productive agricultural land when developing wind and solar
22 projects.

23 **10. Michigan Certified Beef**

24 We support creation of a Michigan certified beef label that would identify beef that was born,
25 bred, raised, and processed within Michigan’s borders.

1 **Federal Policy Recommendations**

2 ***Energy***

3 **1. Electric Deregulation**

4 We oppose efforts to create federally mandated electric deregulation. We oppose any unregulated
5 retail wheeling that forces local utilities, including electric co-ops, to recover stranded costs (previous
6 investments) by charging smaller customers higher rates. We oppose any deregulation of electricity that
7 does not protect rural and urban families from unwarranted rate increases while industrial customers have
8 their rates lowered.

9 **2. Energy Alternatives**

10 As a primary means of developing alternatives to our dependence on finite petrochemicals to
11 meet growing energy demands, federal and state governments should encourage alternative energy
12 research and development by farmers, small business, individuals and educational institutions that include
13 tax incentives and low interest loans for development of alternative energy sources as well as increased
14 funding for forestry improvement projects in farm woodlots that could find a place in alternative energy
15 sources. Farmer support for carbon credit exchanges through the National Farmers Union program
16 opportunity is encouraged.

17 Opening state owned land for oil and gas exploration should be considered only where it is
18 proven to be environmentally defensible. Where gas and oil are extracted from state land, the state should
19 be compensated according to the energy source's current market value. These monies should then be
20 dedicated to the acquisition and operation of state park and recreational lands.

21 We are opposed to drilling for oil under the Great Lakes under any conditions.

22 We support the development of a broad array of energy conservation measures to be instituted
23 across all sectors of society through effective state and federal legislation mandating such action.

1 **3. Fuel Allocation Priority**

2 The US should formulate an energy policy that would provide an adequate fuel supply for
3 agriculture in the event of an energy crisis.

4 **4. Stray Voltage**

5 Stray voltage negatively affects the dairy and livestock industries in Michigan, and thus has a
6 harmful effect as well on the health of people in rural communities. We urge enforcement of Sec. 21
7 General Requirement rule 215-B of the National Electric Safety Code, which prohibits electric utilities
8 from using the ground as the sole conductor for electric current. Public utility providers must return all
9 electricity on the neutral return and not use the earth as a return pathway to the substations.

10 ***Environment and Climate***

11 **1. Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFO)**

12 All CAFO's should be required to have a National Pollution Discharge Elimination System
13 (NPDES) permit issued by the state's Department of Environmental Quality with EPA approval. Permit
14 applications must include an approved comprehensive nutrient management plans (CNMP) that is site
15 specific. All permittees should be monitored by means of an unannounced site visit by MDEQ at least
16 annually. Fees for permits and fines for violation of MDEQ and/or EPA regulation should be adequate to
17 cover the state's costs of inspection, enforcement and administration of the permit and monitoring
18 program.

19 We oppose the voluntary nature of the state's Right to Farm Act CAFO provisions and the
20 Generally Accepted Agricultural Management Practices (GAAMPs).

21 **2. Global Warming**

22 The United States should join with the many other nations already supporting a global warming
23 treaty (the Kyoto Protocol) with immediate emphasis on conservation and education.

1 **3. Great Lakes Water**

2 Neither surface nor ground water in the Great Lakes basin should be considered a commodity. All
3 water that is withdrawn from the Great Lakes and aquifers in the basin should be returned to their
4 source(s) in a condition that is usable for human, agricultural and recreation purposes.

5 We support a requirement for all agricultural, industrial, and commercial users of water to adopt
6 stringent conservation practices that allow for the return of as much water as originally withdrawn as is
7 technically feasible, free of chemicals and other pollutants and at a temperature as near the water’s natural
8 temperature as is reasonable.

9 We support permits for enterprises that withdraw an average of more than 200,000 gallons of
10 water per day or 1,200,000 gallons per week. Applications for water withdrawal permits must include a
11 plan for how the water is to be used, purified, and returned to its source in useable condition.

12 We support mandatory compliance with rule 303(d) of the federal Clean Water Act that
13 establishes total maximum daily loads (TMDLs) of phosphorus in designated watersheds.

14 We support incentives and cost sharing to minimize expense to family farmers should be made
15 available.

16 We support legislation enforcing prohibition of discharged foreign vessel ballast water into the
17 Great Lakes, the Erie Canal, the St. Mary’s River, and any other waterways connecting to the Great
18 Lakes.

19 We strongly oppose the exporting of Great Lakes water out of the Great Lakes basin. We urge
20 every state and Canadian Province bordering the Great Lakes to resist the export of water to areas out of
21 the basin, including foreign export for any purpose.

22 **4. Invasive Species**

23 We urge the state to initiate and fund a program to prevent introduction of and for the control
24 and/or elimination of such existing invasive aquatic and terrestrial species as Purple Loosestrife, Spotted
25 Knapweed, Autumn Olive, Multiflora Rose, Garlic Mustard, Emerald Ash Borer, Round Goby, Big

1 Headed Carp, Snakehead Fish, Zebra Mussel, Lantern Fly, Gall Wasp, Spotted Wing Drosophila, etc. and
2 any other plant and animal species determined to be detrimental to agriculture and natural resource’s best
3 interests.

4 **5. Sustainable Agriculture**

5 We support efforts in Michigan and the nation to integrate plant and animal production practices
6 that are less chemically dependent and that will improve soil health, fertility, and biodiversity. We urge
7 comprehensive research to provide access to information and opportunities for farmers to embed practices
8 into their farm systems that enhance environmental quality and the natural resource base through making
9 the most efficient use of nonrenewable resources and integrating natural biological cycles and controls
10 into their methodology. We recommend the EPA base all decisions surrounding the management of
11 pesticides, herbicides, and fungicides on sound scientific data that satisfies their mission to protect human
12 health and the environment.

13 **6. Regenerative Agriculture**

14 Regenerative agriculture is a system of farming and ranching principles and practices that
15 increase biodiversity, enriches the soil, purifies watersheds, and all while increasing in-farm fertility,
16 which may help producers save money by reducing input expenses. Regenerative practices include no
17 tillage to minimal tillage, diverse cover crops, multiple crop rotations, agroforestry and silvopasture, all of
18 which should be augmented by holistic grazing guidelines.

19 We support:

- 20 1. Incentives for regenerative farming and ranching practices that sequester
21 more carbon, improve soil health and productivity, slow erosion, and build
22 up topsoil, and increase water infiltration;
- 23 2. Development of new markets for farmers and ranchers who are currently
24 practicing regenerative farming and ranching or who are transitioning to
25 regenerative practices;

- 1 3. Applied research on soil health in regenerative food production systems;
- 2 4. The making and use of compost to invigorate beneficial microbial soil life
- 3 while recycling nutrients back onto the farm;
- 4 5. Educational, legislative, policy, and advocacy efforts aimed at furthering the
- 5 practice of regenerative;
- 6 6. Efforts that incentivize regenerative agriculture practices, whether
- 7 administered through the government, private entities, or the marketplace,
- 8 so that the financial burden of implementing them is not borne solely by
- 9 family farmers, but by all that benefit;
- 10 7. Public and private funding to pay farmers to develop healthier soil, as
- 11 determined by such metrics as depth of soil aggregate formation. Soil
- 12 aggregates are foundational to the function of watersheds and the longevity
- 13 of infrastructure, and their tending requires adaptive management by the
- 14 farmer; and
- 15 8. We encourage USDA, private industry, other relevant agencies, and
- 16 collaborative efforts among farmers to explore economic opportunities for
- 17 family farmers who utilize ecosystem services which improve resiliency,
- 18 increase soil health, and promote healthier watersheds.

19 ***Federal Programs***

20 **1. Dairy Supply Management**

21 We support a national supply management program for dairy. The ongoing oversupply of milk
22 and huge dairy imports have caused large losses in equity and numbers of farms. Combined with shifts in
23 domestic demand and a prolonged negative basis, mailbox prices have been below break-even for over
24 three years. Without the ability of a federal program to fully eliminate herds, we must adjust our

1 marketing schemes. Therefore, we ask that all dairy farms, private and government groups work to
2 implement a fully functioning supply management system.

3 We strongly agree that all dairy farms of any size should be able to pay their bills and make a
4 profit. We believe milk should not be sold for an undervalued price just to find a home for the milk.
5 Therefore, milk supply should be managed.

6 Producers who have maintained their production over the last year should not be assessed the
7 same fee as the farmer who has increased their production dramatically over the past year.

8 A supply management program would:

- 9 • Allow milk producers to be paid a price to meet their BILLS and make a profitable living
10 to RAISE a family.
- 11 • Discontinue the trend of producing milk in a cycle that is 66% of the time not meeting the
12 bills or making a profitable living. From 2014 till 2018, dairy farms were not profitable
13 75% of the time. The last profitable year was 2014.
- 14 • Allow a long- term solution for milk pricing.
- 15 • Address a solution for small farms under 1000 cows to remain in business.
- 16 • Address a way for new or young farmers to enter the dairy business.
- 17 • Address a way that farmers can expand if they desire to do so.
- 18 • Eliminate the need for a government subsidy program.

19 We support all dairy farmers, private entities, and government groups working together to
20 implement a fully functioning supply management system.

21 **2. Organic Standards**

22 We urge vigorous enforcement of existing federal organic standards from farm products and
23 deplore efforts to weaken those standards or to interpret them in ways that are counter to the language of
24 the laws establishing them and/or to the intent of that language.

1 **3. Disaster Relief**

2 The federal government should enact permanent national disaster relief for all farm products and
3 provide adequate funding to cover the program costs.

4 **4. Farm Commodity Check-Off**

5 Michigan Farmers Union supports one member - one vote policies.

6 We oppose any check-off not approved by a numerical majority of producers, and all volume of
7 production or block voting by co-ops.

8 **5. Farm Credit**

9 The solution to the farm credit, including urban and rural community crises, lies in the
10 improvement of farm income. The farm credit system including USDA lending, cooperative banks and
11 credit unions must be supported and continued for the purpose they were originally created for, such as
12 direct loans to beginning farmers and support in capitalizing existing operations. Congress should
13 continue to fund agriculture’s financial systems in such a manner that these purposes can be
14 accomplished.

15 **6. Federal Conservation Programs**

16 Serious erosion of America’s soil makes it necessary to continually support a long-term federal
17 conservation program to preserve our nation’s soil and water resources. Fragile lands should continue to
18 be withdrawn from intensive cropping and be eligible for enrollment in the Conservation and Wetland
19 Reserve Programs. Soil erodibility formula should not change because of changing field size. All water
20 resources must be protected from chemical and sediment contamination.

21 Because soil and water resources are essential to every citizen, federal funding must be available
22 in adequate amounts on a permanent basis to protect these irreplaceable assets.

23 **7. Federal Farm Programs: Parity**

24 Production agriculture has no minimum wage or cost of living allowance and yet an economic
25 yardstick is essential to measure the fairness of price and income levels. Until such time as Congress

1 legislates a superior new yardstick, parity remains the only legally recognized standard. Parity should
2 serve as the basis for establishing farm stabilization goals. Food policy must not only seek abundant
3 production but must provide incentives and protection which will enable producers to assure productive
4 capacity for future generations.

5 The following principles must be implemented in any farm bill:

- 6 • Supply management programs which are:
 - 7 ○ Based on units of production rather than acres.
 - 8 ○ Mandatory to prevent a minority of producers from frustrating adjustments
9 made by the majority.
 - 10 ○ Linked by law to supply and demand and not included in the discretionary
11 powers given to the Secretary of Agriculture.
- 12 • A price support system that provides an adequate return for producers using non-
13 recourse commodity loans that exceed cost of production, coupled with the farmer
14 owned reserve. Payments should be limited to small and medium producers.

15 We support the farmer held reserve with equitable storage payments for all commodities and low
16 interest storage facility loans for at least one year's production over and above reserve shortages.

17 We oppose program benefits given to non-farm corporations, aliens, or farms which do not follow
18 accepted soil and water conservation practices.

19 **8. Federal Farm Programs: Other**

20 To establish a foundation for achieving our long-term goal of returning profitability to the family
21 farm system of agriculture and economic stability to rural areas, we recommend that the following
22 principles be incorporated within U.S. farm policy:

23 We support future farm policy that recognizes the differences in agriculture and provides
24 flexibility regardless of the agriculture operation whether commodity crops, specialty crops or livestock.

1 We support a predictable federal farm program that will provide farmers with a fair and equitable
2 net farm income. This should include a price balance between sales and cost of production.

3 We support agricultural policy that is directed towards and beneficial to independently owned and
4 operated family farms.

5 We support establishing a revolving, two-year, farmer-owned reserve of commodities to provide
6 an adequate supply of raw materials for use as emergency food or renewable energy.

7 We support an effective price support program to provide security for domestic producers of
8 sugar. We oppose a federal price cap on sugar.

9 We support on-farm storage and encourage producer utilization of the on-farm facility loan
10 program. This includes the increased definition of facilities that allow specialty crop producers, dairy
11 farmers, and others to take advantage of the program.

12 ***Food and Nutrition***

13 **1. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)**

14 Loans made for a farm operation should not be counted against a farm family's eligibility for
15 SNAP.

16 **2. Imitation Cheese**

17 Large quantities of casein, sodium caseinates and whey products are being imported into the U.S.
18 in direct competition with raw milk. These products have not been approved for human consumption in
19 this country. Importers have also petitioned FDA to lessen standards for cheese so as to allow substitution
20 of questionable import for raw milk.

21 We urge Congress to take whatever action is necessary to protect American milk producers and
22 consumers from these illegal and potentially harmful products.

1 **3. Irradiation of Meat**

2 We oppose irradiation of meat but support more and better meat inspection both at the borders
3 and in processing plants.

4 **4. Labeling**

5 We strongly oppose efforts to allow any product, including food products, containing a substantial
6 percentage of imported material or ingredients to be labeled “Made in the USA”.

7 We urge the USDA Secretary to begin immediate enforcement of the recently enacted “Country
8 of Origin Labeling” law.

9 **5. Meat Inspection**

10 In light of numerous and sometimes fatal food poisoning episodes, we urge mandatory inspection of
11 all meat crossing the border from Canada and any other foreign nation, including meat transshipped
12 through Canada into the U.S. In addition, we strongly support the placement of and critical funding for an
13 adequate number of certified meat inspector to serve all packing and processing Facilities in the U.S.

14 We strongly support the placement of and continual funding for an adequate number of certified
15 USDA Meat Inspectors to serve at all packing and processing plants in the U.S.

16 **6. Milk**

17 Most school age children need the nutrients provided by whole milk and studies have shown that
18 milk fat has nutritional values that are beneficial to most people. We oppose the elimination of whole milk
19 feeding programs. However, we support milk alternative feeding programs.

20 **7. School Lunch & Breakfast Program**

21 Many children from families of all income levels are being sent to school without breakfast.

22 We support state and federal programs to make nutritious breakfast and lunch available to all
23 public school children.

24 We encourage state and federal programs to prioritize sourcing from local farms.

1 ***Foreign Affairs and Trade***

2 **1. Emergency Food Reserves**

3 We recommend the federal government pressure the United Nations to establish food reserves and
4 a military force if necessary to protect relief workers where strife exists, and to implement a rapid
5 deployment system to deliver food to those areas of the world where starvation conditions prevail.

6 **2. Foreign Aid**

7 We urge Congress and the Administration to utilize food as the U.S. major foreign aid tool.

8 **3. Free Trade Agreements**

9 We continue to oppose the free trade agreements in place and those proposed. We oppose
10 exploitation of the world's impoverished masses at the expense of American farmers and industrial
11 workers. We oppose giving tax incentives to those corporations that cross borders and exploit workers in
12 the name of free trade.

13 U.S. policy on agricultural imports should include a labor equity adjustment provision. The unit
14 labor cost on all imports should be determined by computing the wages and fringe benefits actually
15 received by workers who work in farm production and the processing of farm commodities in the country
16 of origin. This unit labor cost would be adjusted with unit labor costs paid to U.S. workers employed in
17 farm production and processing. If the unit labor cost of any import is less than paid U.S. workers, a labor
18 equity adjustment would be assessed on such imports and collected by USDA.

19 **4. Grain Export Standards**

20 Grain delivered to an elevator may pay dockage if the grain is above a certain level of moisture,
21 or contains chaff, cracked seeds, dirt, or other foreign matter. Exported grain is allowed a certain
22 percentage of foreign matter and even if clean, may have screenings, clay pellets, or even water blended
23 back in by the exporter. We ask that export standards be raised to reduce the minimum levels of foreign
24 matter allowed with implementation of increased federal inspection and enforcement.

1 **5. World Trade Organization**

2 We have consistently opposed U.S. participation in the WTO. We continue to condemn U.S trade
3 representatives for their efforts to eliminate domestic farm policy.

4 We oppose efforts to force corporate “free market” idealism on the entire world. Free trade
5 benefits have been consistently overstated while job loss, food safety concerns, environmental damages,
6 and other negative consequences have been downplayed.

7 We reject the concept of unelected and anonymous bureaucrats determining U.S. trade legality of
8 our environmental, food safety, buy American, and labor standard laws. Rather than “free trade”
9 agreements, we propose a system of international commodity marketing agreements between exporting
10 nations. Beginning emphasis should be on fair raw commodity prices to producers. Prices to importing
11 nations should be based on ability to pay.

12 ***Land***

13 **1. Land Ownership**

14 We encourage ownership of agricultural lands be in the hands of American family farmers and/or
15 family farm corporations as opposed to foreign investors and/or domestic non-family farm corporation.

16 Ownership of agricultural lands by foreign investors should be limited and no tax benefits should
17 be available to those investors. Location and complete identity disclosure of agricultural lands owned by
18 foreign investors should be published annually by USDA.

19 **2. Land Use**

20 Daily, more prime farmland is being lost to non-farm development. It is obvious that neither local
21 planning and zoning efforts nor state sponsored land preservation programs have succeeded in saving land
22 for agricultural production. World population growth is rapidly outstripping our ability to feed ourselves.
23 Therefore, we support mandatory statewide land use law that permanently protects prime farmland and
24 irreplaceable wetlands from development. This can be accomplished by:

- 1 • Banning the conversion of productive farmland to other uses
- 2 • Providing incentives and cost sharing to local units of government that adopt farmland
- 3 and wetland preservation and purchase and transfer of development rights ordinances.
- 4 • Enabling local units of government to tax farmland on its productive value rather than its
- 5 potential value for non-farm development, also known as “highest and best use”.

6 **3. Property Rights Legislation**

7 “Property taking” should not be considered and monetary compensation should not be made
8 when a certain use is denied because of a determination of detrimental impact on the environment, a
9 community, or society as a whole. Simply having made a speculative investment in an area of high
10 environmental risk should not deter denial of developmental rights.

11 ***Markets and Competition***

12 **1. Agri-Business Concentration**

13 The federal government should immediately condemn and force the breakup of vertically
14 integrated, monopolistic agri-business corporations which have effectively eliminated market
15 competition. If court decisions or trade agreements have diluted the intent of anti-trust laws, Congress
16 should enact legislation to restore the integrity of those laws. We insist that the federal government act
17 promptly to restore competition in the commodity and livestock marketing systems.

18 **2. Animal & Seed Patenting**

19 We oppose granting patents on genetically altered livestock until a thorough study has been
20 completed by the Office of Technology Assessment and reviewed by Congress. No patents should be
21 granted at any time without excluding patent royalties for breeding stock or offspring.

22 We also oppose seed patenting that prohibits farmers from planting, seed saving, and/or selling a
23 limited amount of a commodity for seed that was raised on the farmer’s own land. To do otherwise creates
24 a monopoly and results in higher costs for the producer.

1 We oppose the use of any GMO or genetically engineered seed in the human or animal food chain
2 without adequate safety testing and assurances by an independent agency.

3 We support the imposition of full liability for the contamination of another's crops on the part of
4 producers and suppliers of GMO and GE plant materials including damages to be recovered by the
5 innocent victims of genetic contamination.

6 **3. Anti-Trust**

7 Market consolidation is depriving farmers of fair pricing mechanisms through elimination of
8 competitive markets. The US Justice Department should move to break up monopoly practices in the
9 agricultural marketing, trading, and retail industries, and enforce the Sherman Anti-Trust Act to prevent
10 continuing market concentration.

11 **4. National Food and Fiber Policy**

12 The nation and its family food productions system urgently need a consistent food and fiber
13 policy. We support the following:

- 14 • Stability of producing food and fiber at a profitable level. Profitable farm gate prices - not
15 number of acres farmed, or livestock raised - should be the criteria for determining the
16 adequacy of the production unit.
- 17 • Production demands determined by domestic needs, domestic and international food
18 assistance.
- 19 • Programs, export needs, world food reserves with international participation.
- 20 • Export needs determined by world commodity agreements which promote realistic
21 market prices and provide for orderly marketing.
- 22 • Responsible use of food in foreign policy. The food pipeline should be the last link
23 severed when there are political difficulties among nations.
- 24 • Mandatory supply management programs based on producer referendum.

1 **5. Chicago Board of Trade and Chicago Mercantile Exchange**

2 We strongly urge enforcement of regulation of the CBT and CME as they trade speculatively in
3 farm commodities.

4 We oppose the combining of the two entities.

5 **6. Farmer Bargaining**

6 Concentration in marketing, processing and retail corporations continues unabated. Under these
7 conditions, while farmers are being paid less for their commodities, consumers are paying more for their
8 food. Profit from food is being retained in the hands of major corporations. We support a collective
9 bargaining system of a scope that would produce a fair price to farmers and ranchers for their products
10 from the marketplace.

11 **7. Federal Reserve**

12 We urge Congress to restructure the Federal Reserve from an independent body to a system with
13 Congressional oversight. This body should consist of representatives of agriculture, labor, and business,
14 as well as banking interests.

15 **8. Marketing Orders**

16 We support the use of marketing orders for all farm products if producers so desire. Marketing
17 orders should provide an even-handed bargaining system and supply management options.

18 **9. Surplus Commodity Standard**

19 We urge the USDA to adopt a “Surplus Commodities Standard” so that no agricultural
20 commodity is to be declared in surplus unless supplies on hand exceed estimated needs for domestic use,
21 foreign feeding programs, export needs and a one-year reserve for all of these uses combined.

1 ***Rural Development and Technology***

2 **1. Biotechnology**

3 Bio-technology’s potential impact on the environment and on society remains largely unknown.
4 The genetic uniformity required by industrialized agriculture being thrust on the world demands the
5 current gene-splicing bio-tech revolution. Unfortunately, the social and economic costs of any particular
6 bio-tech innovations have been received on limited consideration. The public must be actively involved in
7 the process of assessing the benefits and disadvantages of ongoing and proposed bio-tech research and
8 commercial innovation.

9 To this end, we support a national public board of review to oversee and direct the emerging bio-
10 tech industry.

11 **2. Health Care**

12 With the ever-increasing inflation of health care costs, many people in this country are unable to
13 afford either health care or insurance to cover that cost. We urge the federal government to enact a
14 comprehensive single payer national health care and medical facility program. It is deplorable that our
15 federal elected officials, who have taxpayer funded health insurance themselves, nevertheless have failed
16 to support health care coverage for all Americans.

17 We support 100% deductibility for farmers and other small businesses and individuals who
18 purchase their own health care plans.

19 We support transferability of coverage from job to job.

20 We oppose the privatization of Medicare and prescription drug coverage under Medicare should
21 be revised to eliminate the “donut hole”.

22 We support further regulation and oversight of drug company pricing.

23 **3. Rural and Urban Development**

24 We support state and federal initiatives for the development and coordination of funding for
25 community based, value added cooperative ventures, and farmer owned enterprises.

1 **4. Trucking & Rail Service**

2 Legislation should provide for uniform laws across the nation for length, width, and height of
3 trucks regardless of country or origin.

4 We support a gross weight limit of 80,000 pounds on all class B or lower roads.

5 We oppose toxic material being transported in any trucks that also carry edible food products.

6 We oppose trucks carrying fine metals of any kind also allowed to haul bulk animal feed.

7 We encourage federal action to avoid rail car shortages with regard to transporting grain and other
8 agricultural commodities. We urge the restoration and maintenance of short line rails.

9 **5. Right to Repair**

10 We support farmers having the right to repair their own equipment, because repair restrictions
11 imposed by equipment manufacturers violate antitrust law, leads to increased costs and repair delays for
12 farmers, and reduces repair choice.