2020 Policy of the Ohio Farmers Union

Enacted by the Delegates to the 86th Annual Convention
Lima, Ohio
January 24-25, 2020
# Table of Contents

**PREAMBLE**....................................................................................................................................... 1

I. GENERAL PROVISIONS OF FARM POLICY .................................................................................. 2
   A. Religion .......................................................................................................................................... 2
   B. Family Farm ................................................................................................................................... 2
   C. Family Farm Corporations ............................................................................................................. 2
   D. Farm Advisory Board .................................................................................................................... 2
   E. Corporation Farming ...................................................................................................................... 2
   F. Alien Ownership ............................................................................................................................ 2
   G. Ag Land Trust .................................................................................................................................. 3
   H. Alternative Marketing ...................................................................................................................... 3
   I. Sovereign Immunity ......................................................................................................................... 3
   J. Farmer Controlled Agricultural Cooperatives .................................................................................. 3
   K. Consumer Protection ...................................................................................................................... 3
   L. Labeling – The Full Implementation and Enforcement of ............................................................... 4
   M. Food Sovereignty ............................................................................................................................ 4

II. CROP POLICY .................................................................................................................................. 4
   A. Federal ........................................................................................................................................... 4
   B. State ................................................................................................................................................ 8

III. LIVESTOCK POLICY ....................................................................................................................... 8
   A. Dairy Programs ............................................................................................................................... 8
   B. Block Voting .................................................................................................................................. 9
   C. Conventional and Certified Organic Beef ....................................................................................... 9
   D. Manure Management and Nutrient Management ........................................................................... 10
   E. Confined Animal Feeding Operations and Animal Feeding Operations ...................................... 10
   F. National Animal Identification System (NAIS) ............................................................................... 11
   G. Antibiotic Resistance and Livestock Care ...................................................................................... 11

IV. TAX POLICY ................................................................................................................................... 11
   A. Education ....................................................................................................................................... 11
   B. Legislation ..................................................................................................................................... 12
   C. Other Tax Recommendations ......................................................................................................... 13
   D. Tax Revenue Sharing, Federal Grants and Aid and National Sales Tax ....................................... 13
   E. Highway Fuel Tax ........................................................................................................................... 13
   F. Woodland Tax Values in Ohio ....................................................................................................... 13

V. FINANCE POLICY .......................................................................................................................... 14
A. Federal................................................................................................................................. 14

VI. ENVIRONMENT AND WILDLIFE.................................................................................. 14
   A. Ohio Farmers Union Farmland Preservation Position .................................................. 14
   B. Land and Watershed Use Policy .................................................................................. 14
   C. Mines and Quarries ....................................................................................................... 15
   D. Federal Conservation Programs ................................................................................... 15
   E. Hazardous Waste .......................................................................................................... 15
   F. Regulation on Gas and Oil Wells .................................................................................... 16
   G. Pollution ....................................................................................................................... 17
   H. Carbon Sequestration .................................................................................................... 17
   I. State Wildlife Regulations ............................................................................................ 17
   J. Nutrient Management .................................................................................................... 18

VII. TRANSPORTATION AND ENERGY.............................................................................. 18
   A. Rural Transportation ..................................................................................................... 18
   B. Ohio Turnpike .............................................................................................................. 18
   C. Railroad Abandonment ............................................................................................... 19
   D. Railroad Safety ............................................................................................................ 19
   E. Fuel Policy .................................................................................................................... 19
   F. Renewable and Alternative Energy .............................................................................. 19
   G. Pipelines ...................................................................................................................... 20

VIII. UTILITIES..................................................................................................................... 21
   A. Utilities ......................................................................................................................... 21
   B. Rural Electric and Telephone Cooperatives and Companies ...................................... 21

IX. QUALITY OF LIFE IN RURAL OHIO ........................................................................ 21
   A. Labor Cooperation ....................................................................................................... 21
   B. Health Care ................................................................................................................... 22
   C. Social Security, Private Accounts and Medicare ....................................................... 22
   D. Farm Women and Social Security .............................................................................. 23
   E. Employment and Anti-Poverty Efforts ........................................................................ 23

X. INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS.......................................................................................... 23
   A. International Trade and Commodity Agreements ....................................................... 23
   B. World Trade Organization (WTO) .............................................................................. 24
   C. Cuban Trade Embargo ................................................................................................. 24

XI. GOVERNMENT................................................................................................................ 25
   A. Federal ........................................................................................................................ 25
B. State.........................................................................................................................26

XII. INSURANCE, RISK MANAGEMENT AND LIABILITY..............................................29
   A. State.........................................................................................................................29

XIII. JUDICIAL..................................................................................................................30
   A. Monopolies.................................................................................................................30

XIV. CHECKOFFS AND COMMODITY GROUPS ..........................................................30
   A. Checkoff Programs.....................................................................................................30
   B. Checkoff Operations..................................................................................................30
   C. Checkoff Nominations .............................................................................................30

XV. EDUCATION.............................................................................................................31
   A. Land, Sea Grant Colleges.........................................................................................31
   B. Ohio State and County Fairs..................................................................................31

XVI. FARMERS UNION ORGANIZATION......................................................................31
   A. Membership .............................................................................................................31
   B. Communication and Information............................................................................32
   C. Youth Programs .......................................................................................................32
   D. Local Programs .........................................................................................................32
   E. Legislation ................................................................................................................32
   F. Political Action Committee.......................................................................................32
The family type farm is the keystone of our policy. Family agriculture continues to be the base of a strong society.

A family farm is a unit using land and other capital investments, operated by a family member or members, provides the management, takes the economic risk and provides a majority of the labor and supervision of the unit.

We are dedicated to strengthening and preserving the family farm system for present and future generations, by producing adequate supplies of safe food, for our nation’s consumers.

Farmers are entitled to economic equality with other groups, a fair share of the nation’s income and economic growth.

We call for re-establishment of the economic equality for America’s farm families through programs that will provide a parity of income and living standards.

We urge that the Farmers Union provide leadership in coordinating the efforts of all farm groups in forwarding these goals.
I. GENERAL PROVISIONS OF FARM POLICY

A. Religion

Religious influence plays a major role in the improvement of family farm living. The unique spiritual values of living on the land must be preserved. High moral standards should be encouraged in every area of life. We believe our nation can survive only by perpetuating the great religious principles upon which it was founded. We oppose any measure, which would infringe upon religious freedom. Farmers Union vigorously defends the concept of separation of church and state as contained within the Constitution.

B. Family Farm

A family farm is a unit using land and other capital investments, operated by a family member or members, provides the management, takes the economic risk and provides a majority of the labor and supervision of the unit.

C. Family Farm Corporations

A family farm corporation is a corporation founded for the purpose of farming. Its shareholders must be related to each other by kin.

D. Farm Advisory Board

We propose Farm Advisory Boards to assist the Ohio Director of Agriculture and the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture. These members should consist of bona fide farmers representing and participating in each general farm organization in the United States.

Such delegations should not include agents of foreign owned, multi-national, or foreign-controlled grain trading companies.

E. Corporation Farming

In order to protect the family farm and family farm corporation, we recommend Federal and State legislation which would discourage farming systems that do not take into account, triple bottom line practices, including sustained rural communities and land stewardship.

F. Alien Ownership

Foreign interest should be discouraged from engaging directly or indirectly in farming or owning any interest in farmland.

We oppose further leasing, ownership, and operation of U.S. farmland by nonresident aliens or their production in this country of agriculture products that compete with U.S. citizens.

Farm program benefits should not be allowed for nonfarm corporations.

Alien ownership of agricultural entities in the U.S. shall be subject to equal tax and regulatory burden as their American counterparts.

To assure a long-range commitment to rural communities, all producers should strive to own all commodities required for that production, such as land, livestock, equipment and machinery appropriate to the number of animals at the facility, in the present and in the future.
**G. Ag Land Trust**

Investment pension fund and tax-sheltered trust should be regulated by law to ensure that they do not result in control over farmland by large corporate interest. We oppose the use of agricultural land trust agreements by nonfamily farm corporations.

**H. Alternative Marketing**

We should take interest in and support, when feasible, alternative marketing systems and concepts, which increase farmers marketing control over their commodities. We urge the extension service and agriculture colleges to conduct marketing research and educational marketing programs for farmers. We support the development of local farm markets.

**I. Sovereign Immunity**

Ohio Farmers Union has always supported the ability and authority for local communities to promote their own prosperity and determine their future by exercising their sovereign rights. Too often, these rights are being pre-empted by state laws or by the World Trade Organization. We support the rights of communities to use the democratic process to determine the character of their food systems and the makeup of their mix of businesses and industries. We believe that local government, such as Township Trustees, Zoning Boards, county boards of health and county commissioners should represent the people of the community and have final jurisdiction over land use.

We favor sovereign immunity with respect to the local government.

**J. Farmer Controlled Agricultural Cooperatives**

The National Farmers Union, the National Grange and the National Milk Producers joined forces and launched a drive in 1917 to establish farmer’s legal right to organize and operate cooperative associations. This effort produced the Capper Volstead Act in 1922, which allows collective bargaining of agricultural commodities. When regional and national cooperatives fail to carry out their mission, farmers must take charge.

Farmers must take charge of their organizations to make sure they operate for the benefit of their members.

**K. Consumer Protection**

USDA should not prohibit more stringent testing of any/all animals or animal products for BSE and other pathogens to provide an extra measure of food safety for consumers and in order to satisfy requirements of export markets. Consolidated food production systems have proven to be a threat to consumer health, and make our food supply more vulnerable to agri-terrorism. We support that the FDA should not impede the adoption of more stringent testing for health and safety of food products by private industry to satisfy local needs.

We call on the FDA and USDA FSIS to increase efforts to assure that all products, foreign and domestic, meet U.S. health and safety standards. Actions should include increased inspection of imported food products.
L. Labeling – The Full Implementation and Enforcement of

1. We support increased funding and strengthening safeguards against agri-terrorism and prevention of infectious pest and diseases.

2. We support the twice passed (2002 & 2008) mandatory Country of Origin Labeling Law and mandatory funding for its implementation.

3. We believe in the consumer’s right to be informed about foods they consume through proper labeling and information.

4. We oppose any effort to block or eliminate the law through the federal appropriations process or through any trade agreements.

In an era of global agricultural markets and consolidated processing facilities, consumers need effective labeling tools to understand the risks associated with purchase and consumption of foods from the global marketplace. Proper labeling can supply consumers with crucial information regarding food quality and origin having a great impact on individual and community health. Food security can be a matter of individual choice and responsibility only if consumers have access to information regarding food origin and production practices.

M. Food Sovereignty

We support the Declaration of Nyeneli (Mali, 2007) which states “Food sovereignty is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems. It puts the aspirations and needs of those who produce, distribute and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies rather than the demands of markets and corporations.”

Further, we support the related concept of food security, which believes all peoples have the right to decide what they eat and to ensure that food in their community is healthy and accessible for everyone. Food security is achieved through the production of healthy food that is sold at a fair price. Family farmers and fishers should have the first right to local and regional markets.

II. CROP POLICY

A. Federal

1. FARM PROGRAM

Farming is risky business due to uncertainties regarding weather, pests, disease, supply and demand factors and not knowing the sale price because these factors have yet to occur. The Federal Farm Program is policy that gives certainty and stability with the expectation of being profitable; and at the same time assuring a safe, abundant, and economical food supply. This is a safety net for both farmers and consumers.

Other components of viable Federal Farm Policy include conservation, nutrition, rural development and renewable energy. Ohio Farmers Union continues to call for:
a) Price and income support that establishes a floor for market prices and enable producers to obtain their income from the marketplace.

b) Price support and loan levels should be set at adequate and equitable levels to ensure producers receive a fair return on their investments, and to prevent market distortion.

c) We support a Federal inventory supply program that provides management for all commodities.

d) We urge additional Federal legislation to change the current procedure so farmers can purchase moderate crop insurance at a higher level per acre.

e) We support the transition away from relying on direct farm payments and promote reliance on sustainable market prices based on the cost of production. We support a national safety net policy that protects family farms and we support the National Farmers Union policy on providing a safety net.

f) We support a firm, enforceable payment of no more than $50,000, per participant in any Federal Farm Program.

g) Since the current Federal Farm Program requires less than 1 percent of the Federal Budget, there should be no reductions in present benefits to family farmers.

h) The Ohio Farmers Union believes that it is critical to maintain the linkage between agricultural policy and public nutrition in the Farm Bill. We recognize the importance of this historic partnership among taxpayers, producers and consumers. Ohio Farmers Union is committed to working with other groups in Ohio to keeping the nutrition title in the Farm Bill.

2. FARMER STORAGE

We support on-farm storage and encourage producer utilization of the on-farm facility loan program, which will ultimately provide financial assistance in the construction of on-farm storage facilities. Producers should be reimbursed for storage at the prevailing UGSA. (Uniform Grain Storage Agreement)

3. TOBACCO

In 2004, Congress passed a $10 billion tobacco quota farmer buy-out that did not include continued support for cooperatively owned marketing institutions, tobacco dependent communities, or federal oversight of tobacco by the Food and Drug Administration.

With the tobacco buy-out “off the legislative table” and the components of the 1938 tobacco program all but terminated, important issues and questions remain about how tobacco is to be produced, processed and marketed in this country and abroad.
a) We support efforts to ensure the integrity of the crop in its production, processing, distribution and eventual use in manufactured tobacco products.

b) Failure to enact fair and comprehensive FDA reform over tobacco will allow tobacco companies to not only conduct “business as usual” but also encourage companies to enter the market place to produce cheaper cigarettes using cheaper, unregulated, foreign tobacco.

We urge action by Congress and the Administration to:

• Ensure that tobacco growers and quota holders are provided with timely, fair and equitable compensations for their quota;

• Provide for a plan and funding for economic development assistance to tobacco-dependent communities;

• Establish country-of-origin labeling for tobacco;

• Ensure that all imported tobacco meets the same standards of domestic leaf and is monitored and tracked in a similar fashion as domestic leaf;

• Ensure, at least for the short term, that tobacco production should be restricted to areas already producing tobacco until such time as an effective operational system and structure is in place;

• Encourage USDA to continue research to develop new uses for tobacco plants, such as development of any pesticide properties, and medical research;

• Ensure that GMO tobacco (genetically modified) is carefully monitored, tested, evaluated and certified;

• Support the President’s Commission on Tobacco recommendations and the efforts of the Alliance for Health Economic and Agricultural Development (AHEAD);

• Act to establish a new chapter under the Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act for the fair and effective regulation of all tobacco products in the way in which they are manufactured, sold, labeled and marketed and ensure that growers and stakeholders have the opportunity to provide input and comments on any future rules issued by FDA;

• Ensure that adequate funding is provided for grower compensation, as well as tobacco control, education and cessation programs;

• Establish mechanisms by which tobacco and tobacco products can be monitored and tracked in interstate and foreign commerce to prevent the illegal manufacture, sale, distribution of tobacco products. The trafficking and smuggling of tobacco products is a national and international multi-billion-dollar crime phenomenon negatively impacting of growers, responsible manufacturers, and public health.

4. **ALTERNATIVE AND SPECIALTY CROPS**

We support independent continued research into the production and profitable marketing of alternative crops, as well as the implementation of a safety net for specialty crops.

The Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA) should make efforts to support value added processing and implementation.
5. TERMINATOR SEED TECHNOLOGY

Terminator seed technology, a patented seed stock that has been DNA-manipulated to be sterile, preventing the seed from germinating. Several moral and ethical questions must be raised.

Such technology would put too much control of the production of the world’s food supply in one corporation’s hands.

Seed companies claim they need this technology to recover their development costs. Such costs are already recovered in the sales price of the seeds. A public office-USDA jointly developed the technology. Therefore, taxpayers have already paid for part of the technology.

USDA and its scientists will reportedly receive royalties of net sales of the product, which runs counter to the intended duties of public officials and public offices.

Such technology is costlier, enhancing the trend of making food accessible only to those countries that can afford it.

If Terminator seed technology becomes more prevalent in mainstream food production, the world’s food supply will become more susceptible to major disasters.

Terminator technology raises far more moral and ethical questions than solutions to food production and distribution. Technology should work for man, not the other way around Terminator technology, in its current form would be a potential tool for placing power in the hands of a few to oppress many.

6. TECHNOLOGY FEES

Technology fees for seed stock, herbicides and pharmaceuticals should not be charged to American producers or consumers.

7. SEED SAVING AND GENETIC DIVERSITY

We support genetic diversity in our crops, recognizing that the traits needed for successful crop production tomorrow come from the genetic diversity of today. Farmers should be permitted to use any seeds grown on their farms as seed stock in future years without penalty. Via policy action to keep Ohio laws from outlawing seed exchange and by directly supporting seed libraries, we will support and encourage both seed saving and the open exchange of heirloom and open-pollinated seed.

8. LIABILITY FOR POLLEN DRIFT

Any liability for pollen drift contamination of crops should lie with the patent holder of the GMO seed that was the source of the contamination. We believe the patent holders of any seed stock should be legally responsible for any contamination of any crops via pollen drift. We support legislation to this end. Focus should be on the patent holder and not the family farmer.

9. Liability for Herbicide Drift

Any liability for herbicide drift contamination of crops should lie with the patent holder of the chemical that was the source of the contamination. We believe the patent holders of any herbicides should be legally responsible for any contamination of any crops via herbicide drift.
We support legislation to this end. Focus should be on the patent holder and not the family farmer.

B. State

1. DELAYED PRICING

We oppose the delayed price concept of selling grain. Delayed price immediately puts the grain into the marketing channels, which depresses the market and thus defeats the purpose of storing grain.

Further, title to the grain is relinquished thereby limiting the farmer to only 80% price recovery in the event of elevator insolvency.

We urge farmers to use other marketing options for their grain that offer a better sale price and full recovery in the event of elevator failure.

2. PROTECTION OF GRAIN DEPOSITORS

OFU will work with the Ohio Director of Agriculture and his appointees to help make the grain indemnity fund program successful. We will also work to ensure that the O.D.A. budget includes adequate funding for the inspection of grain warehouses.

OFU supports recently enacted changes to the Grain Indemnity Law. The increase from ½ cent to ¾ cent insures adequate resources to cover elevator losses for farmers. Of equal importance is the codifying of the Ohio Revised Code language that gives farmers priority lien if an elevator fails.

3. STATE REGULATION OF MOISTURE AND GRAIN GRADING

We advocate development of a standard discount and dockage schedule to be used by the commercial grain trade in Ohio and for strict enforcement of testing and grading procedures. Grain taken out of storage should be tested for moisture and any foreign materials present. A premium equal to the shrinkage loss should be paid at market price to the farmer for grain testing lower than the dry grain moisture standard for said grain. When farmers sell their grain, it should be bought under the same federal standards as when elevators sell grain.

We call for passage of legislation that will require the Ohio Department of Agriculture to fund and test the calibration of moisture testing equipment annually.

III. LIVESTOCK POLICY

A. Dairy Programs

Many improvements can be to further strengthen and simplify the dairy program. We support the development of a comprehensive dairy program, which provides long-term inventory supply management to family-sized farms. Such a program, should also include, but is not limited to the following:

1. Allows for sustainable environmental practices
2. Allows producer earnings, which cover production cost, plus a reasonable profit from the marketplace
3. Allows for a price support program, which is established by using the feed cost to price ratio.
4. Allows for a high-quality, stable supply, with regulation of supply and demand
5. Allows for incentive premium payment, if a domestic dairy producer agrees to voluntarily limit production
6. Allows for a floor price on milk that helps producers earn a fair return
7. Allows for the encouraged use of GSM-102 export credit guarantees, the Market Access Program (MAP), to help producers be competitive in a world market
8. Allows USDA inspection of imported casein intended for use in standardized food products
9. Allows for the restriction of Imported Milk Protein (MPC)/Ultra Filtered (UF) milk products in use in standardized food products
10. Allows for labeling, including country-of-origin, rbST-free, organic or grass-fed labeling
11. Future improvements should not reward those who do not choose to participate in the program
12. Allows for dairy-related education in our nation’s classrooms
13. Allows for a variety of milk products to be added to the school lunch programs, and nutritional programs for low-income families
14. Allows for production and marketing research to enhance family farm income, including both domestic and international trade
15. Prevents the use of Imported Milk Protein (MPC) and Ultra Filtered (UF) Milk products in cheese products
16. We advocate the implementation of a dairy indemnity fund
17. We support targeting payments such as, MILC to family size farms
18. OFU supports the development of standards, including waiver by purchasers and safeguards, by which raw milk may be legally sold by a farmer, to an informed willing buyer
19. OFU urges the FDA not to change the definition of milk
20. As raw milk producers, we fully realize the important role that processors play in turning our product into a variety of useful and nutritious foods. In addressing the role of producer costs of production, the USDA completely ignored existing law as written in the 1937 Agriculture Marketing Agreement Act, section 608c(18). The USDA arguments given here are irrelevant to the core issue that raw milk does indeed have value. Saying that milk has no value without being pasteurized, at least, is comparable to saying that crude oil, iron ore, and a host of other raw materials have no value. It is our opinion that existing law must be looked at and followed by the Secretary of Agriculture in the creation and implementation of policy.

B. Block Voting
Block voting by cooperatives and testimony given by industry on behalf of dairy farmers has not always been in the best interest of their producers.

We, therefore, support change in policy in which U.S.D.A. notifies all dairy farmers 30 days prior to any Federal Order Hearings, in order to assure that producers’ inputs are heard. We also support reimbursement of expense by U.S.D.A. to producers who choose to attend these hearings.

C. Conventional and Certified Organic Beef
We call for scientific studies comparing organic to conventionally grown beef. Studies need to determine:

1. Nutritional analysis of organic beef and conventionally grown beef;
2. Residue analysis of each type of beef;
3. Differences in effects, if any, of consuming each type;
4. Public acceptance
5. Economic impact of organic vs. conventionally grown beef, including impact on farmers' production costs, demand for corn and other commodities used for feeding cattle, ripple effect on farm communities.

6. The nutritional benefits of grass-fed beef and dairy products.

D. Manure Management and Nutrient Management

We believe that all farms should have conservation plans, including a significant section on nutrient management. These plans should be in a format approved of by the NRCS. Regular soil testing is an essential part of nutrient management. Although numerous private laboratories will analyze soil samples, most are connected to companies that sell fertilizer. We urge the reopening of the Ohio State Soil testing lab, including the process whereby soil test results are sent to the county extension agents. If Ohio State University remains adamant that they will not reopen the lab, we urge Central State University to consider a soil testing lab as part of their agricultural program.

The Ohio Department of Agriculture should enforce a rigorous chain of accountability and liability that connects the livestock farm that generates the manure, the transport of the manure, and the application of the manure. If a water quality problem occurs due to over application of manure, or manure application on snow covered, frozen, or saturated soils, the responsibility shall lie with the livestock farm generating the manure, the Certified Livestock Manager, the manure applicator and the landowner.

E. Confined Animal Feeding Operations and Animal Feeding Operations

The Ohio Farmers Union supports changes in the regulations that are necessary to obtain a permit to operate a CAFO from the livestock environmental permitting program. These changes will include:

1. If a water quality problem occurs due to a manure lagoon spill or breach, the responsibility lies with the CAFO owner.

2. If a water quality problem occurs due to over application of manure, or manure application on snow covered, frozen, or saturated soils, the responsibility shall lie with the CAFO owner, and/or the Certified Livestock Manager, the manure applicator and/or the landowner.

3. The ODA should make public input a mandatory part of the permitting process, not a mere formality after the fact, as seems to be the way it is currently addressed.’

4. Before CAFO’s are permitted, a committee should be formed to facilitate the sharing of pertinent information. This committee will consist of residents, ODA officials, and facility owner/operators.

5. Because these facilities do not operate indefinitely, a bond for 30% of the construction costs and a closure plan should be required so that tax payers do not end up with the bill for environmental remediation.
Northwest Ohio is home to many Animal Feeding Operations (AFOs) that are not required
to go through the above CAFO permitting process. However, the operations may also
contribute to water quality problems through improper manure disposal. Therefore, (3)
above should apply to all AFOs. We recommend that the county extension agents compile a
list of all AFOs in their jurisdictions.

F. National Animal Identification System (NAIS)
We oppose mandatory implementation of NAIS, until questions involving confidentiality of
information, producer’s cost and equity of administration between producers of various sizes
can be clarified. Additionally, we oppose the “back-door” implementation of NAIS by the USDA
or state departments of agriculture.

G. Antibiotic Resistance and Livestock Care
Ohio Farmers Union supports the use of antibiotics for treating illness in livestock; however, we
are concerned about the growing problem of antibiotic resistance. We agree with the FDA and
AMA that the practice of routine feeding of antibiotics to healthy livestock and poultry are
contributing to this growing concern. We support phasing out the routine feeding of antibiotics
to healthy livestock for the growth promotion purposes. We support the U.S. Food and Drug
Administration’s directive to require veterinary prescription for the use of antibiotics in animal
feed.

IV. TAX POLICY
A. Education
The members of the Ohio Farmers union believe that the central principle of State tax policy
should be taxation based on the ability of taxpayers to meet their tax liability. This principle
should be reflected not only in the state income tax, but it must also apply to the property tax
structure. To this end we recommend that we reverse the present trend toward increased
reliance on the farmers and homeowners of this State to produce our needed revenue.

All property tax exemptions given to religious, charitable, and educational organizations must
be reviewed to ensure that they accomplish their worthy goal of promoting the public good and
do not serve to excuse profit operations from their legal responsibilities.

OFU opposes the trend to reallocate funds for public education toward vouchers and charter
schools. We call on the General Assembly to restore the 10% rollback and the 2.5% residential
reduction, which were repealed when the Governor and the General Assembly balanced the
State Budget in the summer of 2013. All of these real property tax relief measures were a
promise made to farmers and homeowners when the state Income tax was enacted during the
1970’s and that promise has now been broken. Additional revenues should come from
increasing the graduation feature of the State income tax on both personal and corporate
income and not with additional fees. We also recommend that the corporate income (franchise)
tax be reinstated.

CAUV: We continue to support the Current Agricultural Use Valuation (CAUV) law that should
allow farmland owners to pay reasonable real estate taxes on farm and woodland based on its
“use value.” We welcome the recent changes made by the Ohio General Assembly (2017) that
have alleviated, somewhat, the past skyrocketing increases in values with a downward,
decreasing trend in values. We will continue to work for a more accurate CAUV formula in the future.

**B. Legislation**

The Ohio Farmers Union supports legislation that would use state income tax revenue to adequately provide funds for public education, including Vocational, Technical, Arts and Physical Education instruction for grades 9 through 12. The Ohio Legislature should approve the following approach for adequate school funding to take effect over a period of time.

The Ohio Farmers Union supports legislation that would use state income tax revenue to adequately provide funds for public education, including Vocational, Technical, Arts and Physical Education instruction for grades 9 through 12. The Ohio Legislature should approve the following approach for adequate school funding to take effect over a period of time.

1. Provide for a uniform millage rate for the operation of public schools K-12 (for example, 20 mills).
2. Provide for a uniform local school income tax for public schools K-12 (for example, 1%).
3. Provide that business and industry real estate taxes that go to public schools, be collected on a state-wide basis and be distributed to public schools on a per pupil basis. If the Ohio General Assembly and Governor do not approve this legislation, the Ohio Farmers Union will work with those organizations that will support all, or a major part of this concept to adequately fund public education. Any school revenue decrease by changes in the Ohio tax structure must be replaced by funds from another source. All state required mandates for public education must be funded in the state budget.

We support a Constitutional mandate that the General Assembly must secure a thorough and efficient system of public schools, which means that each Ohio child has the fundamental right to a higher quality education; and request the General Assembly to cost out a high quality education program and enact a school funding program which insures that each school district has available the minimum stat established standards, including facilities, equipment, technology, materials, supplies and personnel to provide a high quality education to every child.

We continue to support the principle of the homestead exemption for senior citizens and recommend that its use be expanded upon.

We oppose all tax abatement programs that eliminate or forgive real estate property taxes on industrial and commercial property for future tax periods. We also support the repeal and elimination of Ohio’s “Community Reinvestment Area Tax Exemption Law” contained in Ohio Revised Code Sections 3735.65-70.
C. Other Tax Recommendations

1. We support the 10% investment tax credit and income averaging for farmers.

2. We recommend that the social security tax rate for self-employed persons be reduced to the same level that employees pay. We further recommend that the upper limit on income being taxed for social security be raised to cover any lost revenue due to change in the self-employed rate or deficits in social security funds.

3. Consumer excise taxes are regressive and unfair to all working-class people. We are opposed to any increase in consumer excise taxes.

4. OFU opposes the regressive Commercial Activity Tax (CAT).

5. We support state legislation enacting a state income tax credit for all landowners applying to have land placed in an agricultural district. This tax credit would also apply to land currently enrolled as an agricultural district.

D. Tax Revenue Sharing, Federal Grants and Aid and National Sales Tax

We acknowledge that a system of progressive taxation at the federal level is superior to the system of taxation in the states. In the effort to adopt at state levels a system of taxation based on income as contrasted to property, Farmers Union is seeking additional state tax reform. As states adopt tax reform measures, we also support improved programs of Federal grants-in-aid to states and Federal State cost sharing, especially in supplementing property taxes, which bear an increasingly greater share of the costs of financing educational programs. We oppose a so-called “value added” national tax, which is merely a thinly disguised national sales tax.

E. Highway Fuel Tax

All segments of our society benefit from goods and services that travel our roads and bridges. We therefore urge an increase in the fuel tax and that all monies derived from the new users’ tax go for improvements or repairs to roads or bridges.

For years, local governments have been exempted from paying federal gasoline tax back to the Federal Government. We oppose the removal of this exemption.

We support an exemption for farm licensed trucks hauling farm commodities between field, farm or market (traveling less than 3000 miles per year), per vehicle, be exempt from IFTA (International Fuel Tax Agreement) filing.

F. Woodland Tax Values in Ohio

In an ongoing quest for fair and equitable taxation, we call upon the Ohio General Assembly to review and reduce the property taxes on woodlands. Woodland areas provide substantial environmental benefits by cleaning surface and ground water, by removing carbon dioxide and emitting oxygen. Also, forestlands have the capacity to sequester many tons of carbon in soils and forest biomass.
V. FINANCE POLICY

A. Federal

1. Interests and Farm Credit

   a) We support young farmer’s credit legislation, to provide credit for young farmers on a long term pro-rated low interest basis.

   b) We urge the funding (passage of legislation) to enable the State to assist beginning family farms by at least providing no interest loans to go toward a percentage of the interest paid on private loans secured by farmers at lending institutions or through private sources. This would help offset the high cost of upgrading family farming operations and help secure a better future for family farms in this state.

   c) We support the present Agricultural Linked Deposits Loan Program operated by the State Treasurer’s Office and recommend that it be continued and expanded in the future to the level of at least $500 million per year.

   d) ODA and USDA should make every effort to make USDA guaranteed farm loans available in every rural community.

   e) We oppose the privatization of the farm credit system.

VI. ENVIRONMENT AND WILDLIFE

A. Ohio Farmers Union Farmland Preservation Position

The state of Ohio has established within the Ohio Department of Agriculture, a special office to encourage farmland preservation in Ohio. By utilizing private, federal and state funding, this office arranges the purchases or donations of agricultural or conservation easements on Ohio farmland.

Ohio Farmers Union and its members actively support this (new) program on the state and county levels as an effective way to preserve our farmland.

B. Land and Watershed Use Policy

1. Goals: All life and human development is dependent upon an agricultural economy that can insure an adequate supply of food, fiber and energy. It is in the best interest of our State to promote land uses that are consistent with the goal of protecting and preserving agricultural lands, a finite and irreplaceable resource, while allowing farmers to maintain and improve drainage and fertility to protect family farm profits.

2. Agricultural lands are under attack from urban pressure and runaway development, high cost of public services, increasing taxation geared to an inflated market value, loss of irreplaceable soil and land resources, and most importantly a steady decrease in the number of family farming units brought on by an inadequate return on investment. The problems are statewide in scope and local in their immediate effect. Farmers should make use of the Farmland Preservation Act, which protects farmers against utility assessments and private nuisance suits.

3. The protection of our water resources is critical not only to continuing farm operations, but as a source of drinking water for the vast majority of rural residents. We encourage the conservation of subterranean and surface water use.

4. We oppose the federal government’s purchase of water rights anywhere in the United States.
5. We oppose the damming of rivers for municipal water supplies when it forces people from their homes, their farms, and has a negative impact on farm drainage systems. We believe an above ground reservoir along with better water management, including recycling, would be a better solution. O.F.U. recognizes that a sound regional food policy rejects the notion of depleting one region's resources for supposed benefits of another. Thus, massive water shipment projects, such as the proposal to transfer water from the Great Lakes to the Western states defeat the concept of a rational food program.

6. We oppose the further establishment of Wildlife Preserve Areas by the Government Agencies, unless surrounding farmers are notified and consulted as to the "Agricultural Impact" of such wildlife or Preserve areas.

7. Private landowners should not be penalized for converting wetlands on which no wetland determination (has been) was made before 1985.

8. We feel wetland regulation on private farmland, should be limited to projects of high environmental value and that property taxes should be (lowered) eliminated to compensate for the loss of other potential uses. If the maintenance of a wetland is determined to be valuable enough for protection for community benefit, then the landowner must be compensated. Any mitigation of wetlands should be done within the same county or watershed. We support NRCS as the exclusive agency controlling wetland issues. To be regulated, wetlands must exceed five contiguous acres.

9. Watersheds - Ohio Farmers Union proposes that the law be amended to require each county to make swift and effective use of their drainage maintenance funds.

C. Mines and Quarries

The Ohio Farmers Union realizes the need for minerals including oil, gas, coal, and aggregates; as well the need for lumber.

We oppose the mining, drilling, and commercial logging, except for routine maintenance, on all state property, on prime farmland, in populated areas, and under public roads.

We also oppose the practice of “mountain-top” mining.

D. Federal Conservation Programs

The Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 calls for increased investments in conservation efforts.

1. We support full implementation and funding for title II conservation programs. We believe that the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) should be fully funded and that the $450,000 payment limit be reduced to $50,000. The Conservation Stewardship (Security) Program (CSP) should be fully funded, implemented, and made available to all watersheds and family farms. We believe that the Farm Service Agency (FSA) farmer elected committee system should over-see and administer all conservation programs with technical assistance provided by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and/or the Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD).

2. We encourage the FSA and other local conservation districts, to include large diameter drainage tile, as an approved practice for EQIP funding.

E. Hazardous Waste

We propose legislation for the EPA (state and federal) to stop dumping of hazardous nuclear, low-level radioactive and toxic waste into Ohio land. We also encourage development of
hazardous and low-level radioactive waste disposal methods other than landfills with stricter enforcement of laws on transporting and handling hazardous and low-level radioactive waste.

We oppose the method of deep well injection of dangerous chemicals and hazardous waste because of the risk of contaminating our water sources.

Those who work with or live near such dangerous chemicals have a right to know their contents and risks. Our groundwater must be safeguarded from contamination. The adequate monitoring of hazardous waste sites and industry producing hazardous waste by the EPA is essential to maintain a safe environment. Industry should be required to keep records of delivery to other states.

Early notice and meaningful participation by local government and residents must be part of any waste facility approval process. Landowners need statutory rights to recover damages and legal costs caused by waste facilities.

We encourage efforts to ensure that all costs of hazardous disposal are borne by generators of that waste. Farmers Union encourages the least contamination method to dispose of waste, which seems to be incinerating.

We recommend ongoing recycling of any hazardous waste on the site where the waste is created. We encourage the State of Ohio and the Federal Government to require the recycling and detoxification of hazardous waste.

We urge the State of Ohio to comply with the 1986 Emergency Planning and Community Right to Know Act. Oil and gas well operators must report all hazardous chemicals in use or stored at drilling sites to the Ohio State Emergency Response Commission, co-chaired by the Ohio EPA and the Ohio Emergency Management Agency. The Ohio SERC should maintain a database with this information that is easily accessible to first responders and the public.

**F. Regulation on Gas and Oil Wells**

In order to protect our fresh water supply in areas where gas and oil well drilling is done, inspections should be made when drilling pits are being pumped, also when they are being closed to ensure that proper procedures are followed. Restoration of every site should be a requirement to preserve our land and water. A certifiable bond should be required to guarantee this restoration. Seeding should be made in every case and kept mowed around well and tank battery. Restoration plans should be constructed with culvert pipe installed at streams or waterways. Fences should be constructed around well and tank battery to protect people and animals, also to stop vandalism. Dikes should be constructed around tank batteries made of such material and built high enough and strong enough to contain whatever liquid is in the tanks in the battery, also, to prevent the use of any well for purpose of waste disposal. Sales or transfer of leases should have landowner approval.

Ohio Farmers Union supports a statute for the installation of transmission lines, which addresses concerns such as rights-of-way, soil compaction, land slope, restoring topsoil and replacing drainage tile. It also calls for monitoring the project no less than two years after initial restoration of right-of-way. We also support a position within the Ohio Department of Natural Resources Soil & Water division which would be responsible for seeing that such guidelines are met. We would support state appropriation of the necessary funding for such a position.
G. Pollution

Farmers Union recognizes the importance of maintaining a clean and healthful environment and supports efforts to curb the pollution of that environment. We specifically recommend the following:

1. We support the implementation of a comprehensive solid waste management plan that is geared toward reducing the amount of waste stream into landfills. It can be achieved by educating and encouraging society to recycle, further research into other forms of disposal (i.e. incineration) and new market development of recycled and biodegradable products.

2. We strongly endorse the concept of a deposit on all beverage containers. Such a deposit should be adequate to ensure the return of said containers.

3. We support legislation that limits garbage and solid waste dumping from other states and encourages strong penalties for such dumping.

4. We recommend that the government use re-cycled paper. We encourage the printing industry to use re-cycled paper and soy ink.

5. We recommend that the Clean Air Act not be weakened, and that hydrogen sulfide and ammonia emission standards be established and enforced.

6. We believe that all interest accrued from monies deposited in County Ditch Funds should be returned to that fund. This will keep the funds benefiting the intended purpose of a well-maintained ditch project.

7. With the increased presence and proposals of industrialized farms, Ohio's Governmental agencies must be up to the task of assuring that these operations are environmentally friendly and are following the law.

H. Carbon Sequestration

OFU urges aggressive action to mitigate climate change. We support various conservation methodologies, especially terrestrial carbon sinks designed to reduce greenhouse gasses and programs designed to capture and sequester carbon.

I. State Wildlife Regulations

We recommend that the Division of Wildlife and all sportsmen's organizations conduct educational programs for the licensed hunter emphasizing the importance of hunting laws and hunting techniques.

We urge the passage of laws stating that the act of hunting any game animal or fowl while on private property and without express written permission of the owner be classified as a 3rd degree misdemeanor; and that upon conviction of such an offense, the crime is to be punishable by a minimum of 10 days in the county jail in addition to all other penalties presently in place and enforced by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Wildlife.

We urge the state wildlife department to better control the population of any wildlife that are a detriment to farm income and assets and that a fund be established by the Wildlife Department to compensate for producers' crop losses. We urge research to develop a better motor safety vehicle device to repel deer.

We further recommend that a uniform badge or tag identification system be adopted statewide, which would allow local game protectors to determine in the field those hunters having owner permission to hunt.
We believe that the farmer should have the right to charge hunters a fee to hunt on his land. The hunter and the farmer should agree on the fee. The hunter should be respectful of the owner’s land and have no right to sue for any reason.

We support the Coyote Indemnity Fund in the biennial budget of the Ohio Department of Agriculture. This budget should presently be funded adequately to meet all the claims of the budget year.

Ohio Farmers Union is open to debate any proposal to control coyotes and other species. We support the livestock protection collar.

We support passage of legislation and/or fair management of the funds in the Coyote Indemnity Fund by the Ohio Department of Agriculture and encourage a state bounty.

The Ohio Farmers Union urges the passage of laws regulating the operation of sports vehicles such as snowmobiles, ATVs, etc., on private property and without express written permission of the owner be classified as a 3rd degree misdemeanor and (that) upon conviction of such offense, the crime is to be punishable by a minimum of ten days in the county jail, plus restitution for property or crop damage to all other penalties presently in place and enforced by the law enforcement agencies of the state.

J. Nutrient Management

The Ohio Farmers Union supports the Ohio Dept. of Agriculture rules requiring nutrient management planning for farmers in watersheds that have been declared to be in “In Distress.” In order to address water quality issues across Ohio, Ohio Farmers Union recommends the state of Ohio adopt the standards set forth in the USDA Conservation Practice Standard on Nutrient Management (Code 590) as the basis for Nutrient Management Plans with application rates limited to the annual agronomic rate of the next intended crop.

VII. TRANSPORTATION AND ENERGY

A. Rural Transportation

A well-maintained transportation system in our rural area is essential to the movement of food and fiber and is an important part of Ohio’s number one industry agriculture. The condition of rural roads and bridges are such that immediate attention should be given to their improvements. We oppose the further removal of railroad lines.

Funds raised by the State should be distributed to the local government (county and township) by a formula, which recognizes the need for maintaining transportation in our less populated rural areas. This formula should give priority to bridges, which have deteriorated to a dangerous condition.

B. Ohio Turnpike

There has been a dramatic increase in highway traffic along parallel highways causing many more highway fatalities and congestion in many communities. This is causing higher outlays of funds from O.D.O.T. than would normally be necessary. The Ohio Farmers Union believes that there should be action taken by the Ohio General Assembly to request budget approval of the Ohio Turnpike Commission or steps be taken to assume the responsibility of the management and bond financing of the Ohio Turnpike.
We strongly urge the Ohio Turnpike not be privatized, and that the Ohio Turnpike Commission be responsible for the maintenance and repair of the turnpike and overpasses.

C. Railroad Abandonment
In case of railroad abandonment, the company should make an effort to turn over all or parts of the property in question to local business for sidings or short line transportation. The cost of such a turnover should be at the salvage value of the track and other facilities. Where there is a potential buyer, the transaction should be made within one year. Any property, which cannot be feasibly returned to service or sold to another party, should be, released to adjoining property owners at no cost and no liability.

D. Railroad Safety
Vehicle-train collisions have become an increasingly serious problem, especially in our rural areas. We encourage the PUCO to promptly appropriate its Federal Assistance Funds, allowing the installation of signals and gates at crossings where they are needed most. We propose rumble strips be installed a distance from all railroad crossings and that every railroad approach meet state standards.

E. Fuel Policy
We call on the federal government to:

1. Assure priority deliveries of gasoline, diesel, propane, and other fuels to farmers in an equitable fashion.
2. In case of emergencies we allocate crude oil among refineries to assure equitable supplies to all areas.
3. We call for full-scale Congressional investigation concerning inventories of both supply and reserves of crude oil and petroleum products including the outlook for meeting future domestic needs from developable domestic sources of crude oil and gas. Increasing costs of gasoline, fuel oil and natural gas would also increase inflationary pressures. We encourage research and development of new energy sources by the Federal Government. The Antitrust laws should be rigidly enforced to prevent monopoly in the energy field.
4. We encourage enactment, implementation and enforcement of fuel quality standards in the state of Ohio.
5. Home heating fuel should be exempt from sales tax.

F. Renewable and Alternative Energy
This nation requires an ever-increasing supply of dependable and economical energy. Nowhere is this problem better realized and potentially remedied than in the agricultural segment of our economy. Because America’s farmers and ranchers are committed to being part of our nations’ energy security, and at the same time enhancing economic opportunities within communities across the country, and with community-based energy development reducing concentration and increasing competition that benefits local communities; we urge congress to implement and fully fund the Renewable Fuel Standard that is written in the 2008 farm bill, which included a target of 36 billion gallons of renewable fuels produced domestically. Additionally, we call for strengthened regulatory authority and transparency to restore the intended function of energy and commodity futures markets. In order to decrease our dependence on traditional fossil fuels (particularly imported fuels) we urge the following action on these sources of alternative energy.
1. **Renewable Fuel**

1. Fuels produced from corn, soybeans, sugar beets, potatoes, waste, cellulosic, bio-mass and other agricultural products are now being manufactured and sold commercially in several states and have proven to be successful and desirable vehicle fuels. These alcohol fuels and others should be developed and encouraged by the following steps:

2. Removal of the state gas tax on all alcohol portions of fuels sold in Ohio

3. Increased research and pilot projects by Land Grant Universities on the use of alcohol fuels and its spent byproduct; whenever possible these projects should involve family farm operations;

4. Tax advantages for farm use and participation in alcohol fuels development

5. The NFU should use its educational and legislative resources to promote alcohol fuels for farm and public use; in particular, the possibilities of on farm production of alcohol fuels from animal waste

6. Strongly recommends mandating the use of domestic produced ethanol in gasoline fuels sold in Ohio, to range from 15% to 99% blend.

7. Whereas many current production vehicles are now manufactured to accommodate E-85, the OFU recommends that the State of Ohio make available, by legislation if necessary, 85 percent ethanol fuel to all consumers in Ohio.

8. Ohio Farmers Union will work aggressively with all other groups and organizations to promote the education and use of ethanol fuels made from domestic agricultural products.

9. We support introduction of the Incentive for Renewable Energy Sources legislation. We also support the American Soybeans Association’s workings to legislate a blenders’ tax credit for biodiesel.

10. The State of Ohio should be required to use renewable fuels.

11. E85 Ethanol and bio-diesel fuel should be made easily accessible in the state of Ohio.

12. We oppose allocations of renewable fuels tax credit and support the maintenance of tariffs on imported fuels.

13. We urge that the RFS standards from the 2008 Farm Bill, be fully implemented and fully funded.

2. **On-Farm Wind and Solar Energy**

The Farmers Union calls upon legislative and administrative leadership in Ohio to join their neighboring states in encouraging renewable fuels through RFP (Renewable Fuels Portfolio) and C-BED (Community Based Energy Development) legislation.

Wind and solar energy, especially passive solar energy, can be economically used on the farm when farmers are provided with technical and educational assistance. The needed technical expertise can be provided by joint efforts of private, state, and federal agencies to tap these potential energy sources on the farm.

G. **Pipelines**

There continues to be pipeline building pressure in many parts of rural Ohio. In addition to Special Order of Business 2015-04, the Ohio Farmers Union believes the following in relation to private sector pipelines and private property owners:

1. Any ingress or egress to work area across private land be planked with pads the full length of the access road.

2. No above ground structure be placed on cropland being farmed.

3. Only one pipeline per easement.
4. Soil will be stripped in three layers rather than two; as some trenches will be eight feet deep.
5. Compensation will be made on a pipe size and per foot basis instead of per acre.
6. Any septic tiles be replaced, and, if a back bed must be installed, the pipeline would bear the cost.
7. Any water pumped from trench while installing pipeline will not be piped on top of the ground.
8. Any pipeline on easement that would devastate or destroy a business should not be permitted.
9. Any drainage tile replacement will be done to the satisfaction of the landowner at the cost of the pipeline company.
10. We Urge Ohio to adopt a "Trespass Fee" to compensate private land owners for inconvenience or property damage.

(Wyoming and other states use such fees to compensate the state for "use" of their wildlife).

VIII. UTILITIES

A. Utilities

The Ohio Farmers Union will work aggressively with the Ohio Consumers Counsel to oppose all efforts by any utility, which may take unfair advantage of its consumers. Peak rates for energy should not be applied to small businesses, including agriculture whose operations can’t avoid power usage.

B. Rural Electric and Telephone Cooperatives and Companies

We support the Rural Electrification generation and transmission loan program and urge the adequate funding thereof. We urge the continuation of an adequate loan program to insure a dependable supply of low-cost power and telephone service for rural areas. We also recommend that State and Federal governmental regulations should be designed to benefit rural electric and telephone cooperatives.

We encourage institution of extended area services where possible. We further urge adoption of a standard overdue charge not to exceed 1 1/2 percent per month throughout the state of Ohio.

Ohio Farmers Union supports Extended Area Service (EAS) between telephone exchanges that are adjacent to each other. Furthermore, we support local access calling to the county seat.

OFU supports the availability of broad band internet services to all rural communities.

Ohio Farmers Union urges companies offering metal-based landline telephone service as of 2015 to continue to support these networks in all areas of Ohio until Internet-based telephone service is universally available geographically and compares in cost favorably with traditional landlines.

IX. QUALITY OF LIFE IN RURAL OHIO

A. Labor Cooperation

We respect the right of other groups with weak bargaining power to organize and bargain to improve their position in the nation’s economy.

Farmers must have market power balanced with the bargaining power of farm workers and other sectors of the economy.
We ask farm labor to understand the hardship of boycotts and of strikes during harvest periods. We seek the cooperation of labor as we strive to strengthen farm bargaining power essential to the welfare of both farm operators and their employees.

Any organizing effort should be based on the merit of need, refraining from the use of coercion and the intimidation of outside organizations to try to force an issue.

O.F.U. recognizes the opportunities this nation has offered immigrants and we support a strictly supervised immigration program which confers both rights and responsibilities on foreign born residents. These programs must not jeopardize the jobs of domestic workers.

**B. Health Care**

Tens of millions of Americans are uninsured and underinsured. This is especially bad for those in dangerous occupations such as farming. The combination of lower farm income and increasing health care costs has forced many farm families to choose between feeding their families and providing health insurance.

For the long-term, comprehensive reform is needed which will:

1. Implement cost controls including prescription drugs and eliminate its advertising as a tax deduction and authorize U.S. bulk purchasing of prescription drugs
2. Reduce fraud and administrative expenses
3. Encourage preventive care
4. Provide universal access that is, coverage for all, so that the insured do not pay inflated prices to cover the uninsured
5. Provide long-term care, including assistance to those who wish to stay in their homes instead of entering a nursing home
6. Retain the individual’s right to choose the doctor and hospital
7. Support legislation that would allow for comprehensive health care, based on a single payer system, similar to the Medicare program
8. Encourage reasonable guidelines for hospital expansion

Every American has the right to receive appropriate medical attention that can improve our quality of life. O.F.U. members have much at stake in assuring that our health care is available, humane, and affordable. We support preventive medicine programs and see the need for national health care programs both for catastrophic and nursing home coverage. O.F.U. shall continue participation in the State government sponsored efforts to review and direct our health care costs. O.F.U. will work to halt wasteful, inflated or monopolistic pricing practices.

Every sector of the health care industry, including users, must do their part to contain the runaway costs of providing these essential services.

**C. Social Security, Private Accounts and Medicare**

Farmers Union supports the following actions for the social security system:

1. Ohio Farmers Union supports preserving the integrity of the current social security system. The income cap should be eliminated.
2. We do not support the privatization of social security but encourage Americans to secure investment accounts outside social security, to supplement their retirements.
3. The age retirement and survivors’ benefit program are financed from contributions made by participants in the Social Security program. The employee payroll deductions, employer contributions and self-employment taxes are placed in a trust fund and can be used for no other public purposes.

4. Therefore, cutting Social security benefits or limited cost-of-living adjustments will do nothing real to reduce deficits or balance the federal budget. Such benefit reductions will only deprive beneficiaries of payments to which they are entitled.

5. The Social Security Trust Fund, therefore, should be removed from the unified federal budget, beyond the grasp of enemies of the program.

6. That all Social Security benefits be equitably computed regardless of the recipient’s year of birth.

7. We oppose any and all reductions in Medicare benefits whether by increased premiums or deductibles.

D. Farm Women and Social Security

It is estimated that over 70 percent of women in farm families actively participate in farm work and management, but they have been discouraged from contributing to their own Social Security coverage. Although they may pay Social Security taxes in off-farm employment, such work is often low-paid and intermittent. They are, therefore denied full retirement, disability and survivor protection.

Husbands and wives, sharing a farm enterprise, should have the option to share income credit from Social Security.

E. Employment and Anti-Poverty Efforts

Ohio Farmers Union supports the Green Thumb concept and on the job training programs, which have offered effective employment for low-income rural Ohio citizens. We encourage continuation and funding at a higher level than at present.

We ask the Federal Government, Post Office Department and any corporation selling to or receiving benefits from the Federal Government to give priority employment opportunities to a qualified individual or family.

X. INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

A. International Trade and Commodity Agreements

Exports of farm commodities should not be restricted. Imported food and fiber products should meet the same standards as applicable to domestic producers, such as sanitation, tolerances of harmful chemicals, and additives. O.F.U. recommends the support of legislation requiring the labeling in conspicuous places of all imported agricultural, food and fiber products sold in retail trade in this country. The final consumer should be provided information on point of origin of imported foods.

Our markets should only be open to other exporters if their standards meet those of the United States. All imported agricultural products should be federally inspected prior to admission or entry into the United States. In cases where state inspection standards meet or surpass federal standards, those state inspected agricultural products may be marketed across state lines. The importer shall incur the cost of any import inspections. This would assure a safe food supply for U.S. consumers and put U.S. producers on a level playing field when competing in the global market.
Commodity support programs can have their impacts maximized by imposing strictly enforced payment limitations to direct scarce resources toward family sized farms.

We propose legislation to outlaw the addition of foreign material into grain for export.

We support establishment of quotas and/or duties on imports to protect domestic producers.

International agreements should be negotiated with other producing and consuming countries to provide for international cooperation to stabilize prices and supplies of agriculture commodities through the following provisions:

1. Commitments to assure quality supplies to importing countries; and to assure access to markets for exporting countries;
2. Cooperation among participating countries to manage the supplies put into the world market;
3. Consultations between governments on the effects of national price support programs on work trade;
4. Reserves of food and fiber, under the control of national governments but subject to international review, to assure importing countries of the reliability of exporting countries to meet their supply commitments, and to provide for national and international emergencies;
5. Political restrictions should not be imposed on trade in agricultural commodities at any time except under conditions specified by law, which, among others, provide for specific measures to ensure that the farmer producers of the commodity concerned will not be adversely affected.
6. The federal government should engage in negotiations to establish uniformity in currency values.

**B. World Trade Organization (WTO)**

1. WTO agreements should not mandate a decrease in the present benefits to family farmers who participate in the current United States Federal Farm Programs.
2. WTO rules should include a mechanism to adjust currency values of all countries compared to the U.S. dollar, and not manipulation to benefit countries trading with the U.S.
3. WTO trade agreements should include mechanisms, to enforce uniform minimum labor standards for all nations.
4. WTO trade agreements should include mechanisms for environmental and food safety for all nations.
5. WTO trade negotiators should not unilaterally reduce farm subsidy levels unless tied to effective mechanisms to support commodity values.

**C. Cuban Trade Embargo**

OFU supports the elimination of the Cuban Trade Embargo for the benefit of American livestock producers and to facilitate normalization of relations with Cuba. The Ohio Farmers Union supports the easing of restrictions on travel and remunerations undertaken in 2016. We urge Congress to fully lift the embargo as soon as possible.
XI. GOVERNMENT

A. Federal

1. National Food Policy and Parity

The members of the Ohio Farmers Union believe that there is one overriding issue on which the future of family agriculture and the future of our nation's food supply greatly depend; the need for a state and national food policy. Such plans must embody provisions relating to all segments of society as well as farmers.

We propose for Farmers Union to make this their primary national objective, that farm production be supported at full parity that provides a family farmer with an adequate return on labor and investment.

We, therefore, reaffirm our basic commitment to the parity formula established by law as the standard by which to determine prices for agriculture commodities that are fair to farmers and ranchers and the public.

A national food policy should include the following:

1. Objective; a nutritionally adequate diet for all persons including expanded and adequate food programs. This should include any increased usage of our Government Surplus food stockpiles to help feed the needy and the hungry. We also propose that the nation's first priority would be to feed the hungry, not only in the United States, but worldwide.

2. Support of the farm credit system to allow farmers to have access to capital investments needed to produce the nation's food and fiber.

3. Cost sharing conservation programs that will allow farmers to better protect our nation's greatest natural resource; the land.

4. Involvement of the U.S. in international trade agreements to offer U.S. farmers a constant and fair export market.

5. Participation by the U.S. in a world grain reserve which will free the world's farmers from the economic stranglehold of fluctuating prices and act as a strategic food supply for emergency distribution.

6. All food staples should be labeled from the point of origin.

2. USDA Reorganization and Clarification

In the interest of achieving the most efficient USDA possible, all parties associated with farm programs need to look at all options to streamline the Department.

The proposed closing of USDA offices alone, based on flawed criteria, will not achieve this goal. Current proposals are irresponsible and would not provide equal access to all farmers. Farmers increasingly rely on off-farm income and would be required to take more time off from these jobs to go to another county.

F.S.A. is requiring too much paperwork for commodity loans. Paperwork must be reduced in order to make programs farmer friendly and save tax dollars and resources (trees used for the paper).

In addition, all agriculture representatives must practice better public relations in order to regain support for farm programs. For example, a USDA official or farmer or farmer representative when speaking on farm programs should not use the word “subsidy”. This word is misleading and implies something for nothing.
If reducing the costs of government farm programs is this nation's objective, then it should implement policies to strengthen commodity prices at the market, which would in turn, reduce government costs for farm programs.

We support the continuance of the farmer elected committee system for FSA, rather than appointments of committee persons.

3. Improve Bargaining Power

The federal government price support and supply management programs, when they are designed to help farmers to prevent over supply of particular commodities, can afford a basic framework of protection for farmers in the marketplace. However, even when the supply and demand of farm products are in relatively good balance, the weak bargaining position of farmers in the market prevents them from obtaining fair prices and income. Farmers need additional and improved mechanisms and institutions for direct and positive influence in the marketplace.

In the quest for greater farm unity, Ohio Farmers Union recommends its members to support the collective bargaining effort of the National Farmers Organization provided for under the Capper Volstead Act of 1922 which allows farmers to:

1. To negotiate collectively for fair prices;
2. To require handlers to negotiate in good faith;
3. To set minimum prices of at least full parity if negotiations fail or handlers refuse to negotiate;
4. To levy penalties upon those who sell below the set minimum;
5. To prevent handlers and processors from direct ownership of production facilities and obtaining alternative sources of supply through their own food production enterprises or imports;
6. To apply marketing quotas subject to the majority approval of producers;
7. To authorize production control where approved through producer referendum;
8. We support national bargaining legislation that will comply with the policy of the Ohio Farmers Union.
9. We support implementation of USDA Grain Inspectors and Packers and Stockyard Administration (GIPSA) proposed rule revisions.

B. State

1. State Food Policy and Parity

The need for International Grain agreements to control production and set minimum floor prices for our exports at an adequate level. The Director of Agriculture and the Government of Ohio should assume the leadership in developing a food plan for Ohio.

Ohio's food plan should include the following goals:

1. A nutritionally adequate diet for all Ohioans
2. Strengthening the family farm and farming communities
3. The conservation of soil and water resources
4. Economic justice for farmers and farm workers
5. The preservation of prime agricultural land
6. Gives preference to Ohio raised agricultural products to be used in all schools and government food programs (school lunches, meals on wheels, etc.).
7. Promote the development of local market distribution and marketing systems, including incorporation of the 'Real Food Challenge', which would commit the food service systems of major state institutions like Ohio State University to source 20 percent of their food from local, sustainable and humanely raised food.

2. Ohio Dept. of Agriculture

The Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA) should be a promoter of family farming in Ohio, not only agribusiness. Continued improvement efforts to the ODA must be coupled with a close working relationship between OFU and family farmer-oriented groups.

3. Campaign Finance Reform

In order to protect our governmental bodies from the abuse of money, the Ohio Farmers Union favors the adoption of a public elections financing system, or strict campaign finance reform. We oppose the pay to play atmosphere created when individuals and Political Action Committees donate substantial amounts of money to a candidate, Political Party, Party Caucus, or another PAC. We also believe it is wrong when candidates use the money they have raised to fund other candidates, parties, caucuses, and PACs.

We call for the repeal of the “Citizens United” Supreme Court Ruling that ruled corporations have the same right of free speech to contribute unlimited amounts of money toward elections that skew political outcomes. We believe that money is not equal to speech and that corporations do not enjoy the same rights as people.

4. Elections

Whereas the American democratic process has been degraded by the influx of hundreds of millions of dollars to influence the outcome;

The Ohio Farmers Union supports measures to insulate potentially corrupting influences of campaign contributions and also supports the requirement of a voting system verifiable by manual audit.

The Ohio Farmers Union is a Legislative Organization. In order to operate our government, we must have elections that encourage eligible citizens to register and vote. We must make registration and voting convenient for all. We oppose any reduction in the present voting hours.

We support voter-education programs in K-12 grade classrooms, for example, Kids voting USA. The end results are to establish a voting tradition in today’s youth and help remind adults of their civic responsibilities.

OFU recommends that voter registration be encouraged at high school levels for graduation.

We support establishing an impartial procedure for drawing the boundaries of Congressional and Ohio General Assembly districts. Any statewide office holder (auditor, attorney general, secretary of state and treasurer) must be out of office one term (4 years) before running for a state office, except for governor.

We support requiring multiple candidates for any elected position.

5. Eminent Domain

Every effort shall be made to preserve farmer ownership. In all public and private projects where eminent domain proceedings may eventually be used, individual notification and public hearings should be held before the project is allowed implementation. Eminent domain shall be
negotiated between property owner and utility to include yearly royalty fees to be paid to the
owner. Severance damages should include payment for the diminution of remaining land values
and increased expenses and inconvenience suffered by affected landowners and operators. All
initial court expenses, including attorney and appraiser fees, should be borne by the
constructing agency in condemnation proceedings. We urge investigation into how the State of
Ohio classifies the purchase of these lands for state and federal tax purposes. Ohio Farmers
Union believes the tax purpose should always be in the best interest of the seller. Eminent
Domain shall not be used to benefit a for profit company, or by one entity to benefit another.
Owners should be compensated no less than three times the appraised value and relocation
expenses.

OFU opposes the use of Eminent Domain to seize private property for any private “for profit”
development projects.

The original owner of the land should have the right to repurchase the land if it is not developed.

6. **Opposition to Combining Some State Agencies**

OFU opposes combining the Ohio departments of Agriculture, Environmental Protection
Agency and Ohio Dept. of Natural Resources.

7. **Support for Local Food Advisory Councils in Ohio**

In 2008 Ohioans spent $35 billion on food - only about 1% of that stayed in Ohio (ODA). By
localizing food spending, Ohio can create wealth and new job opportunities. Encouraging the
growth of local food marketed in Ohio can increase income to farmers and make job
opportunities in farming more attractive. A growing local food sector can also slow the
conversion of farmland, thereby protecting valuable farmland and water resources. Localizing
food spending has many other benefits, including providing fresh high-quality food to Ohioans.
For this localized marketing to happen, there must be deliberate decisions made by the private
and public sectors. One of the ways this has happened in Ohio is through the work of the Local
Food Advisory Councils.

Ohio Farmers Union supports the work of the Local Food Advisory Councils and will cooperate
with them to further our mutual interests.

8. **Funding Claims Under Ohio’s Predator Law**

The Ohio Revised Code, Section 955.51, specifies a provision under the law to pay animal owners
for the loss of animals at the fair market value indemnity for those animals killed by coyotes and
black vultures. However, the Ohio General Assembly, since 2009, has not provided funding for
the Ohio Dept. of Agriculture to pay for such losses.

Because of this, the Ohio Farmers Union should work with the Ohio General Assembly to
appropriate funding in the amount needed for payment of these claims under Ohio law.
XII. INSURANCE, RISK MANAGEMENT AND LIABILITY

A. State

1. Workers Compensation Insurance

We recommend the farmer employers who employ farm family members to work on the farm be exempt from all mandatory coverage under Worker's Compensation Law, similar to "family farm corporation."

The Ohio Farmers Union recommends to the Governor and General Assembly to attempt to make the Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation to meet the needs of employers and employees. We urge careful consideration on all matters including privatization in such an attempt.

As the Ohio General Assembly once again attempts to introduce and pass reforms in the state's workers' compensation system, Ohio Farmers Union restates its position that such reforms must not allow exemptions to mega farms. Also, documentation on employers from the state's Division of Safety and Hygiene must remain open to the public in order to prevent abuses by mega farm operators.

Ohio Farmers Union favors the reduction and elimination of waste and fraud associated with workers' compensation, and all workers' compensation related investment funds. Ohio's auditor, treasurer, attorney general, and governor should assure that funds are properly invested and managed to safeguard the interest of employers and employees; however, any attempts at reforming the workers' compensation system must not take away legitimate protection and rights to workers.

2. Vehicle Liability

The public should be protected from uninsured motorists. Owners must show proof of insurance before the vehicle is registered.

3. Premises Liability

We support legislation that would limit the legal liability (both civil and criminal) of private property owners in respect to thieves, vandals, and all uninvited persons who trespass on the private owner's land.

The membership petitions the Ohio Farmers Union to seek responsible sponsorship to introduce legislation to remove Ohio farmers from liability by persons who receive injury while trespassing upon land with criminal intent.

4. Liability of Manufacturers

Since agriculture involves the use of many machines, chemicals, and other potentially dangerous products, we would oppose any abolition of a farmer's rights to seek redress in a court of law for damages or personal injury as a result of an unsafe or dangerous product. Family farmers have the right to expect accountability from all who manufacture the tools and products used in agriculture. Any infringement on this right to a "day in court" is to accept less than justice for farmers and all consumers.
XIII. JUDICIAL

A. Monopolies

Antitrust laws should be investigated as to why they are not being enforced as they pertain to agriculture. The department of Justice’s antitrust division should restore investigations of antitrust behavior and be fully funded and staffed.

XIV. CHECKOFFS AND COMMODITY GROUPS

A. Checkoff Programs

The Ohio Farmers Union understands that check off programs for agricultural commodities were designed to create a funding method to further the promotion, education, and research of such commodities. It was believed that check off programs would ultimately create more demand for the products and therefore improve prices received for those products.

Significant time has elapsed to allow farmers to see the result of check off programs in the form of improved prices. Consequently, there has been no evidence that proves check off programs have directly resulted in a higher standard of prices received. Therefore, Ohio Farmers Union, knowing check off programs may not be prohibited in the near future, support a farmer’s choice in participation in check off programs.

B. Checkoff Operations

All funds collected in check off programs should serve their intended purpose and should, under criminal penalties, be enforced by the appropriate government agencies, are prohibited from misuse for political or lobbying efforts, operation of a commodity organization, as well as personal gain.

The Ohio Farmers Union strongly opposes the current refund procedures in which check off funds are automatically deducted at the time of sale and is the producers’ responsibility to request a refund. We support immediate change in the provision that allows a producer to abstain from the check off at the time of sale.

If a crop commodity checkoff is requested and a referendum is held, we request the Farm Service Agency (F.S.A.) to conduct these referendums. F.S.A. has verified acreage counts on appropriate commodities, as well as all recognized producers, which enables a more accurate and democratic measure of farmer’s participation in the referendum.

O.F.U. is also supportive of funding for alternative livestock and crop research

The Ohio Farmers Union calls for the approved check off operation committee to have at least one member appointed by the Director of the Ohio Department of Agriculture from each of the four most numerous general farm organizations and one additional farmer. This operating committee should be required to resubmit the check off program to the participating producer for his or her approval every five years. If the approval for continuation fails, the commodity promotion group cannot resubmit any plan for three years.

C. Checkoff Nominations

The Ohio Farmers Union recommends amending criteria to allow all national general farm organizations to submit nominees to check off boards. We feel the current criterion adds to narrow philosophy and ideology.
Producers of the various farm commodities are interdependent on each other. The philosophies of the different general farm organizations shall be represented in order to reflect the diverse philosophies of producers in the way the mandatory check off dollars are spent.

XV. EDUCATION

A. Land, Sea Grant Colleges
The Ohio Farmers Union should take action to ensure that the policies and recommendations of The Ohio State University (OSU) College of Food, Agricultural and Environmental Sciences and the OSU Extension service shall serve the best interests of family farmers.

The Ohio State University College of Food, Agriculture and Environmental Sciences economist should support, and encourage Federal Farm Programs that benefit family farmers.

Consumers need to know, that thanks to the hard work and efficiency of the American farmer, coupled with our comprehensive food security policy, the percent of disposable income spent on food in the United States is only 10 percent-less than anywhere else in the world. On the average, farmers receive less than 10 percent of consumer expenditures for food and that amount is shrinking every year to the point where farmers cannot financially survive. It should be the responsibility and desire of our land grant university to inform consumers that this situation is not sustainable for farmers, and our food distribution and marketing system.

The Ohio Farmers Union should monitor farm projects and programs conducted by the Ohio land grant colleges. Farmers Union should work to guarantee that Ohio Land Grant College’s research and demonstrations aid the family farm with technology and practices appropriate to the goal of stewardship. Our land grant universities shall do more research into value-added production and marketing by family farmers and less encouragement of expansion for expansion’s sake.

B. Ohio State and County Fairs
We call upon the Governor of Ohio and the Ohio General Assembly to adequately fund the Ohio State Fair, Ohio Expo Center, and Junior Fair Program.

O.F.U. opposes any fees for Junior Fair participation to the Ohio State Fair and county fairs.

We support continued adequate state funding for FFA and 4 H. and Home Economics, including county extension agents

XVI. FARMERS UNION ORGANIZATION

A. Membership
These adverse times for family agriculture have caused a need and a desire for rural family farm people to unite.

Farmers Union urges its members and organization to:

1. Establish a yearly membership goal within each county or local;
2. Have concentrated membership drives in each organized county to raise the projected goal as per the guidelines established by the State and County Organization Director. Each Farmers Union member should add at least one new member per year. Set a date for good neighbor policy.
3. Have at least two meetings in each county annually with all members being notified by mail.
4. Have all county and/or local Executive Teams meet a minimum of one time each quarter.
5. Encourage younger members to get involved in working to achieve the goals of the organization.

B. Communication and Information
Success can only be accomplished through a well-informed membership. To improve information and communication, we urge the following:

1. To better inform our membership, the State organization should continue to publish the bi-monthly Ohio Country Messenger newspaper and additional publications be distributed as widely as possible to include all presidents of FFA and young farmer groups.
2. The voting records of legislators (State and Federal) pertaining to Farmers Union policy matters should be published in Farmers Union publications. Candidates should be judged on the basis of their support of Farmers Union policy. We urge each individual member to exercise his freedom of speech and write to his or her lawmakers on an individual basis.
3. Each Farmers Union organization should appoint representatives to work closely with the news media in publicizing Farmers Union activity.
4. Notices should be placed in local newspapers when a membership drive is conducted.
5. The organization should emphasize the need to educate and to inform the public.
6. We encourage our members to study the various farm organizations and to cooperate with them when it would be in the best interest of the farmer.
7. Ohio Farmers Union will continually gather information from the Ohio Farm Service Agency Committee concerning financial benefits available for conservation practices and publish them in the Ohio Country Messenger.

C. Youth Programs
All county organizations are urged to promote state youth programs and the state organization will provide sufficient support to counties to implement promotions of such programs.

Youth should actively participate in their county organization.

D. Local Programs
We urge all counties to participate in local issues. County groups should take a position on national issues and pass the same on to state officials.

E. Legislation
O.F.U. should continue to work with each county legislative director to more effectively involve each county organization in our legislative efforts in the State House. Only county participation can ensure a successful program.

O.F.U. should conduct workshops for county leaders and legislative directors. The workshops should be supported by each county organization to ensure their success in developing a well-informed and participating membership.

F. Political Action Committee
Farmers have never had a greater need for a Political Action Committee. The O.F.U. volunteer bipartisan Political Action Committee (FarmPac) should be supported by every O.F.U. member.
We urge all members to join FarmPac and contribute each year to the committee.
Annual Special Orders of Business Contained in Separate Documents