

# FEDERAL priority issues

## MAINTAIN A STRONG SAFETY NET FOR FARMERS

For a small investment, family farms have a safety net, the environment is improved, specialty crop growers and livestock producers gain new opportunities and rural communities are helped with development projects. As Congress begins to draft a new farm bill later this year and in 2012, Farm Bureau must advocate in support of extending many of the concepts from the 2008 farm bill, which has worked well for farmers. Farm program baseline funds should not be diverted outside the farm bill. A new farm bill should maintain a strong safety net.

## A NEW DIRECTION FOR DAIRY

A new direction in dairy policy is needed to reduce milk price volatility. Recent years have seen both historical but short-term highs and devastating longer-term lows in milk prices. Farm Bureau has recognized that dairy price support and the Milk Income Loss Contract programs have not worked and that the organization will look for new policy options that will better serve farmers. Farm Bureau will seek to change and improve dairy policy either as part of a new farm bill or as stand-alone legislation.

## GROW AGRICULTURAL TRADE OPPORTUNITIES

Three important trade agreements negotiated several years ago have not been approved by Congress. These three agreements with South Korea, Panama and Columbia, are important for American and Ohio agriculture. It is time to move these trade agreements forward. The U.S. government must also continue important talks with other potential trade partners to expand additional trade opportunities.

## REGULATORY OVERSIGHT AND REDUCE ADDITIONAL REGULATORY BURDENS

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency currently is pushing a series of new regulations forward which will impact Ohio farmers. These pesticide, air and water quality proposals will place new costly rules on farmers and rural communities. Farm Bureau will engage with the agency to reduce the impact of any new rules if possible or legally engage if other options fail.

## TAX POLICY AND BUDGET

With successful passage of legislation late in 2010 to extend estate tax exemptions for two years, Farm Bureau will need to continue to educate Congress on the importance of this tax relief and ask for these exemptions to be made permanent. We support elimination of the estate tax. Its impact on succession planning for family farms is devastating.

## FOOD QUALITY AND SAFETY

Food safety is an important national investment with many benefits. With the passage of new food safety legislation late in 2010, Farm Bureau will engage to assure the implantation of this new law will not adversely burden farmers. We will continue to work to improve our food safety system based on sound science, and must educate consumers to increase understanding of the factors that impact food price and quality. We have the safest, most abundant food supply in the world; let's keep it that way.

## ENERGY AND TRANSPORTATION

We support improvements to our nation's transportation infrastructure and a national comprehensive energy policy. We must work to control energy costs; promote energy-related technologies that provide opportunities for agriculture and expand U.S. energy investment in off-shore drilling, nuclear, clean coal technology, renewable energy, biofuels and more.

# 2 0 1 1 Priority Issues

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# STATE

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## priority issues

### ESTATE TAX

Estate taxes are well known to be a burden on small businesses in Ohio. However, they are especially harmful to Ohio farmers because our businesses are capital-intensive. Ninety eight percent of Ohio's farms are family farms and have a high concentration of assets tied up in land, buildings, and equipment. When estate taxes exceed cash and other liquid assets, the surviving family members can be forced to sell their equipment or land in order to pay the taxes and keep farming. This is especially problematic in farmland close to urban areas, as farmland is often lost forever to development if a farm family needs to sell off land to pay taxes.

**We call for passage of legislation eliminating the estate tax in Ohio.**

### BUSINESS CLIMATE AND TAXES

A sound business climate, a low tax burden, a just legal system, and reasonable labor laws will create and retain Ohio jobs and grow our economy. Maintaining a strong CAUV program, clarifying Ohio's sales tax exemption for agricultural equipment, and eliminating the capital gains tax will help keep Ohio farms strong. We oppose mandates on small businesses which negatively impact Ohio's family farmers. We support regulatory reform and consistency, but any plan to streamline government or implement regulatory reform should maintain the position of Director of the Ohio Department of Agriculture as a Governor's cabinet level position and the agency should be operated as a stand-alone part of state government, focusing on issues pertaining to food production/safety, environmental quality and natural resource (soil and water) conservation.

**We call for the passage of legislation to clarify that Ohio's 'animals at large' law is not interpreted as a strict liability statute and that it applies uniformly to all Ohio livestock.**

**We call for the passage of legislation to expand Ohio's agricultural linked deposit program**

### STATE BUDGET

Investment in agricultural research, outreach and conservation; the use of sunset review and performance audits to identify cost saving at the state level; and incentivizing state and local government to initiate reform and right sizing of operations will help balance the budget in the short term and ensure reasonable growth in future years.

**We call for passage of a state operating budget that aligns to Farm Bureau's state and local government budget priorities.**

### TRANSPORTATION

Ohio's agricultural community needs a good system of transportation to keep competitive in today's economy. The state's highway, water, rail and air systems should be further utilized to support and grow Ohio's agbioresource industry, and existing state guidelines regarding transporting agricultural inputs, commodities, and products should be reviewed to ensure common sense and uniformity.

**We call for the passage of legislation that will include silage, sod, and timber in definition of "commodities" for Ohio's weight variance law and an exemption of farm machinery from the weight law.**

**We call for the passage of legislation that recognizes family members and employees in the definition of "farmer" in the Commercial Drivers License (CDL) exemption**

**We call for statutory or regulatory clarification that any late penalties for vehicle registration do not apply to farm vehicles used on a seasonal or partial year basis.**

### ANIMAL CARE

Establishing the Ohio Livestock Care Standards Board is an example of Ohio agriculture's continued commitment to providing excellent animal care while ensuring the economic viability of Ohio's animal agriculture community, family farms, and the continued availability of a safe, locally grown, and affordable food supply. OLCSB regulations should promote sound science, good stewardship, and a process that is fair to all producers — regardless of size or method of production.



### ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT

A variety of energy sources need to be employed to address demands for fuel and power. We support implementation of Ohio's current energy initiatives, uniform facility siting guidelines for utility scale renewable generation and the enhancement of biofuel production capacity. Ohio should partner with Ohio's agbioresource community as both a direct and indirect source of energy production and environmental stewardship. Environmental stewardship is also a priority for Ohio's farmers, which is why we will work to adopt state laws and regulations that promote water quality and maintain access to Ohio's water resources for navigation, commerce, fishery, and recreation through sound science and the protection of private property rights, including the right to reasonable use.

**We call on the passage of legislation to include on-farm energy production that is incidental to agricultural operations in the definition of agriculture when at least 50% of the material used in energy production is generated on-farm.**

**We call on the passage of legislation governing the Great Lakes Compact that ensures water used for food and fiber production and/or products is in the public interest, is a reasonable use of water and should not be considered a diversion.**

**We will monitor water quality regulations as they are implemented.**

