



# **POWER** Communication

*Policy Outreach and Effective Results*

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## **POLICY AND ISSUE DISCUSSION SHEET**

### ***Getting Involved in Policy Development***

#### ***Participation Begins with Member Involvement***

Farm Bureau is directed by its members. They define action programs, legislative priorities and regulatory positions on issues affecting farmers and rural communities through the organization's *policy development process*. Group discussion and input are the basic features of a grassroots approach that leads to the creation of policy positions that guide the Farm Bureau at local, state and national levels.

Farm Bureau members have several opportunities where members can pursue their interests and discuss current issues affecting agriculture, food production and their community. These include:

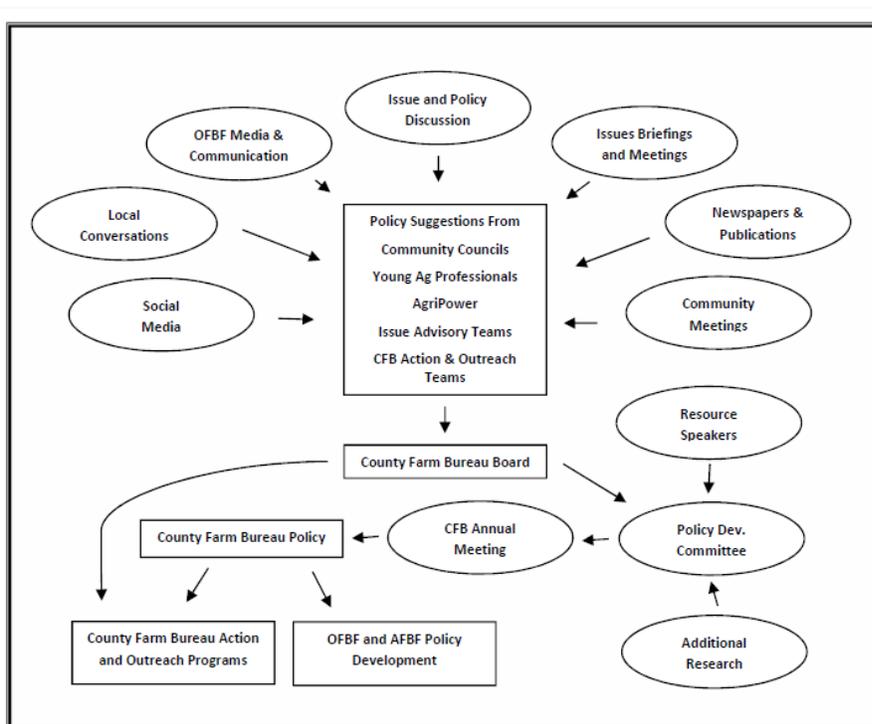
- *Community Councils:* Community Councils are groups that meet regularly to develop camaraderie and community while discussing farm and family topics. The council program began in 1936 and is unique to Ohio. Council members determine their own meeting schedule and gather regularly in each other's homes. Many Farm Bureau leaders can trace their initial involvement in Farm Bureau as a community council member.
- *Action Teams and Outreach Committees:* County Farm Bureaus provide avenues for local involvement, along with Membership, Public Policy and Communication Action Teams, county members support projects such as community gardens, on-farm dinner fundraisers, farm tours, local food experiences and more. County Farm Bureaus also host educational programs and briefings on topics such as taxes, CAUV, energy development and other community issues.
- *Young Ag Professionals:* The Young Ag Professionals (YAP) program is designed to provide leadership development and professional growth opportunities for Farm Bureau members who are age 18-35. This program hosts activities including the Winter Leadership Conference and Washington D.C. Leadership Experience and offers the Outstanding Young Farmer, Excellence in Agriculture and Discussion Meet contests. Connect on Facebook and sign up for the Growing our Generation e-letter. Many YAP groups meet on a regular basis to discuss issues and get involved in county Farm Bureau programs.

- **AgriPOWER:** AgriPOWER is an elite leadership program designed specifically for farmers and agribusiness professionals. This yearlong program focuses on public policy issues confronting agriculture and the food industry. It helps individuals develop the skills necessary to become effective leaders and advocates for agriculture. Many AgriPOWER alumni continue their involvement in Farm Bureau programs.
- **Issue Advisory Teams:** Farm Bureau members have the ability to engage with peers on a specific interest or issue as a member of an Issue Advisory Team. Team members may review, research, discuss, draft and recommend new policies, programming and/or activities addressing a specific interest area. They actively share their work with their county Farm Bureau president and board of trustees. Their input could be used by county Farm Bureaus to initiate programs at local, multicounty and state levels, too.

The primary line of communication in policy development is between members and their county Farm Bureau organization. Member groups are encouraged to identify a designated discussion leader and file a group membership roster with the respective county Farm Bureau office. Meeting Summary and Activity Sheets, as well as regular visits with the county Farm Bureau Board ensure communication between members and leadership.

### **Policy Development Committees Go to Work**

Input, ideas and recommendations from membership groups are gathered by the county Farm Bureau Policy Development Committee. Committee members are selected and/or recruited by county leadership to meet, organize and further research ideas for presentation and consideration at their respective county Farm Bureau Annual Meeting.



During the course of their work, Policy Development Committee members meet with additional community stakeholder groups, agribusiness leaders, service organizations and local government officials to gather additional ideas for policy consideration.

A State Policy Development Committee consisting of county Farm Bureau leaders and State Board members is formed by OFBF with the same mission and purpose. Approved county policies are forwarded and organized. Meetings with statewide stakeholders to gather additional input are held, and research is done by committee members. The results of their work are presented for consideration and approval by county Farm Bureau Annual Meeting delegates.

At the national level, the process is repeated again. A Policy Development Committee encompassing representatives from all states is used to establish policy recommendations for consideration and approval at the American Farm Bureau Federation Annual Meeting.

## ***Creating Effective Policy***

Farm Bureau's policy suggestions come from a variety of sources. Many great policy suggestions have been generated when neighbors talked with neighbors, conversations over the fencerow, in the grain line, as well as in living rooms and other gathering places provide seeds for the policy development process. While the American and Ohio Farm Bureaus provide issue briefing sheets and discussion guides on a variety of issues, newspaper and magazine articles, social media posts, identification of emerging local issues at civic meetings and open house programs are all within the realm of possibility. Farm Bureau members are encouraged to pick and choose the topic they wish to discuss when they get together.

Criteria that should be used to evaluate if an idea could make a good Farm Bureau policy recommendation include:

- Does the issue at hand directly affect agriculture and Farm Bureau's mission?
- Does it ask for or will it result in effective action?
- Is it forward-looking and progressive?
- Is the issue and suggested solution of high interest to members?
- Should the initiative suggested be supported and/or carried out by Farm Bureau?
- Do the Farm Bureau members discussing this issue believe the policy is needed?

Criteria that should be used in composing an effective Farm Bureau policy recommendation include:

- Stating the problem clearly and objectively.
- Identifying the result expected from taking action to address the issue; is it specific enough to establish a clear goal?
- Is the suggestion general and open enough to give members and other stakeholders latitude to create/employ several possible alternatives and strategies to address the issue?
- Will bringing the policy suggestion forward show other community stakeholders that Farm Bureau members and their leadership have duly considered the issue and support an effective remedy?
- Is the appropriate level of the organization (local, state or national) being enlisted to address the issue?

## ***Discussion Questions***

1. List any county, Ohio and/or American Farm Bureau policy that your council wishes to have submitted to your county Policy Development committee for consideration.
2. As well as using Ohio and American Farm Bureau briefing and discussion materials, what other sources of information could be used to spark effective policy development discussion?
3. List community stakeholders (service organizations, business leaders, local officials, etc.) your group would like to see contacted by the county Farm Bureau Policy Development Committee to surface additional ideas for policy development.
4. How do your group members want to work with county Farm Bureau leadership to get further involved in local policy development committee activities?