



2023 Farm Bill Priorities

The following recommendations were selected by the Louisiana Farm Bureau Federation Farm Bill Study Committee. This committee of farmers represented all 18 commodity advisory committees and other farmer led issues committees through LFBF's grassroots structure. Through this process, we hope you find assurance in knowing these priorities are derived directly from the experiences of Louisiana's farmers and ranchers.

Basic Principles

- Overall farm bill funding should be protected.
- We request an increase in funding in the next Farm Bill for farm programs to allow an update of support levels to reflect current market conditions and to help offset skyrocketing input costs.
- The farm bill should be maintained as a multi-year reauthorization for a period of no less than five years. The legislation should continue to combine commodity support, voluntary incentive based conservation programs, trade and research priorities, crop insurance, and nutrition titles.
- Timely action should be taken to not allow for any lapse in Farm Bill programs. Such a default would cause severe impacts to all farmers and ranchers.
- We support maintaining permanent farm law and any changes to current farm legislation must be an amendment to the Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1938 or the Agricultural Act of 1949

USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) – County Offices

- Years of budget cuts and retirements have left FSA County Offices with insufficient staff to administer the FSA Farm Programs available to farmers adequately.
- We support an increase in annual funding for USDA-FSA County Offices to enable FSA to hire additional personnel at FSA County Offices.
- In addition, FSA County Office pay scales are out of date and FSA cannot monetarily compete against private businesses for new hires. We request an increase in the FSA County Office entry level and subsequent pay scales to enable FSA to hire and keep competent FSA staff.

Commodity Title Principles (Title I)

Safety Net Programs & Price Support

- We support continuation of the PLC and ARC price and revenue support programs. Producers of various commodities must have programs that effectively address their unique perils.
- We support maintaining a farmers' ability to annually elect their participation in PLC/ARC farm programs in the next Farm Bill.

- We oppose further restrictions to “Actively Engaged” eligibility requirements for Farm Program participation.
- Reference prices should provide an adequate and equitable safety net and be based on risk of price declines while also taking into account costs of production.
- We support an increase in PLC reference prices for all Title I commodities in the next Farm Bill.
- We support an increase in commodity loan rates in the next Farm Bill.
- Title I assistance should remain decoupled from production and paid on base acres. We support base acres continuing to be based on historical and not planted acres.
- The 20% of seed cotton base acres that were designated as unassigned and unpaid in the 2018 farm bill should be made permanently eligible for Title I programs in this bill.
- We support unassigned, former generic base acres being redistributed to update crop base on the same farm.
- We support maintaining the Farm Bill Sugar Program and improving the safety net for America’s sugar farmers.
- We request a risk management program for livestock producers be developed that provides protection against price and revenue declines. Such a program should account for inflationary pressures of feed, fertilizer, and fuel costs.
- We support the fruit and vegetable industry developing a termed stopgap profit/loss assistance program to mitigate the impact of producer losses due to foreign imports.
- We support defining "specialty crops" as any fruit, vegetable, nut or non-program crop grown for consumption and sale.
- Title I support should be available to all farms regardless of size or structure. We oppose payment limitations for all commodity and crop insurance programs. Risk is equitable, so risk coverage should be equitable just the same.

Disaster Programs

- We support continuation and adequate funding to support standing natural disaster programs for livestock, farm raised aquaculture, and honeybees.
 - Crawfish were added in 2021 to Emergency Livestock Assistance Program (ELAP) from an administrative expansion to include Farm Raised Fish. We request Congress codify this decision and designate Crawfish by name/species. We also request Congress expand eligible causes of loss for crawfish under ELAP to include disaster events including flood, drought, hurricane, extreme cold/freeze and disease (white spot virus).
- We recommend that standing disaster programs be authorized for contract poultry growers
 - Production/revenue losses should be covered under the Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) and associated disposal and cleanup costs should be covered under the Emergency Livestock Assistance Program (ELAP) for both natural disaster and disease (such as Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza).

- We recommend disaster programming be made available for timber producers that provides up-front cost share, rather than current reimbursement requirements, under Emergency Forest Restoration Program (EFRP). Often times, these programs are inaccessible due to capital requirements in a short signup window immediately following a disaster event.
- We recommend standing Farm Bill disaster program funding be streamlined for quicker program delivery.
- We recommend that USDA-FSA Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) and USDA-NRCS Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) program be reviewed to lessen the burden on landowners and USDA staff for reporting requirements in the aftermath of severe storms.
 - We recommend permanent removal of FSA/NRCS employee inspection requirements for every ECP/EWP applicant. In the times of natural disaster, staff is already facing an exponentially increased workload. We encourage USDA to develop self-certification measures or other records to verify covered losses to expedite these time-sensitive programs.
 - We recommend the FSA's ECP and NRCS EWP eligibility timelines be expanded for drainage and watershed cleanup when adjacent landowner or public waterway cleanup impedes the farm landowner's ability to utilize ECP assistance efficiently.
 - Advance payment of expected cost-share should apply to all eligible practices, not just replacement or restoration of fencing and be increased to 50% of expected costs.
- We support farm-raised oysters eligible for disaster assistance under the noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP).

Dairy

- We support retaining the current Dairy Margin Coverage Program (DMC) with:
 - Supplemental feed cost updates
 - Increasing the DMC's 5 million pound limit for Tier 1 payments
 - Updating production averages in the DMC to a three-year rolling average or current production for payment calculations
- We support whole milk and flavored milk advanced through school and nutrition assistance programs.

Conservation Title Principles (Title II)

- The Conservation Title should focus on voluntary, incentive-based conservation programs with producer led stewardship of funds through local input and guidance.
- Conservation practices should remain in the conservation title and not be considered as requirements for eligibility for other farm programs.
- We support streamlining the NRCS conservation practice approval process.
- There should be a priority on working lands programs (EQIP, CSP), rather than land retirement programs, to continue to meet challenges of global food needs.
- We support capping CRP acreage enrollment to keep land in production.
- We support capping CRP rental rates to a percentage of average county rental rates.

- We support making common sense updates to emergency haying and grazing rules, especially adjustments to the turn-in dates surrounding the “primary nesting season,” bale removal, etc.
- We support bringing prime farmland back into production, but retaining CRP for marginal acres and land that is highly erodible or non-productive.
- We support prioritizing water quality and soil health benefits of CRP over wildlife protection and manage requirements of the program accordingly (such as mowing and maintenance, species mixes, and implementation of buffer/filter strips).
- Conservation programs should acknowledge early adopters and maintain economically viable incentives for all program participants. One-size-fits all models do not work. Conservation programs with multiyear contracts should also have inflationary factors in cost shares or monetary incentives to maintain the programs at their economically viable rates depending on the current market conditions.
- Climate benefits considered should include more than just reductions in greenhouse gases. Working lands contributions to water quantity, water quality, wildlife habitat, soil health, etc. should carry equitable importance to the overall goal of bettering our environment.
- Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) and future public/private partnership programs need continued reductions in administrative burdens, and Congress should seek efforts to ensure flexibility is increased.
- We support maintaining the current prioritization of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) funding being targeted to livestock producers.
- We support EQIP flexibility in addressing local and regional resource challenges, including groundwater sustainability and drought relief, resilience, and preparedness.
- We support EQIP maintaining an air quality program that assists producers with air quality compliance.
- We support funding for the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) with greater accessibility to farmers.
- We support authorization of alternative CSP contract terms to make 3 and 4 year CSP contracts available to maximize the efficient dissemination of appropriated funds.
- We support increased funding for the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) funding with an increase to the ceiling on the eligible federal share for ACEP conservation easement to 80% of the easement value.
- We recommend that additional CSP conservation enhancements be developed to farmers attempting to renew a CSP contract.
- We recommend that additional CSP conservation enhancements be developed to grazing lands and livestock producers.
- We support increasing the CSP payment limitation.
- We recommend that management practices employed to slow the spread of pesticide-resistant weed species be added as an eligible CSP conservation enhancement.
- We recommend that continuation of an existing CSP conservation enhancement be counted as a qualified CSP enhancement for CSP contract renewal.

Crop Insurance Title Principles (Title XI)

- Crop insurance should remain a fully funded program that is delivered through a public-private partnership.
- We support a higher subsidy rate for crop insurance coverage in those areas historically perceived as higher risk areas to make higher coverage levels more affordable and to make the farm safety net more equitable throughout the country.
- We oppose any type of means testing that would increase crop insurance premium rates based on farm size for larger farmers.
- We oppose making crop insurance solely focused on revenue or margin protection alone. Different commodities and business structures incur different levels and types of risk. Crop insurance should continue to expand with diverse options with economically viable rates for producers.
- We support expansion of insured commodities including specialty crops and livestock producers (including contract growers). Given limitations of process in adding new commodities, examine ways in which to encourage swifter adoption of policies.
 - We request that the next Farm Bill prioritize development of a crop insurance revenue protection program for contract poultry growers.
 - We request that the next Farm Bill study and prioritize development of a crop insurance quality loss insurance policy and/or endorsement for soybeans.
- We recommend that USDA-RMA private submission authority granted under Section 508(h) be maintained and enhanced to make it easier for farmers to get crop insurance programs developed and approved to insure the unique needs of their commodity.
- Crop insurance requirements should provide more flexibility for farmers to make economically sound decisions when a salvage market or quality loss is present. The following 4 recommendations address quality issues and salvage markets, particularly in soybean policies:
 - We recommend RMA consider renaming “Revenue Policies” to a name that better reflects what the policy actually covers. This would help educate producers on what the policy they are buying actually covers.
 - We recommend RMA review the date that “harvest price” is set for soybeans and consider a regional approach like is used for other crops.
 - The Quality Adjustment discount factor for soybeans is not reflective of actual value of discounts at the time of delivery. We recommend RMA’s discount factor reflect the discount value that the customer receives at the time of delivery.
 - Crop insurance policies should not require harvest simply because a salvage market is present. We recommend USDA-RMA use economically sustainable decision methodologies for their policies, rather than “zero market value” determinations.

Research (Title VII)

- We support funding for agricultural research and education.
- We support reauthorization and further appropriation for ‘Special Authorization for Biosecurity Planning and Response’ which would allow for more proactive and preventative measures against invasive species and other biosecurity threats to our supply chains.
- We support funding for a producer-directed, research-oriented specialty crop block grant program and the IR4 bio-pesticide research program for minor crops.
- We support research into the health risks and strategies for mitigating risks associated with chemical contaminants in water and food such as PFAS.
- We support ensuring adequate funding for the specialty crop industry with emphasis on fundamental research, marketing and promotions, and pest management programs.

Trade (Title III)

- We support appropriations legislation that would fully fund the Market Access Program and Foreign Market Development Program.
- We support the use of commodity-based food aid, including the purchase of specialty crops. We do not support programs that provide U.S. Dollars for food assistance.
- We support maintaining adequate funding for animal health programs that guard against foreign animal and plant diseases.
- We encourage more proactive measures be taken to limit the spread of foreign diseases and invasive species.

Nutrition (Title IV)

- We support inclusion of a block grant program that would allow food banks and food access networks to directly purchase specialty crops from farmers.
- We support incorporating all types of domestic fruits and vegetables (fresh, frozen, canned and dried) into the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program providing an affordable option for increasing the variety available year-round for all and more market opportunities for producers.
- We support technical and monetary assistance being given to farmers to help facilitate online SNAP sales and streamline the requirement to be able to collect SNAP benefits.
- We support the use of SNAP for directly purchasing U.S.-produced agricultural products when available.

Miscellaneous (Title XII)

- We support the Feral Swine Eradication and Control Pilot Program and encourage increased funding with more flexibility for cooperation over coordination between APHIS and the Natural Resources Conservation Service.
- We recommend that the Feral Swine Eradication and Control Pilot Program be made permanent and be expanded statewide.