

Governors' Priorities to Reauthorize the Farm Bill

Commodities

- Governors urge continued support for the Price Loss Coverage and Agriculture Risk Coverage programs and urge consideration of adjusting reference pricing to reflect recent changes in crop prices.
- Governors support disaster assistance programs that provide certainty to producers in times of emergency situations and urge improvements to programs to ensure assistance is timely, adaptable, and tailored to their specific needs to protect agricultural productivity.
- Governors support the Dairy Margin Coverage Program and recommend increasing Tier 1 coverage as well as increasing the margin pricing index. Doing so will provide greater certainty to dairy producers when faced with unforeseen challenges.

Conservation

- Governors support allowing state conservation entities greater levels of autonomy in their conservation practices, as conservation programs are overburdened, resulting in significant program backlogs and slow decision-making, except when the conservation goal requires multi-state cooperation.
- Governors support increased investment in conservation programs, specifically the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, the Conservation Stewardship Program, the Regional Conservation Partnership Program, State Forest Stewardship Programs, and the Conservation Reserve Program.
- Governors support continued funding for technical assistance to assist landowners in implementing conservation and land stewardship efforts.
- Governors support continued funding to strengthen invasive species detection and surveillance, identification, threat mitigation, and outreach, especially for culturally significant species.

Trade

- Governors strongly support robust investment in the Market Access Program (MAP). Increased investment will help pay for itself through greater market access to foreign consumers, which will yield greater income for American producers and distributors and is vital in the sharing of our valuable crop commodities worldwide.

Nutrition

- Governors encourage Congress to maintain support for nutritional assistance programs, especially the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

- Governors strongly support expanding SNAP benefits to all the 55 states and territories, continuing support for SNAP funding and encouraging state and territorial flexibility to ensure equal access to affordable, nutritious food for all Americans.
- Governors support administrative flexibility in implementation of nutrition assistance programs and urge Congress to consider ways to streamline application processes, so that assistance can reach communities with the greatest level of need in a timely manner.
- Governors support the SNAP Employment & Training (E&T) Program and recommend strategies that will encourage work and support families, such as connecting recipients to Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and labor exchanges and other avenues to avoid and mitigate benefits cliffs.

Credit

- Governors support Congressional efforts to continue providing credit through the Farm Credit System and the Farm Service Agency, as the two respectively provide access and opportunity to agricultural entrepreneurship and support family farmers.
- Governors urge Congress to continue funding the Beginning Farmers and Ranchers Development Program, ensuring that new farmers and ranchers can fill the void left by those who are aging out and retiring, thus setting up the next generation for success in the in the agricultural sector.

Rural Development

- Governors are eager to deploy funding from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act to help build out broadband to reach rural communities and urge Congress to continue its support for the Rural Broadband Program, the Community Connect Program, and the Distance Learning and Telemedicine Program in the Farm Bill. These programs, in addition to the funding provided in the various Covid-relief packages, proved vital for rural communities during the pandemic and remain vital today.
- Governors support the continued funding of rural business programs, such as the Intermediary Relending Program and the Rural Innovation Stronger Economy (RISE) program, with the aim of fostering business development and expansion in rural communities. Supporting rural businesses provides needed job creation and economic stability in rural communities.
- Governors support improving workforce housing supply and affordability, and support continuation of the Rural Housing Service programs. In order to have access to a robust rural workforce, workers must be able to afford to live in the communities where they work.
- Governors support continued funding for the water, waste and environmental programs to support safe drinking water and sanitary waste disposal systems.

This is especially important as communities seek to offset the harm caused by per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS).

Research

- Governors support increased funding for agricultural research and extension programs, with a specific focus on bolstering the safety and security of the food system, fighting pest and crop diseases, and safeguarding our natural resources. Continuing to fund these programs will ensure that the United States maintains a competitive edge in the global agricultural sector.

Forestry

- Governors value Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) projects and urge Congress to broaden the flexibility and eligibility of such projects. These projects enhance states' capacity to work collaboratively with neighboring states to improve species' habitats, enhance watersheds, and mitigate the risks posed by hazardous wildfire fuels.
- Governors support removing the 2023 sunset of date pertaining to the treatment of revenues generated through the sale of timber products under a good neighbor agreement. Many state agencies across the country have developed standalone programs that depend upon GNA timber sale revenues to cover program expenses and fund additional authorized restoration activities on federal lands. The elimination of this term from the current statute is critical to the continued success of GNA partnerships and achieving mutually desired outcomes on federal lands.
- Governors support including a new funding authorization for statewide assessment and strategies for forest resources that would provide flexible funding for state forest action plan implementation, allowing state forestry agencies to address the most critical forest management priorities within their respective boundaries.
- Governors urge Congress to provide a more accurate and inclusive definition of "at-risk community" and empower states, territories, tribes, and regions to determine which communities are at the greatest risk of wildfire.
- Governors support an "all-lands" approach to reforestation and urge Congress to create an authorization of appropriations for the USFS Reforestation, Nurseries and Genetic Resources Program (RNGR). Congress should also provide support to federal, state, tribal, and private nurseries and seed orchards through technical assistance and research, providing collaborative agreements and cooperative efforts; and to support seed collection and storage and tree nursery expansion, including the purchase of land, building construction and equipment and workforce development. Governors also support amending the Reforestation Trust Fund (16 U.S.C. § 1606(a)) to provide financial support to the RNGR program and to state operated tree nurseries and seed orchards.

- Governors urge Congress to remove the language established in the 2018 Farm Bill designating the Landscape Scale Restoration (LSR) Program as rural. The LSR rural requirement has eliminated opportunities for state forestry agencies to leverage their Urban and Community Forestry (U&CF) program work, and greatly restricted their ability to conduct hazardous fuels reduction projects under LSR in the areas with populations great than 50,000 including many areas within the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI).
- Governors support expansion and amplification of the USFS Wood Innovation Grants Program to further recognize embodied carbon in wood products, reduce current match requirements and support innovations with the highest impact and greatest commercialization potential.

Energy

- Governors support continued funding for agriculture-based renewable energy programs that focus on increasing energy efficiency and developing bio-based energy solutions. These programs encourage and support rural economic development, environmental improvements, and energy security.

Horticulture

- Governors support increased funding for the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program to continue to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops.

Crop Insurance

- Governors support the federal crop insurance program and urge Congress to expand crop insurance access which protects farmers from the vulnerability of agricultural livelihoods to natural disasters, helping build a safety net against massive losses, and allowing them to recover and rebuild in the aftermath of such tragedies. This proactive measure demonstrates a genuine dedication to supporting the agricultural community and safeguarding their vital contributions to our economy from environmental impacts and wavering crop values.

Miscellaneous

- Governors support mental health programs that offer assistance to agricultural producers, workers, and their families, such as the Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network, and emphasize the importance of destigmatizing access to mental health resources for farmers, ranchers, and other agriculture-related occupations.
- Governors strongly urge Congress to prioritize expanding programs aimed at preventing and managing animal diseases and to create a more comprehensive plan that emphasizes early disease detection, robust surveillance, effective prevention measures, and swift response capabilities. For example, the National Animal Disease Preparedness and Response Program (NADPRP), the National Animal Vaccine and Veterinary Countermeasures Bank (NAVVCB), and the National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN) each provide critical services that keep our food chain secure and protect against foreign animal diseases.

- Governors urge Congress to support urban farmers and update the definition of “urban farming” to include a broader range of agricultural activities that take place within urban areas, such as community gardens and non-profit community food growers, enabling a more comprehensive representation of urban producers.
- Governors urge Congress to avoid preempting state level laws regarding agriculture production. States succeed when the federal government avoids granting a private right of action against states that maintain their own production or manufacturing standard on agricultural products.