

Wisconsin Farmers Union

# POLICY

2024



Grassroots Policy Adopted by Delegates at the  
Wisconsin Farmers Union 93rd Annual Convention  
December 10th, 2023



# **2024 Wisconsin Farmers Union State Policy**

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>WHAT IS WISCONSIN FARMERS UNION.....</b>	<b>2</b>
BOARD OF DIRECTORS .....	3
<b>SPECIAL ORDERS OF BUSINESS .....</b>	<b>4</b>
PRESERVING SMALL AND MID SIZE FARMS .....	5
CONCENTRATION IN THE AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY .....	6
RESOLUTION TO CREATE FAIR MAPS FROM A NONPARTISAN PROCEDURE FOR THE PREPARATION OF LEGISLATIVE AND CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING PLANS .....	7
QUALITY HEALTHCARE IN WISCONSIN .....	9
<b>PREAMBLE.....</b>	<b>11</b>
MISSION STATEMENT .....	11
THE DEFINITION OF A FAMILY FARM.....	11
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF HISTORICAL HARMS.....	11
<b>I.    AGRICULTURE PROGRAMS AND THE FAMILY FARM.....</b>	<b>13</b>
FARM AND NUTRITION PROGRAMS.....	13
SUPPLY ADJUSTMENT MECHANISMS .....	13
PAYMENT PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY AND LIMITATIONS .....	13
BASE ACRES .....	13
PAYMENT ACRES.....	14
CONSERVATION REQUIREMENTS.....	14
COMMODITY MARKETING AND PRICES.....	14
DISASTER ASSISTANCE.....	14
CONSERVATION PROGRAMS .....	14
CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM .....	15
ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY INCENTIVE PROGRAM .....	15
CONSERVATION RESERVE PROGRAM.....	15
INCREASE NRCS PROGRAM SCALE .....	15
COMMODITY CHECK-OFF PROGRAMS .....	15
REVIEW OF CHECK-OFF PROGRAMS AND REFERENDUM .....	15
ORGANIC CHECK-OFF .....	15
COMMODITIES AND LIVESTOCK .....	15
DAIRY POLICY .....	15
DAIRY REFORM POLICY .....	16
DAIRY MARGIN COVERAGE PROGRAM .....	17
NATIONAL POOLING .....	17
MILK PRICING.....	17
COOPERATIVES WORKING TOGETHER .....	17
DAIRY INCENTIVE STABILIZATION .....	18
INVENTORY MANAGEMENT.....	18
MILK PRICING REPORTING .....	18
USE OF MILK CHECKOFF FUNDS.....	18
ASSESSMENT OF IMPORTED MILK PRODUCTS .....	18
MILK PROTEIN CONCENTRATE; ULTRA-FILTERED MILK PRODUCTS .....	18
DEFINITION OF MILK .....	19
GRADE A FLUID MILK STANDARDS .....	19
PASTEURIZED MILK ORDINANCE (SOMATIC CELL COUNT) .....	19
RAW MILK .....	19
SPRING ROAD RESTRICTIONS.....	19
SMALL-SCALE DAIRY PROCESSORS .....	20
TERMINATION OF SERVICE.....	20

HAY AND PASTURE .....	21
ORGANIC AGRICULTURE PROGRAMS.....	21
FRUITS, VEGETABLES, HORTICULTURE, AQUAPONICS, AND AGROFORESTRY.....	21
HEMP .....	22
SEED SOVEREIGNTY.....	22
THC COMPLIANCE TESTING.....	22
HEMP EQUITY .....	23
EDUCATION AND RESOURCES.....	23
ANTI-CORPORATE FARMING LAW .....	23
HONEY/POLLINATION .....	23
HORSES .....	24
RABBITS.....	24
HOGS.....	24
POULTRY .....	24
FEDERAL CROP INSURANCE .....	24
DIVERSIFICATION OF CROP INSURANCE OFFERINGS.....	24
USDA GUIDANCE ON COVER CROPS AND CROP INSURANCE.....	25
CROP INSURANCE PAYMENT LIMITATIONS.....	25
FARMERS’ RIGHTS IN A CROP INSURANCE DISPUTE .....	26
FARM SERVICE AGENCY .....	26
DISCLOSURE AND TRANSPARENCY IN ALLOCATION OF FEDERAL FARM PAYMENTS .....	26
SOUND SCIENCE.....	26
ANIMAL PATENTING AND CLONING .....	26
GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISMS.....	26
GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE .....	27
FOOD SECURITY AND SOVEREIGNTY.....	27
FOOD INSPECTION.....	27
RISK MANAGEMENT .....	28
FOOD BIOSECURITY.....	28
FEDERAL SEED, ANIMAL, AND GERMPASM PRESERVATION .....	28
ANTIBIOTIC USE .....	28
FOOD WASTE.....	29
LOCAL SEED PRODUCTION.....	29
DIVERSITY AND EQUITY IN AGRICULTURE.....	29
‘RIGHT TO FOOD’ CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT .....	30
URBAN AGRICULTURE .....	30
TRUTH IN LABELING .....	30
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN LABELING .....	30
ORGANIC FOOD PRODUCTS.....	30
GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISMS.....	31
CLONED ANIMALS.....	31
SYNTHETIC BOVINE GROWTH HORMONE .....	31
IRRADIATED FOOD LABELING .....	31
LAB OR FACTORY CULTURED MEAT LIKE PRODUCTS .....	31
PREMISES REGISTRATION AND ANIMAL IDENTIFICATION .....	31
<b>II. ENERGY .....</b>	<b>32</b>
FEDERAL POLICIES.....	32
STATE POLICIES.....	33
RENEWABLE ENERGY BUYBACK PROGRAM .....	33
LOW CARBON FUEL STANDARD.....	33
FOCUS ON ENERGY PROGRAM .....	33
RENEWABLE ENERGY FINANCING.....	33
FAIRNESS IN STATE ALTERNATIVE ENERGY SUBSIDIES.....	33
PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION .....	33
WISCONSIN’S REVEWABLE ELECTRICITY STANDARD .....	34

ELECTRIC AND HYBRID VEHICLES.....	34
LARGE-SCALE SOLAR.....	34
LOCAL POLICIES .....	34
COMMUNITY SOLAR .....	34
BIODIESEL .....	34
ETHANOL .....	35
ETHANOL WAIVERS.....	35
WIND ENERGY.....	36
WIND ENERGY LANDOWNERS' RIGHTS.....	36
ALTERNATIVE FERTILIZER/PLANT FOODS.....	37
ANAEROBIC DIGESTERS.....	37
ELECTRIC UTILITY DEREGULATION .....	37
ELECTRIC TRANSMISSION LINES.....	37
STRAY VOLTAGE .....	38
NUCLEAR POWER .....	38
TAX CREDITS .....	38
<b>III.    INTERNATION TRADE AND AGRICULTURE RELATED INVESTMENT .....</b>	<b>40</b>
INTERNATION TRADE STANDARDS .....	40
EXECUTING STABLE TRADE PRACTICES FOR AGRICULTURAL PRODUCE AND AVOIDING TARIFFS BY CONSTRUCTIVE, COLLABORATIVE NEGOTIATING .....	41
OWNERSHIP OF FARMLAND BY INSTITUTIONAL INVESTORS IN ALL COUNTRIES .....	41
<b>IV.    AGRIBUSINESS CONCENTRATION AND ANTI-TRUST .....</b>	<b>42</b>
FEDERAL ANTI-TRUST LAWS.....	42
ANTI-TRUST ENFORCEMENT BY THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE AND FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION .....	42
USDA GRAIN INSPECTION, PACKERS AND STOCKYARDS ADMINISTRATION .....	42
WISCONSIN ANTI-CORPORATE FARMING LAW .....	42
ADDRESSING THE IMPACT OF LIVESTOCK CONCENTRATION .....	43
BAN ON PACKER OWNERSHIP.....	43
TRANSPARENCY IN LIVESTOCK MARKET PRICES AND REQUIRING PACKERS TO PRICE MORE THAN HALF OF THEIR PURCHASES IN CASH MARKET .....	44
PACKERS AND STOCKYARD ACT .....	44
FARM SYSTEM REFORM ACT.....	44
PATENTING LIFE .....	44
RESTRICTING GMO PATENT RIGHTS AND ENFORCING GMO LIABILITIES .....	44
GRAIN FARMERS RELEASE OF CONFIDENTIAL PROPRIETARY DATA TO SEED AND IMPLEMENT COMPANIES .....	45
RIGHT TO REPAIR AND OPPOSITION TO MONOPLY CONTROL OVER PURCHASED EQUIPMENT AND TECHNOLOGY.....	45
US SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION CONTROL OF COMMODITY FUTURES, OPTIONS, AND OTHER MARKETS FOR AGRICULTURAL COMMODITIES .....	45
TRANSPARENCY IN BUSINESS ENTITY OWNERSHIP.....	45
FARMERS BILL OF RIGHTS .....	45
<b>V.    COOPERATIVES.....</b>	<b>47</b>
CAPPER-VOLSTEAD ACT .....	48
CONDUCTING COOPERATIVE BUSINESS.....	48
COOPERATIVE FINANCING.....	49
CREDIT UNIONS .....	49
COOPERATIVE MERGERS AND CONSOLIDATION .....	49
COOPERATIVE AFFILIATIONS .....	49
BLOCK VOTING.....	50
OUTSOURCING PRODUCT .....	50
USDA COOPERATIVE DEVELOPMENT SERVICES .....	50

WISCONSIN COOPERATIVE LAW .....	50
<b>VI. <u>RURAL DEVELOPMENT</u> .....</b>	<b>51</b>
<u>DEFINING DAIRY MODERNIZATION</u> .....	51
<u>LOCAL AND REGIONAL FOOD SYSTEMS</u> .....	51
<u>LOCAL AND REGIONAL FIBER SYSTEMS</u> .....	51
<u>PASTURE BASED FARMS</u> .....	52
<u>VALUE ADDED AGRICULTURE</u> .....	52
<u>RIGHT TO FARM AND LIVESTOCK SITING</u> .....	52
<u>RURAL TOURISM</u> .....	52
<u>AGRICULTURAL TOURISM</u> .....	52
<u>LOCAL CONTROL</u> .....	53
<u>MAINTENANCE OF ROADS AND HIGHWAYS</u> .....	53
<u>FAIR SHARE FOR LOCAL ROADS</u> .....	53
<u>LOCAL CONTROL OVER ROAD FUNDING OPTIONS</u> .....	53
<u>SEASONAL WEIGHT LIMITS FOR AGRICULTURAL OPERATIONS</u> .....	53
<u>IRRIGATION ORDINANCE</u> .....	54
<u>WINERY AND CIDER-HOUSE HOURS AND SAMPLES</u> .....	54
<b>VII. <u>QUALITY OF LIFE IN AMERICA</u> .....</b>	<b>55</b>
<u>GENDER AND MINORITY EQUALITY</u> .....	55
<u>CIVILITY AND INCLUSION IN CIVIC LIFE</u> .....	55
<u>CIVICS EDUCATION SUPPORT</u> .....	55
<u>IMMIGRATION REFORM</u> .....	55
<u>MASS INCARCERATION AND RURAL PRISONS</u> .....	56
<u>EDUCATION</u> .....	56
<u>EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION</u> .....	56
<u>AGRICULTURE EDUCATION</u> .....	56
<u>NATIONAL FARMERS UNION EDUCATION</u> .....	57
<u>CHILDCARE</u> .....	57
<u>NUTRITION</u> .....	57
<u>SCHOOL MILK</u> .....	57
<u>UNIVERSAL BREAKFAST PROGRAM</u> .....	58
<u>SNACK MILK PROGRAM</u> .....	58
<u>GOVERNMENT NUTRITION PROGRAMS</u> .....	58
<u>SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAM</u> .....	58
<u>FAST FOOD INDUSTRY</u> .....	58
<u>COUNTY PROGRAMS</u> .....	59
<u>COUNTY EXTENSION PROGRAMS</u> .....	59
<u>COUNTY FAIR PROGRAMS</u> .....	59
<u>RESEARCH</u> .....	59
<u>DAIRY ECONOMICS</u> .....	59
<u>VALUE ADDED AGRICULTURE</u> .....	59
<u>CENTER FOR INTEGRATED AGRICULTURAL SYSTEMS</u> .....	59
<u>HEALTH CARE RESEARCH AND ADVOCACY</u> .....	59
<u>HEMP</u> .....	59
<u>GRAZING RESEARCH</u> .....	60
<u>FARM BASED ENERGY</u> .....	60
<u>LESS HARMFUL PESTICIDES</u> .....	60
<u>CLIMATE CHANGE</u> .....	60
<u>YOUTH FARM SAFETY TRAINING</u> .....	61
<u>HEALTH CARE</u> .....	61
<u>COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM OF HEALTH CARE</u> .....	61
<u>EXPANDED MEDICARE</u> .....	61
<u>CONTROLLING PRESCRIPTION DRUG COSTS</u> .....	62
<u>HEALTH INSURANCE EXCHANGE</u> .....	62

HEALTH (OR MEDICAL) SAVINGS ACCOUNTS.....	62
TAX DEDUCTIBILITY FOR HEALTH INSURANCE.....	62
MEDICAID.....	62
COMMUNITY PARAMEDICS AND EMTs.....	62
PREVENTION OF AGRICULTURAL WORKER SUICIDE.....	62
BADGERCARE AND BADGERCARE PUBLIC OPTION.....	63
CANNABIS.....	63
RURAL ACCESS TO TECHNOLOGY AND INFORMATION.....	63
TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND BROADBAND ACCESS.....	63
NET NEUTRALITY.....	64
LIBRARIES.....	64
POSTAL SERVICE.....	64
SOCIAL SECURITY REFORM.....	64
SUPPORT FOR VETERANS SERVICES.....	64
CAMPAIGN FINANCING.....	65
NONPARTISAN REDISTRICTING.....	65
VOTING ACCESS AND RIGHTS.....	65
FELONY VOTING RIGHTS.....	65
EXPANSION OF VOTING ACCESS.....	65
RANKED CHOICE VOTING.....	66
REGULATING PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION OF WISCONSIN.....	66
PUBLIC INTERVENOR.....	66
NATIONAL FARMERS UNION INSURANCE.....	66
URBAN AGRICULTURE.....	66
COMMON SENSE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS.....	66
WASTE MANAGEMENT.....	66
WASTE GENERATION.....	66
PLASTICS.....	66
WASTE MANAGEMENT.....	66
<b>VIII. ECONOMICS AND THE FAMILY FARM.....</b>	<b>68</b>
BEGINNING FARMER PROGRAMS.....	68
FARM CREDIT.....	68
TAXATION.....	68
SHARED REVENUE TO MUNICIPALITIES.....	68
REAFFIRMATION OF THE FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS.....	69
CONSTITUTIONAL SPENDING LIMITS.....	69
PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS.....	69
MINIMUM WAGE.....	69
RURAL INCOME.....	69
NATIONAL AND STATE SALES TAX.....	69
FEDERAL AND STATE ESTATE TAX.....	69
FEDERAL CORPORATE TAX RATES.....	69
FEDERAL DEBT REDUCTION.....	70
LIMITING SECTION 179 SINGLE YEAR EXPENSING.....	70
A FAIR AND FISCALLY SOUND FEDERAL TAX POLICY.....	70
DOMESTIC PRODUCTION ACTIVITIES DEDUCTION AND TAX CREDIT.....	71
LABOR GAINS EXEMPTION.....	71
ESTABLISHMENT OF A WISCONSIN STATE BANK.....	71
FARM LABOR.....	71
PROTECTION OF AGRICULTURAL LABOR IN THE FOOD SYSTEM.....	71
LAND USE PLANNING.....	71
WORKING LANDS INITIATIVE.....	72
FARMLAND PRESERVATION.....	72
USE VALUE ASSESSMENT.....	72
COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING.....	72

TRANSFER OF PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS .....	72
EMINENT DOMAIN .....	73
ADVERSE POSSESSION .....	73
SAND MINING .....	73
SULFIDE MINING .....	74
DEVELOPMENT OF PRODUCTS AND DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL MARKETS FOR SMALL GRAINS	74
<b>IX. THE ENVIRONMENT AND THE FAMILY FARM .....</b>	<b>75</b>
SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE .....	75
CONSERVATION .....	76
WISCONSIN COUNTY CONSERVATION STAFFING .....	76
CARBON SEQUESTRATION CREDITS .....	76
GREENHOUSE GAS REDUCTION .....	76
IMPROVEMENT OF SOIL HEALTH THROUGH MANAGED GRAZING, COVER CROPPING, AND REDUCED TILLAGE .....	76
SCIENCE BASED TRIALS OF ROWCROPS INTEGRATED WITH PRAIRIE STRIPS .....	77
CONVERSION OF MARGINAL LAND AND WORLD CARBON SINK GREEN ZONES INTO CROP LAND .....	77
PROTECTION OF WATER BY THE STATE .....	77
GROUNDWATER MAPPING .....	77
PROTECTION OF WATERS IN SENSITIVE AREAS .....	78
PFAS .....	78
TEN STATE MISSISSIPPI RIVER PACT .....	78
PEAK PHOSPHORUS .....	79
ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY .....	79
RESTORATION OF THE FEDERAL CLEAN WATER ACT .....	79
ENSURING RESPONSIBLE CHEMICAL USE .....	79
SECONDARY CONTAINMENT UNITS .....	80
AG CHEMICAL CLEANUP FUND .....	80
LAND SPREADING OF INDUSTRIAL WASTE .....	80
TEXTILE CHEMICALS .....	80
CHEMICALS ENTERING THE MARKETPLACE .....	81
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES .....	81
NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT .....	81
NUTRIENT TRADING .....	81
MANURE MANGEMENT .....	81
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES REFORM .....	81
DNR SECRETARY .....	81
DNR FUNDING AND STAFF .....	82
HABITAT STAMP .....	82
INVASIVE SPECIES .....	82
WISCONSIN POLLUTION DISCHARGE ELIMINATION SYSTEM PERMITS .....	82
GENERAL PERMIT FOR CAFOS .....	82
DNR CONTROL OF AND MONITORING OF WATER USE IN HIGH CAPACITY WELLS .....	82
DNR SUPPORT FOR FARMER-LED WATERSHED COUNCILS .....	83
WILDLIFE/ANIMALS .....	83
WOLVES .....	83
OTHER PREDATORS .....	83
CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE .....	83
WILD TURKEYS .....	83
SANDHILL CRANES .....	83
ANIMAL WELFARE .....	84
NATIONAL DAIRY ANIMAL WELL-BEING INITIATIVE .....	84
<b>X. WISCONSIN FAMILY FARMERS AND THEIR ORGANIZATION .....</b>	<b>85</b>
WISCONSIN FARMERS UNION KAMP KENWOOD .....	85



EMERGING LEADERS AND FARMERS UNION ENTERPRISES LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS .....	85
<u>PARTNERSHIPS WITH OTHER COOPERATIVES.....</u>	<u>85</u>
<b><u>CONCLUSION.....</u></b>	<b><u>85</u></b>

# What is Wisconsin Farmers Union?

## OUR MISSION

Wisconsin Farmers Union, a member-driven farm organization, is committed to enhancing the quality of life for family farmers, rural communities and all people through educational opportunities, cooperative endeavors and civic engagement.

## OUR HISTORY

Farmers Union was founded in Point, Texas, in 1902, by a group of ten farmers and other citizens who organized to help bring about a more economically secure way of life for farmers. Wisconsin Farmers Union was chartered in 1930 through the assistance of the Northwest Organizing Committee, which helped to establish the first county and local organizations in Wisconsin in the 1920s. The organization of Wisconsin Farmers Union was simultaneous with the development of the Farmers Union Central Exchange cooperative (later Cenex, and now, CHS), and Wisconsin Farmers Union President A.N. Young and Wisconsin Farmers Union Secretary-Treasurer William E. Sanderson served on the FUCE co-op's board of incorporators.

## OUR GOALS

Farmers Union is committed to providing effective grassroots leadership to build a sustainable economic system in which family farms and rural communities thrive and prosper. Guided by its cooperative, legislative and educational ideals, Farmers Union continues to work for the advancement of the quality of life of people everywhere. Goals include a strong family farm structure of agriculture that protects farmland, provides a secure and sustainable food system, promotes cooperative endeavors and preserves the cultural and economic health of rural communities.

## OUR ACTIVITIES

Farmers Union's holistic approach to improving the quality of life for farmers and all citizens can be seen through its various programs and activities. Wisconsin Farmers Union has held informational meetings for its members and the general public on topics including farm business ventures, the state budget, renewable energy and the Farm Bill. The Farmers Union adult and youth education program teaches all ages about cooperatives, leadership and active citizenship. The *Wisconsin Farmers Union News* provides information and education to members on recent and upcoming events and farm issues. As more and more members use email, news and information are transmitted over the Internet. A group of Farmers Union members gathered together to create the Wisconsin Farmers Union Specialty Cheese Co., LLC. The company had been sold to Arthur Schuman, Inc.

## OUR PARTNERS

Farmers Union works with a variety of farm, consumer and other groups with similar missions. Wisconsin Farmers Union's roles in these organizations vary from coalition member to policy and drafting partner, to conference planning, to board representative.

## OUR STRUCTURE

The Wisconsin Farmers Union board is made up of nine (9) district directors. Wisconsin Farmers Union staff oversee day-to-day operations from the state office in Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin, a satellite office in Madison, Wisconsin and at the Wisconsin Farmers Union Kamp Kenwood facility in Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin. Nearly 200 volunteers work at the county and local levels as officers and in other leadership roles in the areas of youth education, membership, legislation and programming.

# Wisconsin Farmers Union Board of Directors

## **DISTRICT ONE:**

LINDA CEYLOR, Secretary  
First elected in 2017  
N3689 Riley Rd.  
Catawba, WI 54515  
Phone: 715-567-1010  
Email: hillsidedairyfarm@yahoo.com  
Counties: Ashland, Barron, Bayfield, Burnett, Douglas, Iron, Lincoln, Oneida, Polk, Price, Rusk, Sawyer, Taylor, Vilas and Washburn

## **DISTRICT TWO:**

DAVE ROSEN  
Filled position in 2020; First elected in 2021  
2057 280<sup>th</sup> Street  
Glenwood City, WI 54013  
Phone: 715-781-0846  
Email: drosen@wisconsinfarmersunion.com  
Counties: Dunn, Pepin, Pierce and St. Croix

## **DISTRICT THREE:**

ED GORELL, Treasurer  
First elected in 2013  
S12399 County Road F  
Eleva, WI 54738  
Phone: 715-287-3383  
Email: egorell@wisconsinfarmersunion.com  
Counties: Chippewa, Clark and Eau Claire

## **DISTRICT FOUR:**

JEN SCHMITZ  
First elected in 2020  
PO Box 4  
Cashton, WI 54619  
Phone: 608-487-0766  
Email: jen7cows@gmail.com  
Counties: Buffalo, Jackson, La Crosse, Monroe and Trempealeau

## **DISTRICT FIVE:**

DARIN VON RUDEN, President  
First elected in 2008  
S1309A Clinton Ridge Road  
Westby, WI 54667  
Phone: 608-852-4272  
Email: dvonruden@wisconsinfarmersunion.com  
Counties: Crawford, Grant, Green, Iowa, Lafayette, Richland, Rock and Vernon

## **DISTRICT SIX:**

PATTY EDELBURG  
First elected in 2024  
10931 Bestul Rd.  
Scandinavia WI 54977  
Phone: 715-824-4561  
Email: pjedelburg@gmail.com  
Counties: Adams, Columbia, Green Lake, Juneau, Marathon, Marquette, Portage, Sauk, Waupaca, Waushara and Wood

## **DISTRICT SEVEN:**

TINA HINCHLEY, Vice President  
First elected in 2012  
2844 Hwy 73  
Cambridge, WI 53523  
Phone: 608-764-5090  
Email: tina@dairyfarmtours.com  
Counties: Dane, Jefferson, Kenosha, Racine, and Walworth

## **DISTRICT EIGHT:**

MICHAEL SLATTERY,  
First elected 2023  
9704 Pautz Road  
Maribel, WI 54227  
Phone: 920-863-2996  
Email: mslattery@wisconsinfarmersunion.com  
Counties: Brown, Calumet, Dodge, Door, Fond du Lac, Forest, Florence, Kewaunee, Langlade, Marinette, Manitowoc, Menomonie, Milwaukee, Oconto, Outagamie, Ozaukee, Shawano, Sheboygan, Washington, Waukesha and Winnebago

## **AT-LARGE:**

RACHEL BOURESSA  
First elected in 2022  
N3775 Ritchie Road  
New London, WI 54961  
Phone: 608-228-6617  
Email: bouressafamilyfarm@gmail.com

# **WISCONSIN FARMERS UNION**

## **Special Orders of Business – 2024**

- **PRESERVING SMALL- AND MID- SIZE FARMS**
- **CONCENTRATION IN THE AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY**
- **RESOLUTION TO CREATE FAIR MAPS FROM A NONPARTISAN PROCEDURE FOR THE PREPARATION OF LEGISLATIVE AND CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING PLANS**
- **QUALITY HEALTHCARE IN WISCONSIN**

## **2024 SPECIAL ORDERS OF BUSINESS**

### **PRESERVING SMALL- AND MID- SIZE FARMS**

**WHEREAS**, over eight (8) years between 2012 and 2019 Wisconsin has lost 6,300 farms or 8.8% of the farms in the state; and

**WHEREAS**, all scales of farms by sales experienced a drop in farm numbers over this period; and

**WHEREAS**, of these 6,300 farms, 83% (5,200 farms) had sales of less than \$250,000 and 94% (5,950 farms) had sales of less than \$500,000; and

**WHEREAS**, all scales of farms by sales increased acreage farmed, except for micro farms with sales of less than \$10,000, and farms with sales greater than \$250,000, and especially farms with sales over \$1 million, showed the largest increase in average acreage (185 ac); and

**WHEREAS**, of the 6,300 decreased farms, 4,342 of the farms exiting the industry were dairy farms, indicating that about 2,000 other types of farms also ceased operation; and

**WHEREAS**, the factors that have caused the cessation of farming until now will continue to strengthen and force more farmers from the industry; and

**WHEREAS**, many complicated factors negatively affect the continuation of farm numbers and the Wisconsin Farmers Union has addressed only some of these in a piecemeal approach focusing on specific farm-related issues; and

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that Wisconsin Farmers Union with various allied organizations will intensely explore the problem, develop and lead systemic and realistic solutions to sustain small- and mid-size farms to continue their operation; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the systemic approach will address the interrelationship between issues related to government assistance and regulations, demographics, business, economics, legacy and succession, market concentration, trade structures, development of marketing, politics and farm input, competitiveness, amongst others; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that Wisconsin Farmers Union will establish a multi-year phased approach with deliverables to address this problem in order to sustain and significantly improve the viability of small- and mid-size farming operations.



## **2024 SPECIAL ORDERS OF BUSINESS CONCENTRATION IN THE AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY**

**WHEREAS**, deregulation of industries has been a commonplace occurrence over the past four decades which has rolled back many of the protections to independent agricultural interests and farmers that were established to foster competition and a healthy marketplace; and

**WHEREAS**, enforcement of federal antitrust laws has diminished over the past few decades, with very few meaningful investigations into mergers and acquisitions of large-scale agricultural producers, suppliers and processors; and

**WHEREAS**, a decline in the vitality of rural communities has coincided with this concentration in agricultural and retail food markets with family farms bearing the brunt of this injustice; and

**WHEREAS**, the movement towards fewer bigger suppliers of agriculture inputs and markets for farm products has been accelerating in the past decade; and

**WHEREAS**, a recent USDA study “Milk Hauling Charges in the Upper Midwest Marketing Area, October 2021”, indicates that hauling charge by hundredweight declines as the producer's milk volume increases, creating incentive for concentration in the dairy industry; and

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that Wisconsin Farmers Union strongly demands that the Wisconsin Department of Justice (WI DOJ) and the United States Department of Justice (US DOJ), as well as other regulatory agencies, aggressively investigate this situation and initiate action to level the playing field for family farmers and return meaningful competition to the marketplace; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that Wisconsin Farmers Union calls on the WI DOJ and US DOJ to carry out antitrust investigation and to aggressively prosecute violators of antitrust laws; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that Wisconsin Farmers Union urges the federal government to increase its oversight of consolidation and vertical integration in the agriculture industry and to establish a constant dialog within agriculture about market control and antitrust concerns; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that Wisconsin Farmers Union opposes the investment in arable lands in all countries by institutional investors (corporations, commercial and investment banks, pension funds, life insurance companies, endowments, high net-worth individuals, sovereign wealth funds, all of which apply to both domestic and foreign entities, amongst others). These lands should primarily be owned, managed, and farmed, if so desired, by domestic family farmers; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that Wisconsin Farmers Union urges the Wisconsin Attorney General's office to vigorously enforce the law limiting ownership by foreign entities to 640 acres of land in Wisconsin.

**2024 SPECIAL ORDERS OF BUSINESS**  
**RESOLUTION TO CREATE FAIR MAPS FROM A NONPARTISAN**  
**PROCEDURE FOR THE PREPARATION OF LEGISLATIVE AND**  
**CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING PLANS**

**WHEREAS**, currently under the state constitution, the majority party of the state legislature is directed to redistrict legislative districts according to the number of inhabitants at its next session following the decennial federal census and

**WHEREAS**, legislative and congressional redistricting plans created with this procedure are used to elect members of the legislature and members of Congress in the fall of the year following the year of the census, and

**WHEREAS**, historically legislative and congressional maps in Wisconsin have been subject to partisan influence that put the desires of politicians ahead of the electoral prerogative of the people, and

**WHEREAS**, in 2019, 72% of all Wisconsin voters want a nonpartisan commission to draw the legislative and congressional district maps instead of the elected officials. Additionally, 56 of the 72 counties in Wisconsin have passed resolutions, and the voters in 32 of Wisconsin's 72 counties have passed advisory referendums by overwhelming majorities calling on the State Legislature to create a nonpartisan process for drawing voting maps, and

**WHEREAS**, Wisconsin voting maps are viewed as the most extreme gerrymandering in the United States and a panel of federal district court judges ruled the Wisconsin 2011 redistricting was unconstitutional, and

**WHEREAS**, residents were moved from one district to another and did not necessarily share their community interests; state law defines a "community of interest" as "a population that shares common social or economic interests that should be included within a single supervisorial district for purposes of its effective and fair representation, and

**WHEREAS**, this injustice has cost the taxpayer millions to fight litigation, and

**WHEREAS**, Wisconsin is being viewed as the bellwether for fair maps, and Wisconsin is being watched nationwide.

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the Wisconsin Farmers Union insists upon the creation of an objective, nonpartisan procedure for the preparation of legislative and congressional redistricting plans; one that ensures all voters' ballots carry equal weight; one that provides a truly representative government, and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** the Wisconsin Farmers Union supports redistricting legislation in the form of a constitutional amendment. If passed, no political party will be able to unfairly change the maps again. The amendment requires adoption by two successive legislatures, and ratification by the people, before it can become effective.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Wisconsin Farmers Union insists the process promotes accountability and transparency and prohibits the consideration of voting patterns, party information, outside lobbying interests, and incumbents' residence information or demographic information in

drawing the maps, except as necessary to ensure minority participation as required by the U.S. Constitution.

## **2024 SPECIAL ORDERS OF BUSINESS QUALITY HEALTHCARE IN WISCONSIN**

**WHEREAS**, Wisconsin Farmers Union members believe that access to quality health care including mental health care should be a right of all people rather than a privilege. Wisconsin Farmers Union supports a comprehensive single-payer universal health care system ~~of health care~~ which offers affordable and accessible health care for all.

**WHEREAS**, having un-insured and under-insured individuals and families can lead to both a lack of preventive care and untreated illness, and consequently an increase in medical costs.

**WHEREAS**, farmers, among other groups of self-employed individuals, often find it difficult to access affordable healthcare, creating a roadblock for prospective farmers and a significant cost and area of vulnerability for continuing farmers. As farmers age, they become more and more uninsurable. Historically, farmers have had a difficult time obtaining health insurance. As they become older, they are exposed to chemicals, they are required to do repetitive labor for their profession, and they do dangerous work.

**WHEREAS**, prior to the Affordable Care Act (ACA), farmers were often excluded from private health insurance due to the health and safety risks inherent in farming. It is no surprise that rural residents are twice as likely to participate in the health insurance marketplace as those in urban areas.

**WHEREAS**, within our current system the federal regulation of the ACA and state regulation of the Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OCI) insures customers receive proper service from providers, requires and assures adequate reserves for solvency issue protections, and other key protections, such as explicitly prohibiting providers from denying people with preexisting conditions, preventing plans from requiring extended waiting periods, generally renewing coverage, provides limits to profits and administrative costs, and requiring coverage to 10 essential health benefits.

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Wisconsin Farmers Union calls on the Wisconsin State Legislature to accept available federal funds for BadgerCare to ensure that thousands of Wisconsin citizens have access to quality and affordable health coverage.

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, The Wisconsin Farmers Union rejects the introduction of healthcare products that are designed as if they were insurance products, which operate outside of a regulated insurer.

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Wisconsin Farmers Union calls on the federal government to support affordable and available health insurance for all individuals regardless of age, gender, ethnicity

or preexisting conditions, and insurance policies of community rating where all individuals share in the cost and risks of health insurance.



## **PREAMBLE**

In our constantly changing society, there are certain goals and values we consider to be fundamental—to be preserved as part of the American dream and democratic ideal. These basic aims grow out of personal faith, understanding of nature, and duty to country. We cherish our belief in the dignity of the individual, in the basic freedom of our Bill of Rights, and in the importance of every person having the opportunity to think for themselves. The family farm has maintained a unique role in America, and Wisconsin Farmers Union embraces the family farm as an economic unit of agricultural production. We value agricultural models of production that prioritize humane treatment of workers and animals, just pay for farm workers, just prices for farm products, careful stewardship of natural resources, protection of open spaces, stabilization of family units in rural economies and the preservation of viable rural communities - for the shared benefit and future of both rural and urban citizens.

The Farmers Union symbol, a triangle constructed with education at its base and complete with cooperation and legislation on the sides, represents a structure that takes on more importance than ever before. This triangle mandates that the organization is dedicated not only to the advancement of the profession of family farm agriculture, but also to articulating and illuminating the issues facing family agriculture for a populace increasingly disconnected from the means of its food production and from its rural places.

Wisconsin Farmers Union holds the policies herein as fundamental to the preservation of democracy, to the retention, succession, transition and increase of independent farm families on the land, to the support of thriving rural communities, and to the protection of public access to healthy rural spaces - for the purpose of enhancing the quality of life for all people everywhere for generations to come.

## ***MISSION STATEMENT***

Wisconsin Farmers Union, a member-driven farm organization, is committed to enhancing the quality of life for family farmers, rural communities and all people through educational opportunities, cooperative endeavors and civic engagement.

## ***THE DEFINITION OF A FAMILY FARM***

We believe that family farming is fundamental and basic. Family-owned and -operated farms have been at the forefront of rural development in the country, and have historically provided sustenance for farm families and rural communities and plentiful reasonably priced food for all America. Now, the family farm system is being severely threatened by agricultural concentration and industrial models of farming to the detriment of family farmers, rural communities and food security for the nation and the very definition of what constitutes a family farm operation is in question. **Therefore, the definition of the family farm must include those farm economic units in which the family provides the significant majority of labor and management for the enterprise and receives a significant amount of its gross income from the farm.** Wisconsin Farmers Union supports targeting such benefits and support that may be available to this family farm unit.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports programs and policies that recognize and reward farms as multifunctional operations; as providers of food, fuel, fiber, flowers, and ornamental plants, but also for their irreplaceable contributions to land stewardship, resource conservation, and rural culture.

## ***ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF HISTORICAL HARMS***

Settler-colonialism and imperial, extractive forms of agriculture have caused irreparable harm to the Indigenous peoples of America, enslaved African peoples, and their descendants. Agriculture in the United States was and is based on broken treaties, the exploitation of stolen land and unpaid or underpaid labor of migrants, immigrants, enslaved people, imprisoned people, and other vulnerable people. Extractive natural resource management has caused severe harm to the world's ecosystems, as well as significant health and environmental repercussions, especially for Indigenous, Black, and People of Color. Indigenous and Black people contribute substantially to sustainable, community-based agriculture. Indigenous peoples are stewards of the vast majority of the world's biodiversity. It is the inheritance of all peoples in all lands to participate in traditions of land stewardship that work in harmony with the natural world and within a human scale of agriculture. All peoples

are connected to the land, urban or rural, and deserve a life of dignity, health, and prosperity.

## **I. AGRICULTURE PROGRAMS AND THE FAMILY FARM**

### **FARM AND NUTRITION PROGRAMS**

Wisconsin Farmers Union reaffirms our position that federal governmental policies and programs are essential to protect family farmers against the hazards of the marketplace where almost everyone else, except the farmer, is protected. The power of public policy must be used to sustain the independent farmer in an economy that is otherwise strongly concentrated. Family farmers must be protected against the economic sacrifices that may be necessary to balance our nation's trade and ensure world peace.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports tying nutrition assistance and farm assistance programs together in the Farm Bill. Rather than on a five-year interval, the Secretary should be required to annually re-evaluate and advise on food prices when inflation exceeds 2-3% greater than previous year. Change state-determined level of housing deduction to match realistic housing costs for homeless.

### **SUPPLY ADJUSTMENT MECHANISMS**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports a federally oriented supply management system, which would reduce costly over-production, ensure adequate income for farm families and provide the public with sufficient supplies of safe and nutritious food. If farm programs continue to contain no supply adjustment mechanism, farm policies will continue to encourage excess production of crops, and excess production will continue to depress farm prices now and into the future with no relief in sight. Wisconsin Farmers Union continues its effort for an effective supply adjustment mechanism for all major commodities.

### **PAYMENT PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY AND LIMITATIONS**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports eligibility requirements that require farmers have adjusted gross income no greater than \$100,000 adjusted annually for inflation and an annual aggregate limit of federal government farm payments to individual producers to \$75,000, excluding weather-related disaster programs. Non-active farmers and farm investors who have no operating earnings at risk in farming should be ineligible for receipt of USDA/FSA assistance. Wisconsin Farmers Union supports attaching soil and water conservation standards (conservation compliance) to eligibility for federal and state farm programs.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports premium reductions and other incentives to include perennial crops and cover crops in the rotation.

The Wisconsin Farmers Union supports efforts to amend USDA and State of Wisconsin crop insurance programs and the EPA National Renewable Fuel Standard to incentivize the use of these practices:

1. Maximize opportunities for perennial cropping systems:
  - 1) to produce hay, perennial grain crops, and perennial fuel crops
  - 2) to support pasture-based, managed grazing and agroforestry
  - 3) to encourage establishment and maintenance of perennial windbreaks and riparian buffers, and prairie plantings,
2. Maximize the use of conservation tillage planting systems and use of cover crops:
  - 1) to minimize soil disturbance and enhance levels of soil fertility and carbon sequestration
  - 2) to manage water infiltration and runoff, and 3) to maintain habitat for ground and stem-nesting bees
3. Couple perennial agriculture to solar energy generation prioritizing on marginal farmland (eg. low soil cover in karst area or sandy permeable soils and/or steeply sloped land) to enhance opportunities for pasture-based managed grazing, food production, and bird and pollinator habitats on farmland producing renewable energy

### **BASE ACRES**

Farmers should be permitted to change or update their base acres every five years and not be forced to use base acres of the 1990s or be restricted to a one-time adjustment.

#### **PAYMENT ACRES**

In addition to base acres in grain, oilseeds and cotton, farmers should be allowed to add alfalfa, vegetables, fruit, pasture, and nut acres and not be dependent upon Secretary's case-by-case discretion.

#### **CONSERVATION REQUIREMENTS**

For farmers to be eligible for benefits for Title I, they must exercise conservation practices. They would be disqualified if they convert wetlands, pasturelands, grasslands, marginal lands, etc. to tillage and or cropping if that land would have negative impact on water quality.

#### **COMMODITY MARKETING AND PRICES**

Wisconsin Farmers Union believes our production and marketing practices can and must be adjusted to give farm families full opportunity to earn and receive an income comparable with Americans in other lines of work and that will make farming attractive to future generations. It is important to educate consumers, voters and politicians on the benefits of a fair pricing system for all agricultural products.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the creation of a safety net or price supports based only on a percentage of historical production.

To ensure greater transparency of cash trading in dairy products at the Chicago Mercantile Exchange, Wisconsin Farmers Union calls for a permanent federal agency to oversee cash trading in agricultural commodities, and that the agency have investigative and penalty powers.

Wisconsin Farmers Union opposes any change to the Agricultural Producer Security Fund that would reduce financial protections for farmers.

#### **FARM OWNERSHIP AND OPERATING LOANS**

Adjust amount limits based on farmland or average farm asset values of 2023.

#### **PAYMENT RATES FOR SMALL GRAINS**

Subsidy for and increase payment rates for small grains (barley, rye, rapeseed, canola, sunflower, oats, lentils, pulses, canary, sorghum, hempseed, etc.) and seeds.

#### **IMPERFECT PRODUCE**

USDA needs to create and appropriate funds with appropriate commodity pricing for imperfect produce, inclusive of pilot programs.

#### **REDUCING TECHNOLOGY GAPS FOR SMALL FARMERS**

Under Title XII, the Wisconsin Farmers Union recommends that the USDA offers grants and/or low-interest government-subsidized loans to only small- and mid-size farmers (annual revenue \$10,000-\$499,000) to acquire the latest and new technologies to gain greater efficiency in planting, applying fertilizer, weed-control and supplemental nutrient application, mapping soils and fields, and harvesting that will assist in leveling the competitive playing field amongst all types of farms.

#### **DISASTER ASSISTANCE**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports a permanent federal farm disaster program.

#### **CONSERVATION PROGRAMS**

### **CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM (CSP)**

CSP is successful and should be fully funded. Full funding of CSP will provide the hay and grazing program called for by Wisconsin Farmers Union and encourage and assist in financing better conservation stewardship of soil and water.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY INCENTIVE PROGRAM (EQIP)**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports full funding of EQIP for practices including, but not limited to, planting cover crops, nutrient management planning, stream bank fencing, barnyard runoff control, regenerative agricultural practices, prairie STRIPS, beetle banks, perennial buffers adjacent to waterways, native plantings, and no-till planting methods. Wisconsin Farmers Union supports a voluntary approach to the environmental stewardship concept of EQIP, with a prohibition on EQIP payments to Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs).

### **CONSERVATION RESERVE PROGRAM (CRP)**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports CRP and Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) to retire environmentally sensitive land and allow limited haying. We support expanding acreage from the current cap to 30 million acres.

### **INCREASE NRCS PROGRAM SCALE**

Increase the scale, size, accepted applicants, and funding of both of EQIP and CSP programs by at least doubling them compared to 2022, and appropriate staffing to process applications. Give greater preference to CSP over EQIP because of the multiple ways to induce farmers continuation in this program.

## **COMMODITY CHECK-OFF PROGRAMS**

### **REVIEW OF CHECK-OFF PROGRAMS AND REFERENDUM**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports a systematic and public review of all the commodity check-off programs overseen by the USDA. This review should assess if and how the check-off programs are working in the best interest of the farmers.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports a referendum of all affected producers in each check-off program for farmers to indicate if they want the check-off to continue or to amend and improve the use of the funds.

To end abuse of programs, Wisconsin Farmers Union supports greater safeguards to ensure that organizations engaging in lobbying activities do not receive or derive benefit from checkoff dollars.

### **ORGANIC CHECK-OFF**

Wisconsin Farmers Union does not support the creation of an Organic Research and Promotion Program, aka an Organic Checkoff.

## **COMMODITIES & LIVESTOCK**

### **DAIRY POLICY**

In many years, the average cost of production for a hundredweight of milk exceeds the price paid to farmers. As a result of farm prices falling below parity, dairy farmers' quality of life has suffered. Wisconsin Farmers Union supports a shift away from federal farm policy based on agricultural subsidies, and a return to federal farm policy using parity pricing as a conceptual framework or guideline. Wisconsin Farmers Union supports an equitable means of pricing milk that does not create disadvantages for family farmers.

Wisconsin Farmers Union's Dairy Producer Survey indicated that dairy farmers in Wisconsin were



losing nearly a dollar per hundredweight in 2016. Large numbers of dairy farmers also indicated that milk price volatility contributed to stress, reduced re-investment in the farm, and deterred future generations from taking over the farm.

Milk price volatility has increased dramatically since the mid-1980's, due to a combination of diminishing government price support levels, increased international trade in dairy products, and the loosening of regulations on speculation in commodity markets.

The Federal Margin Protection Program (MPP) utterly failed to mitigate milk price volatility or support dairy farmers during the period of low prices between 2014 and 2018. State programs such as the Dairy 30x20 Program, with its stated goal of increasing Wisconsin milk production to 30 billion pounds annually by 2020, further exacerbates the oversupply that is driving down prices for dairy farmers.

Wisconsin Farmers Union urges Congress to overhaul or eliminate the Dairy Margin Coverage Program, and replace it with a policy that makes price stability the top priority for dairy policy. The following have been shown to mitigate dairy price volatility, and should be considered:

1. Price support levels that are high enough to constitute a floor, but not so high that they encourage overproduction and constitute a burden on taxpayers.
2. Management to deter oversupply.

Congress should seriously consider expanding the Livestock Gross Margin-Dairy program, which has worked much better than the MPP to protect farmers from heavy losses.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the concept of tax-deferred savings accounts for farmers, to encourage farmers to set aside money that can be withdrawn in cases of price collapse or natural disaster. We support suspension of the Dairy 30x20 program in periods where there is an over-supply of milk.

Wisconsin Farmers Union urges dairy cooperatives to implement internal oversupply management systems that apply proportionally to all members to harmonize their supply of milk with their processing capacity. Oversupply management should not be achieved by summarily dropping existing members. Wisconsin Farmers Union encourages farmers who are members of cooperatives to advocate within their coops for supply management, in order to avoid costly dumping of milk due to oversupply.

Wisconsin Farmers Union urges farmers to use the risk management tools at their disposal:

- On-farm diversification of income streams;
- Reduced reliance on purchased inputs, to lessen the impact of feed cost variability;
- Use of forward contracts and hedging to reduce instability and uncertainty in farm income.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports efforts by the Commodities Futures Trading Commission (CFTC) to impose position limits on speculators trading in agricultural commodities. Agricultural commodities markets should exist for the benefit of those with a stake in the industry, and not simply for speculators seeking to make money off of growing price swings in commodities.

## **DAIRY REFORM POLICY**

Wisconsin Farmers Union calls on Congress to establish a mandatory program for managed growth based on market demand and price stability in the 2023 Farm Bill. Such a program should increase farmer profitability by:

1. Elevating milk prices
2. Preventing overproduction
3. Reducing milk price volatility

Such a program should also:

1. Allow for beginning farmer entry
2. Reduce government expenditures
3. Respond to global market conditions
4. Be national and mandatory so that all dairy producers participate
5. Allow for planned growth when the market can accept additional milk
6. Be designed in such a way that any production base does not acquire value
7. Have meaningful farmer input in development, implementation, and governance

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the Class I pricing formula reverting to higher value of Class III or Class IV instead of the average of Class III and Class IV that was put in place in the 2018 Farm Bill.

### **DAIRY MARGIN COVERAGE PROGRAM**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports a Dairy Margin Coverage Program that:

- a. Supports family farmers, allowing them a reasonable return for their product to maintain a viable business operation, including upkeep and improvements, while also supporting a family household.
- b. Provides all dairy farms with a reasonable opportunity for protection, regardless of the size and type of operation, with reduced premiums for those producing under four (4) million pounds of milk per year.
- c. Includes mandatory and meaningful supply management provisions.
- d. Provides the flexibility necessary to accommodate expanding operations.
- e. Requires adjusted gross-income of no greater than \$100,000 similar to what should be for other federal farm programs.

### **NATIONAL POOLING**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports national Class I milk pooling because fluid milk is no longer a regional product. We further support the inclusion of all United States regions in the Federal Milk Marketing Order.

### **MILK PRICING**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports an overhaul of the Federal Milk Marketing Order system that would create greater market transparency and allow dairy farmers to capture more of the value in the dairy supply chain. Such reform could include alternative methods of price discovery, alternative product price formulas, limiting de-pooling, and/or amending the milk pricing formula so that farmers' pay price reflects a blend price of all cheeses, including specialty cheeses, rather than the CME price of cheddar. Use of new information technology such as distributed ledger, digital twins, and machine learning should be considered as ways to improve price discovery and to set price formulas along the supply chain. Reforms must be designed by and for farmers as part of an administrative rule change process.

### **COOPERATIVES WORKING TOGETHER (CWT)**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the CWT program, which has worked to provide farmer-controlled inventory management. The CWT program should be audited annually by an independent agency. Wisconsin Farmers Union has supported the CWT program in the past and recognizes its part in efforts to maintain a viable milk price. We consider CWT a short-term solution that must be tied to a long-term supply management program.

## **DAIRY INCENTIVE STABILIZATION**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the concept of a self-funded incentive plan that utilizes cull cow sales to create long-term stability and keeps dairy operations profitable.

## **INVENTORY MANAGEMENT**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports passage of legislation to establish a long-term inventory management program for dairy, based on daily reporting. We favor a mandatory program to prevent Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) stocks from becoming excessive. We urge the government to utilize the Dairy Export Incentive Program (DEIP).

## **MILK PRICE REPORTING**

Due to allegations of unjust milk pricing, Wisconsin Farmers Union urges that all milk purchased and sold in the United States be reported to the Secretary of Agriculture on a monthly basis and be made available to the public. The prices reported to USDA and published should include the basic price as well as any sale to a particular plant. It also should include any differences attributed to patron size or location. Wisconsin Farmers Union also desires a requirement making the provisions of private contracts between milk buyers and farmers be reported to the Secretary and that the terms of those contract provisions be made public.

## **USE OF MILK CHECKOFF FUNDS**

Wisconsin milk producers pay a 15-cent per hundred pounds of milk (cwt.) check-off for research and promotion of natural cheese and other dairy products. Wisconsin Farmers Union opposes using check-off funding for promoting the use of imported casein and MPC in the use of natural dairy products. We also oppose diverting dairy check-off funds for uses unrelated to promotion and research of dairy product consumption.

Wisconsin Farmers Union encourages the Wisconsin Dairy Council division of the Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin to use five (5) cents of the 15-cent check-off to purchase Wisconsin dairy products for use in Wisconsin schools, to encourage dairy product consumption among children.

## **ASSESSMENT OF IMPORTED MILK PRODUCTS**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports current legislative action to establish an assessment fee on all imported dairy products that is the equivalent of the assessment charged on domestic products.

## **MILK PROTEIN CONCENTRATE (MPC); ULTRA-FILTERED MILK PRODUCTS (UF)**

Imported products such as casein, MPC and UF milk products, blends and food preparations have benefited from a significant loophole in United States dairy trade policy and have distorted the United States dairy market. Casein and MPC imports are entering the United States because they are not limited under the Harmonized Tariff Schedules of the WTO. In addition, casein, MPC and UF products are being used in the current production of standardized cheeses, although they do not meet the United States–Food and Drug Administration’s (FDA) definition of milk. Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the following:

- a. Maintaining FDA’s current definition of milk to prevent casein and MPC from being used in standardized cheese;
- b. Actions that restrict the importation of casein, MPC, dairy blends and food preps;
- c. Properly informing consumers about the use of casein, MPC/UF dairy blends and food preps in food production, including labeling;
- d. Making casein, MPC and other dairy blends subject to Tariff Rate Quotas on a milk equivalent basis within the milk import quota;
- e. Strong penalties for the dairy plants using casein, MPC and dairy blends in

- standardized cheese production;
- f. Requirement of an end-use certification on all imports of MPC, dairy blends and food preps;
  - g. Bringing a trade action against nations that are dumping subsidized MPC, dairy blends and foodpreps;
  - h. Disallowing MPC for human consumption until it meets the necessary generally regarded as safe (GRAS) requirements; and
  - i. We oppose government subsidization of the production of MPC. Wisconsin Farmers Union should work with allied organizations toward the above ends.
  - j. Labeling cheese as “free of imported MPCs and casein.”
  - k. Increased enforcement of FDA rules regarding the use of MPC in Wisconsin cheese by DATCP, and the inspection of warehouses and documentation of statewide MPC usage in cheese manufacturing.

#### **DEFINITION OF MILK**

Wisconsin Farmers Union opposes any changes in the FDA definition of milk, cheese or other products made with milk. Wisconsin Farmers Union opposes the use of the word milk to designate any product not derived from mammals.

#### **GRADE A FLUID MILK STANDARDS**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports efforts by the National Dairy Board, the National Milk Producers Federation and other dairy cooperatives and state agencies to revise the standards for Grade A fluid milk products to that equal to or exceeding the fluid milk standards set by the state of California.

#### **PASTEURIZED MILK ORDINANCE (SOMATIC CELL COUNT)**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports reducing the allowable Somatic Cell Count to 400,000 over a six (6) month rolling average.

#### **RAW MILK**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports legalization of raw milk sales under the following conditions:

- a. Direct sales from producer to consumer.
- b. Products are labeled as unpasteurized milk products.
- c. Products meet or exceed Grade A standards.
- d. Seller must register with the Department of Agriculture Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP).

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports shielding farmers from civil liability in the event that someone is harmed from the consumption of raw milk due to consumer negligence.

#### **SPRING ROAD RESTRICTIONS**

Each Wisconsin spring, as snow melts and roads warm, there are road restrictions placed on county roads throughout the state. During the 2021 spring thaw, some counties attempted to restrict milk trucks’ travel on roads in their county for the entire posted time. This attempt was backed by county law enforcement by stopping milk trucks and giving them a warning, with the threat of substantial monetary fee ticket if the truck continued to pick up milk. Milk is a perishable product. Smaller farmers living in clustered areas may be impacted further, as all may not be able to attain milk pick up due to the travel expense of the truck, leading to all being abandoned for the six-week period. Dairy farmers, already on a perilous financial edge,

would be out of business if this brief county ordinance were to be enforced. This is a product that relies on every other day pickup due to state ordinances and has a short shelf life. Wisconsin Farmers Union supports a state law that milk pickup cannot be restricted by county, town, city, or village ordinance.

### **SMALL-SCALE DAIRY PROCESSORS**

Food safety is the basis for much of the current dairy processing code; Wisconsin Farmers Union supports practical application of food safety measures that account for the different risks associated with small on-farm processors rather than a one-size fits all approach. On-farm dairy product processing offers farmers increased profitability at a family scale.

Therefore, Wisconsin Farmers Union supports efforts to simplify the process to license on-farm milk processing. Wisconsin Farmers Union calls on DATCP to clarify rules and allowances for on-farm processors since most of the administrative code deals with farms, shippers, and processors separately. Wisconsin Farmers Union also supports Wisconsin state exemptions from some regulations for small scale farms, similar to those that already exist within the code.

### **TERMINATION OF SERVICE**

Milk processors should be required to give farms 60-day notice before any changes to premium structure or required fees and give 90-day notice before termination of service. In absence of a catastrophic or health-related event, farmers should be required to give 30-day notice of discontinuing their relationship with their processor. Farms producing over two (2) million pounds per year should be required to give 30-day notice of any increase in annual milk production over 30%.

### **MEAT PROCESSING REFORM**

Wisconsin Farmers Union advocates for County, regional economic development agencies and the WEDC to offer financial support to increase the capacity of and start new state and USDA-inspected meat processors throughout the state. Small and mid-scale farmers need meat processors that farmers can custom order, slaughter, butcher, and package their livestock to meet their needs and their customers' desires for locally sourced, humanely processed meat.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports consistent and streamlined regulation and increasing education and support for local processors to remain viable, as well as for processors that offer USDA and DATCP, organic, Halal, and Kosher certification; as well as mobile and other on-farm processing facilities and find end users of animal by-products and waste.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports federal adoption of the Processing Revival and Intrastate Meat Exemption Act (PRIME Act) which permits the sale of meat processed by custom slaughterhouses that meet federal regulations direct-to-consumer or to restaurants and retailers within the producer's own state.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports allowing meat and poultry products sales across state lines if they have been inspected through state, Meat and Poultry Inspection (MPI) programs.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the formation of cooperatives and other business structures that form to address specific local and regional processing needs and offers assistance to chapters to do so.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports funding efforts for schools and institutions to educate about the benefits of and procurement of all types of locally sourced food.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports further educational opportunities such as and apprenticeship programs and workforce development in meat processing services.

Wisconsin Farmers Union urges the state to allocate and make available additional funding to support Meat Processing Infrastructure and Supply Chain Funding to meet the clear demand for support to alleviate supply chain bottlenecks for farmers and processors.



## **HAY AND PASTURE**

Hay and forage crops for hay and managed pasture should be considered program crops for purposes of government payments. Farmers who grow forage crops for hay or pasture get no direct financial assistance from farm programs, and the land used for these important crops is effectively disqualified for USDA assistance, even though the crops are very sustainable and well-suited in conservation plans. Their use should be encouraged, not penalized, as is presently done. Wisconsin Farmers Union should increase its efforts to promote the importance of these crops and renew its effort in obtaining much-deserved financial assistance comparable to other crops that can be grown on the same land. Funding for a full-time grazing support person at the state level must be allocated.

## **ORGANIC AGRICULTURE PROGRAMS**

Wisconsin Farmers Union recognizes the importance of organic farming as a method to help family farms remain viable. Organic farming is a management-intensive farming system designed to achieve a balance in the agricultural and livestock systems similar to that found in natural systems.

In order to maintain the distinct market of organic agriculture, we support the maintenance and enforcement of a strong national standard. We urge the USDA to continue to maintain a National Organic Standards Board complete with adequate funding.

Wisconsin Farmers Union urges the USDA to adopt other additional rules, such as the Organic Livestock & Poultry Practices Rule, as requested by the National Organic Standards Board to further strengthen the standard.

Wisconsin Farmers Union urges the USDA to enforce the rule requiring organic producers to pasture ruminants for the entire growing season. This should be defined as not less than 120 days and require that at least 30% of the animals' dry matter come from pasture during the growing season. Failure to enforce this rule has resulted in CAFOs with as many as 10,000 cows being certified as organic, even though they have not met the pasturing requirement.

In addition, we urge the USDA to require all replacement animals be organic in origin, defined as an animal that has been raised as organic at least 90 days prior to gestation, once the farm is organic certified.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports protection for organic producers from chemical drift and/or GMO cross-pollination and provide reasonable redress for any damage caused.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports organic food products with proper labeling.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports funding at the state level for full-time organic agriculture support person at DATCP.

## **FRUITS, VEGETABLES, HORTICULTURE, AQUAPONICS, AND AGROFORESTRY**

Wisconsin Farmers Union encourages federal and state policies to increase investment in research, marketing and risk management targeted toward specialty (nuts, fruits, vegetables, horticulture, aquaponics, and agroforestry) crop production with a focus on sustainable practices and local and regional distribution systems.

Current USDA policies penalize participating producers when they grow fruits and vegetables. Wisconsin Farmers Union supports flexibility in USDA crop commodity programs to allow occasional fruit and vegetables production and maintain full program eligibility.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the USDA Tree Assistance Program, which provides assistance to orchard and vineyard owners whose stock is damaged by natural disasters.

Wisconsin Farmers Unions encourages the implementation of beetle banks/berms for organic pest management incentivized by cost-share funds. Beetle banks provide shelter and habitat for predatory ground beetles and other beneficial insects.

### **HEMP**

Until 2016, hemp had not been legally grown in Wisconsin since 1957, causing a lapse in experience and education in hemp production and processing. This has created a significant lack of infrastructure and equipment for harvesting and processing hemp in Wisconsin that severely restricts potential growth for farmers and the overall hemp industry. In the first few years of US CBD Hemp production, an oversupply was produced, leading to a substantial drop in market pricing, in many cases well below the cost of production. Wisconsin farmers have been left to cover production costs while unprocessed biomass sits unsold until the market pricing rises to a level at or above cost to produce.

#### **SEED SOVEREIGNTY**

To create a robust and diversified seed-sourcing and seed-saving program in Wisconsin, and to protect against the monopolization of hemp genetics, Wisconsin Farmers Union advocates for the formulation of an open-source hemp seed-saving program, as well as legislative initiatives to protect farmers' rights to develop new strains, plant hemp seed, and sell hemp seed without unnecessary restriction.

#### **THC COMPLIANCE TESTING**

The federally established allowable level of THC in hemp is set at an arbitrarily low 0.3% based on faulty taxonomy from the 1970s and a global marketplace standard for fiber and grain, forcing Wisconsin hemp farmers to source seeds from a select few breeding companies.

Under current regulations, a farmer must destroy an entire hemp crop at the time of harvest if it tests nominally higher at the time of USDA compliance testing than the current THC limit of 0.3%. A failed THC compliance test results in farmers being forced to destroy their own crop at harvest time. THC testing sampling time is crucial to the results of the hemp farmers' crop success, creating a situation where late sampling causes crop destruction.

It is also pertinent that hemp farmers receive USDA compliance testing results within three (3) days of sampling, to give the opportunity to attempt crop THC dilution techniques in the field to pursue the USDA retest option, making it a viable second chance option to receive a passing test result.

It has been determined that a THC level of up to one percent (1%) is not sufficient to cause a detectable psychoactive effect, and CBD hemp that tests up to one percent (1%) THC is also tied to a higher yield of harvestable CBD. Wisconsin Farmers Union advocates for an increase in the allowable THC content of hemp, as tested in the farmer's field, from 0.3% to 1.0%.

Wisconsin Farmers Union calls upon USDA to increase the allowable THC content of hemp, as tested in the farmer's field, from 0.3% to 1.0%, except for hemp destined for raw flower sales direct to the consumer. For hemp with 0.3%-1.0% THC content to comply with the current federal standard, THC can be removed or diluted to federal compliance levels through state-certified extraction processes. Wisconsin Farmers Union calls upon USDA to create and manage their own independent Wisconsin State hemp program requirements to regulate and test hemp

products in their consumer-ready form.

### **HEMP EQUITY**

A disproportionate number of people of color have been targeted, arrested, and charged with crimes related to non-violent cannabis possession and distribution, and the USDA has set hemp licensing to exclude individuals with prior drug felonies reaching back ten (10) years. Wisconsin Farmers Union supports removing the ban on individuals applying for hemp licenses that have served and completed sentencing for a nonviolent cannabis related felony.

### **EDUCATION AND RESOURCES**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports educational initiatives in production, processing, and marketing of hemp by using available Farmers Union resources to host statewide hemp workshops in partnership with Industry Agents, University of Wisconsin-Madison Division of Extension, local Technical Schools, and Farmers.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports educational initiatives that work to inform the public about Hemp production in Wisconsin and its potential and current impact on Wisconsin's Agricultural Economy.

Hemp fiber has utility in a wide variety of applications, such as textiles, paper, construction materials, and biofuels. Wisconsin Farmers Union calls on the state legislature to appropriate funding for a grant program for building hemp fiber processing facilities that would open market opportunities for more farms to produce hemp in Wisconsin.

### **FDA POSITION ON AND REGULATION OF CBD**

Wisconsin Farmers Union calls upon the FDA to create a safe and regulated pathway for CBD to be utilized in food and beverage for human consumption, as well as in pet and livestock products including feed and bedding. Establishing FDA product safety regulations for currently allowed and newly approved CBD products would support the possibility of overcoming oversupply issues and sub-cost market pricing, in addition to ensuring safe products are reaching consumers.

### **ANTI-CORPORATE FARMING LAW**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports adding hemp to the list of prohibited crops in Wisconsin's anti-corporate farming law.

### **HONEY/POLLINATION**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports agricultural research and education to encourage innovative approaches to protecting honeybee health and improving genetic stocks of honeybees. Continued monitoring of pest populations and pest control methods is necessary, especially in light of the outbreak of colony collapse disorder, regarding the use of non-native honeybees and native wild bees as pollinators. Wisconsin Farmers Union supports honey production and encourages the use of Xerces guidelines to ensure the health of all pollinators.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports efforts to protect and foster our native pollinator population. A diverse native bee community increases pollination rates and subsequent crop yields. Numerous species of native pollinators are at risk of becoming endangered species. At least half of the bumble bee population is also in decline along with butterflies, moths, bats, and birds all contributing to pollination. The continued loss of pollinators will have severe economic impact on Wisconsin agriculture affecting nut and fruit crops vegetable crops, and other traditional crops.

Wisconsin Farmers Union calls on the University of Wisconsin (UW) to launch a scientific study of

new strains of mites and pests and systemic and environmental factors, such as extensive utilization of genetically modified crops and harsh and lengthy changes occurring as a result of climate change that might be weakening honeybee colonies and the production of honey. We also call on the UW to study native bees, moths and butterflies serving an important role in crop pollination.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports efforts to ensure a pure, accurately labeled honey supply.

Honey is an important agricultural product, and honeybees also provide pollination services for other agriculturally significant crops such as soybean, canola, fruits, and vegetables. Given the harm that insecticides pose to honeybees, Wisconsin Farmers Union supports awareness education stating that insecticides should only be used in the case of an actual infestation that would result in a set level of crop deterioration if left untreated. We strongly encourage the use of Integrated Pest Management Practices and adding native plant diversity to agricultural landscapes.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports a ban on neonicotinoid, pesticides as there are ample peer reviewed research that exposes their deleterious effects on all insects. Causing honeybee and native bee immune suppression, Nosema infection, disorientation, and death (see also 8. Less Harmful Pesticides under G. Research in Section XIII. Quality of Life in America).

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the creation of more pollinator habitats through NRCS and encourages more state and federally funded programs to increase pollinator habitats and establish or restore native ecosystems.

## **HORSES**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports lifting the ban on the slaughter of horses in the United States.

## **RABBITS**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports an exemption from licensing requirements for rabbit processing, or, in the absence of an exemption, the creation of a “rabbit processing license” for small producers to process their own rabbits for sale.

## **HOGS**

The cost of oral fluids testing for selling feeder pigs is onerous to small producers. The current rope-test, which relies on under-stimulating, over-stressing, and confining conditions that leads to rope chewing and accompanying saliva, is ineffective for collecting samples on hogs with normal outdoor stimulation that do not exhibit the behavior necessary to collect a saliva sample. Wisconsin Farmers Union supports withdrawing the oral fluids testing for selling feeder pigs or instituting an effective sample collection procedure be developed that will work on ALL kinds of hog farms, not just confinement operations.

## **POULTRY**

Currently, the state of Wisconsin has adopted a 1,000 bird limit poultry processing exemption that allows direct-to-consumer sales of on-farm processed birds from the producer’s farm. While this offers some flexibility and assistance to small poultry farmers, it also severely limits producers’ access to markets. There is no federal restriction on sales channels for poultry produced under the 1,000-bird limit. Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the direct-to-consumer sale of poultry, processed under the federal Poultry Products Inspection Act 1000 bird exemption, directly to consumers regardless of sales channel, i.e. including at farmer’s markets.

## **FEDERAL CROP INSURANCE**

### **DIVERSIFICATION OF CROP INSURANCE OFFERINGS**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the continuation and improvement of diversity within the federal crop insurance program. Crop insurance for all eligible commodities should be reasonably and comprehensively covered throughout the United States and not restricted to a few growing areas. Therefore, Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the availability of federal crop insurance programs and products that protect against yield and/or quality losses to support the diversity of crops that can be grown and recognize the changing infrastructure and markets available to farmers and producers in Wisconsin.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports continuation, improvement, and promotion of Whole Farm Revenue Protection.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports targeting crop insurance programs to support beginning farmers and reducing crop insurance premium costs for farmers implementing soil health and conservation practices.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports incentivizing climate-resilient practices through crop insurance programs.

### **USDA GUIDANCE ON COVER CROPS AND CROP INSURANCE**

Cover crops have become an accepted and highly regarded agronomic practice. Farmers in the future will increasingly need tools such as cover crops to improve water quality while improving crop productivity and nutrient efficiency.

In 2013, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the Risk Management Agency (RMA), and the Farm Service Agency (FSA) of USDA jointly established “Cover Crops Termination Guidelines,” intended to serve as the cover crop management guide for all USDA agencies. Although these guidelines were designed to provide more certainty in treatment of cover crops compared to previous RMA guidance, the current guidelines have still created uncertainty for producers. One particular area of concern has been the RMA’s application of the requirement that a cover crop be “terminated” before an insured crop is planted. The RMA currently defines termination of a cover crop as “growth has ended.” This definition has been interpreted strictly so as to deny farmers crop insurance coverage even if only small amounts of the cover crop survive after normal and reasonable efforts to terminate the cover crop. These and other problems have inhibited effective coverage for producers and discouraged farmers from using cover crops.

The RMA’s longstanding Good Farming Practices (GFP) Handbook is an established process to review all other farmer practices to determine eligibility for insurance and has worked for many years to distinguish eligible from ineligible losses. Wisconsin Farmers Union calls on RMA to eliminate the Cover Crops Termination Guidelines and replace them with the GFP determination process.

Wisconsin Farmers Union further calls on the RMA to amend its definition of termination of cover crops to “the date on which a practice is applied that historically and under reasonable circumstances results in termination of the targeted plants,” in any RMA guidance referring to “termination” of cover crops.

### **SPECIALITY CROPS INSURANCE COVERAGE**

Because Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) only requires that produce in “consumer-expected perfect status” be covered for losses and fails to take a survey of the total produce, it is recommended that NAP survey a field in five to twenty different one square yard locations and classify that produce therein. Value at a discounted rate should be allocated for imperfect produce which is still marketable.

### **CROP INSURANCE PAYMENT LIMITATIONS**

Wisconsin Farmers Union strongly advocates that the federal crop insurance subsidies be restricted

to be applied to farmers with an adjusted gross income no greater than \$100,000 adjusted annually for inflation and that federal subsidy for premium payments be no greater than \$75,000 per farmer to stimulate a more level playing field for producers. Authorized crop insurers receiving federal crop insurance subsidies should be required to transparently report the profitability of their insurance operations.

#### **FARMERS' RIGHTS IN A CROP INSURANCE DISPUTE**

In light of the fact that a wrongful denial of a crop insurance payment can result in additional expenses and loss of income for farmers during the period that a case is in arbitration, Wisconsin Farmers Union calls on the Risk Management Agency to clearly establish that a farmer has a right to pursue damages against the insurance company in arbitration cases, particularly in the event that the denial of a crop insurance claim was arbitrary or discriminatory.

#### **FARM SERVICE AGENCY (FSA)**

Wisconsin Farmers Union confirms our strong support for the current USDA county-based election system.

Wisconsin Farmers Union opposes the Secretary of Agriculture or any federal entity appointing USDA county committee membership. Wisconsin Farmers Union advocates for strong educational campaigns to help farmers make informed decisions about the options afforded to them by programs offered in the current farm program.

Wisconsin Farmers Union calls upon Congress to direct USDA to modernize to make effective its customer service platforms, loan application and servicing systems online, starting with FSA, and authorize funding to do so.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports Congress directing the FSA to streamline the application process. Congress should increase funding for loan authority across all FSA loan programs to ensure that they keep pace with demand and meet statutory participation targets for beginning and socially disadvantaged farmers.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports decreasing experience requirements for direct farm ownership loans from three (3) years to two (2) years.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports making FSA programs available to beginning farmers who are co-mingling cattle with other operators.

#### **DISCLOSURE AND TRANSPARENCY IN ALLOCATION OF FEDERAL FARM PAYMENTS**

Wisconsin Farmers Union calls for clear public disclosure of the formula used in appropriating farm financial assistance and the justifying rationale and levels therein by commodity or region to be accompanied with all notices to farmers when those payments are made.

### **SOUND SCIENCE**

#### **ANIMAL PATENTING AND CLONING**

The scientific community's capacity to work with genetic material already has resulted in the ability to clone some animal species and manipulate others. This technology has proceeded faster than society's thinking about the possible ramifications and impacts of the technology. Concerns about ethics, health, stewardship and the culture of animal husbandry require thought and scrutiny. Therefore, Wisconsin Farmers Union urges government institutions to establish advisory committees composed of farm producers, consumers, and the scientific community to study these issues and make recommendations as to future policy in this arena.

#### **GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISMS (GMOs)**

A number of food biotechnology firms are directly marketing GMOs. In response, scientists and consumers have raised concerns about environmental impacts and the validity of the United States Food and Drug Administration's regulatory process concerning the safety of genetically altered foods. Further, many foreign trading partners refuse to import products that are genetically altered thereby dampening our food exports.

Wisconsin Farmers Union demands rigorous standards regarding GMO toxicity trials and long term testing to allay health concerns; we urge the following:

- a. GMO seeds, crops, and animals or animal products be adequately labeled and stored, so that they do not interfere with the export or import of crops and commodities into countries that have concerns about them.
- b. Seeds with the Terminator Genes, i.e., a gene to ensure that seed will not reproduce, may not be marketed. Wisconsin Farmers Union opposes the use of tax dollars in developing terminator technology.
- c. Farmers retain the right to save and plant seeds and breed and reproduce animals derived from proprietary organisms on their own land.
- d. We support setting Wisconsin state inspection fees at an appropriate level to maintain strong state inspections. We also urge the Wisconsin state legislature to allocate sufficient funding for food and dairy inspections. Maintaining a high degree of food safety is the responsibility of all.

#### **GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE**

Wisconsin Farmers Union urges policymakers to consider the scientific evidence indicating that atmospheric levels of carbon dioxide are increasing, and global climate change is occurring as a result of human activities. Climate change is happening and is caused by human activity and there is no acceptable justification for either federal or state authorities to avoid implementing the various means to mitigate and correct in an expeditious manner the adverse effects of climate change.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports federal climate-change legislation provided that its application to farms is administered by the USDA instead of the EPA.

#### **FOOD SECURITY AND SOVEREIGNTY**

In the interest of food security, Wisconsin Farmers Union believes that a widespread network of many independent family farms is superior to a few very large food production and processing companies. In the event of disease outbreaks, natural disaster, major nuclear or industrial accidents, or in the event of war or acts of terrorism, a concentrated food supply would leave parts of the country and world more vulnerable to hardship than would be experienced with a family farm system.

The concentration of farm ownership also tends to disenfranchise many at the benefit of few, causing financial and social turmoil over time. The family farm efficiently utilizes resources to produce and distribute food and dispose of waste products through energy, labor or transportation systems.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports establishing a revolving farmer-owned reserve of commodities to provide an adequate supply of raw materials for use as emergency food or renewable energy.

#### **FOOD INSPECTION**

- a. Wisconsin Farmers Union supports consolidating food inspection into a single agency and creating and/or maintaining food inspection guidelines as stringent as the USDA meat inspection guidelines.
- b. We support granting the USDA mandatory recall authority.
- c. We support research into best handling practices for specialty crops, including nuts, fruits and

vegetables.

- d. We support setting Wisconsin state inspection fees at an appropriate level according to the size of operations and allocating general purpose revenue to maintain sufficient numbers of state inspector positions.
- e. Wisconsin Farmers Union supports food safety legislation that is scale appropriate. This includes support for Cottage Food laws and other rules and laws that maintain necessary food-safety provisions yet allow for increased opportunity for small-scale and local processed food enterprises.

### **RISK MANAGEMENT**

Wisconsin Farmers Union recognizes the importance of risk management and food safety within the domestic food system. Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the repeal of the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA). But recognizing that it has been enacted, Wisconsin Farmers Union supports implementing FSMA in a manner that:

- a. Allows family farms, CSAs, food hubs, and cottage food ventures, regardless of scale, to remain profitable forms of business;
- b. Allows those who employ sustainable and/or organic farming practices to do so without additional and unnecessary hardship resulting from FSMA;
- c. Allows the continued growth and vitality of local food systems and value-based supply chains;
- d. Supports diversified farming systems;
- e. Supports beginning farmers without creating undue barriers in terms of FSMA compliance.
- f. Considers the ramifications FSMA will have on the quality of produce and contains viable produce washing requirements which would not lower the quality of fresh produce;
- g. Recognizes that the responsibility for risk management and food safety within the domestic food system should be shared among both producers and consumers;
- h. Allows adherence to National Organic Program standards for raw manure, compost applications, and agricultural water usage.

Wisconsin Farmers Union Encourages the FDA to create a FSMA advisory panel comprised of farmers representing various types and scales of operation diversity.

### **FOOD BIOSECURITY**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the increase of inspections of imported agricultural products, a limit on the number of ports where foreign foods enter the United States, and sufficient federal funds to protect our agriculture supply and our ports from bioterrorism.

- a. Wisconsin Farmers Union calls for enforcement of importing food products only from nations with USDA- comparable food inspection/sanitation standards, including milk protein concentrates.
- b. Wisconsin Farmers Union calls for disallowing imports of agricultural products from nations that have experienced outbreaks of diseases that could contaminate the food supply until those nations' agricultural exports have been deemed safe.

### **FEDERAL SEED, ANIMAL AND GERmplasm PRESERVATION**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports a national policy that assures and adequately funds the USDA National Center for Genetic Resources to acquire, evaluate, preserve, and provide as much as feasibly possible a broad collection of genetic resources for plant, animal and germplasm diversity in the United States.

### **ANTIBIOTIC USE**

With regard to limitations on antimicrobial use by farmers and ranchers, Wisconsin Farmers Union



supports policies that:

- a. Require independent monitoring of data on the use of antibiotics in animal agriculture.
- b. Encourage USDA to increase testing for pathogens and antibiotic residues in processing plants, and ensure prompt notification and consequences for animal sellers whose slaughtered animals test positive for violative levels of antibiotics.
- c. Permit the use of antimicrobial drugs to treat animals showing signs of illness.
- d. Permit the use of antimicrobial drugs to control the spread of disease in a herd or flock, when one (1) or more animals in the herd or flock show signs of illness.
- e. Discourage the use of antimicrobial drugs for preventative purposes in healthy animals.
- f. Eliminate the use of antimicrobial drugs for growth promotion.

### **FOOD WASTE**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the voluntary recommendations set forth in the EPA's food recovery hierarchy to prevent and deter food waste; encourages the USDA to study techniques to reduce or recover food waste; supports educational efforts to increase public awareness of food waste and exploit methods to reduce such waste; and advocates for active municipal composting, especially with regard to recycling food waste.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports a federal and state tax credit or deduction to tax liability for farmers who donate food to hunger relief organizations.

### **LOCAL SEED PRODUCTION**

A decentralized system of seed production is vital to the security and self-determination of family farms, the nation and humanity. Wisconsin Farmers Union supports local, state, and federal initiatives that will encourage the development of local seed production, including, but not limited to:

- a. Tax breaks and other financial supports for regionally focused seed companies sourcing their seed from family farms and indigenous peoples.
- b. Encouraging land grant universities to return to the development of open-source seeds.
- c. Legal protections for seed companies or individuals affected by cross contamination from genetically modified organisms or pollen from patented varieties.
- d. The offering of Tax Increment Financing funds for local seed companies.
- e. The development of federal and state grants for beginning seed farmers.

### **DIVERSITY AND EQUITY IN AGRICULTURE**

From 1868 to 1934, the federal government gave away over 200 million acres of historically indigenous farmland, in 160-acre land grants, to over 1.5 million white families. These land grants created generational wealth for the ancestors of tens of millions of white Americans alive today but not for Black, Indigenous, or People of Color (BIPOC) communities. Further, USDA officials have historically ignored complaints from BIPOC farmers and denied them farm aid, loans, and other support based on their race, systematically delayed paperwork until planting season was over, and denied them crop disaster payments.

An intentional equalizing to benefit BIPOC farmers is necessary to rectify racist and discriminatory policies of the past. There is an overdue need for land access support for BIPOC farmers that provides the opportunity for equitable generational wealth.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports state and federal policies that grant land reparations to BIPOC communities and prevent further loss of land. We advocate for policies that support training and education of socially disadvantaged communities, specifically funding for Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). We support reforms to credit systems and financing structures to correct systemic racial inequities in lending. We further support the Justice for Black Farmers Act of 2020 to accomplish

these goals and promote justice and equity in United States agriculture.

#### **“RIGHT TO FOOD” CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports an amendment to the Wisconsin state constitution affirming that all individuals have a natural, inherent and inalienable right to food, including the right to save and exchange seed and the right to grow, raise, harvest, produce, and consume the food of their own choosing for their own nourishment, sustenance, bodily health, and well-being, as long as an individual does not commit trespassing, theft poaching, or other abuses of private property rights, public lands, or natural resources in the harvesting, production, or acquisition of food.

#### **URBAN AGRICULTURE**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the implementation of urban agriculture-friendly policies at all levels of government, especially those policies that focus particularly on communities of color and low-income communities that stand to benefit the most, and especially regarding zoning and general plans that would allow agricultural use in all zoning districts, and sufficient legal clarity and process to provide urban farms a pathway to investment in farm infrastructure without worry of the land being usurped by larger real estate development.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports inventorying land for urban farming with a concentration on low-income communities and individuals of color, making this information publicly available.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports policies that encourage redeveloping abandoned, idled, and underused industrial and commercial facilities and vacant lots, including the use of tax breaks and other incentives for developers who dedicate space for urban agriculture, including community gardens and rooftop gardens.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the development of grants and low-interest loans aimed at assisting with the startup and operating costs of urban agriculture initiatives, including use of workforce development dollars, state bond initiatives, and programs and funding opportunities offered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), as well as programs that provide city services at reduced costs, including trash collection, composting, and access to water, tools, and storage to help reduce urban farmers’ expenses.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports funding for and focus on programs that train urban farmers and offer technical assistance, including via the University of Wisconsin, our state cooperative extension agency, community colleges, and Small Business Administration programs.

#### **TRUTH IN LABELING**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports all manufacturer efforts to provide transparency of any and all products and practices along the supply chain, in response to the demand of consumers. The Wisconsin Farmers Union opposes any efforts to deny consumers access to such information or any regulatory efforts to conceal or confuse at any point along the supply chain.

##### **COUNTRY OF ORIGIN LABELING (COOL)**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the COOL requirements as mandated in the 2008 Farm Bill and calls again for Congress to address the demand from United States livestock raisers and consumers to label locations of birth, raising, and slaughter of livestock and urges its expansion to the labeling of all food products distributed and sold in the United States.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports country of origin labeling for all meat and dairy products.

##### **ORGANIC FOOD PRODUCTS**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports proper labeling of organic food products.

### **GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISMS (GMOs)**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports labeling GMO products. Wisconsin Farmers Union maintains that QR codes or the requirement to call a telephone number or visit a website in order to find product ingredients are not adequate to inform consumers and are not in the spirit of package labeling.

### **CLONED ANIMALS**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the use of milk or meat products from cloned animals when those products are labeled as such.

### **SYNTHETIC BOVINE GROWTH HORMONE (BGH)**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the continuation of standards for labeling milk and dairy products, enabling farmers and consumers to have the opportunity to choose whether to use or consume synthetic BGH. Wisconsin Farmers Union supports labeling laws to allow milk to be labeled r-BST free.

### **IRRADIATED FOOD LABELING**

Food products that have been irradiated must be labeled as such, and appropriate educational materials should be made available to consumers.

### **LAB- OR FACTORY-CULTURED MEAT-LIKE PRODUCTS**

Wisconsin Farmers Union asserts that products labeled as “meat,” and products bearing species-specific designations such as beef, pork, chicken, turkey, lamb, fish, etc., must come from the carcass of a slaughtered animal. Products derived from culturing or reproducing animal proteins or tissues outside of the body of a living animal must be clearly labeled as “lab-grown,” “produced in a factory,” “not derived from harvested livestock,” or similar labeling.

### ***PREMISES REGISTRATION AND ANIMAL IDENTIFICATION***

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports premises registration as implemented by the State of Wisconsin, as well as national premises registration, provided that it is funded by the general public and not by farmers. Wisconsin Farmers Union supports Wisconsin dairy farm permits as a form of registering their premises, thereby not adding cost or paperwork for dairy farms.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the USDA’s new strategy to place the sole responsibility of animal identification in the states.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports state livestock organizations’ efforts to find the best ways to address the issue of compatible traceability of disease management.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the current systems of animal identification used by farmers and processors and do not support the National Animal Identification System (NAIS). Any additional mandates for animal identification will result in costs disproportionately borne by farmers and ranchers.

The use of proprietary information collected through any traceback programs should be subject to strict limits and should not be available to the private sector through the Freedom of Information Act. Wisconsin Farmers Union supports state funding of the Wisconsin Livestock Identification Consortium. Animal identification programs must not be used as a means for packers and processors to transfer liability to the original owner of the animal; instead, trace-back information should mitigate producer liability for contaminated food products.

## II. ENERGY

### ***FEDERAL POLICIES***

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports a balanced national energy policy that would effectively address energy conservation and research, maintaining an adequate supply of existing energy sources and the implementation of renewable energy sources.

Clean, efficient energy should be affordable to all, with adequate supplies to meet the needs of Wisconsin. The United States Energy sources should be diverse and developed as close to points of use as possible rather than depending upon long distance and vulnerable transmission and transportation networks.

We urge the establishment of a national petroleum reserve to ensure an emergency supply for agriculture and other essential industries.

Wisconsin Farmers Union urges policymakers to consider the true costs of energy when making fuel decisions: the cost of importing energy, the national defense costs associated with trading with hostile countries, and the costs of greenhouse gas emissions on the environment.

Wisconsin Farmers Union asks for farmers to be considered part of the solution, rather than the problem, in establishing a clean, independent energy policy. Wisconsin has the ability to sustainably produce biomass crops, oilseed crops and animal fats to be used for energy. We support the community-based development of localized, decentralized alternative energy and encourage tax credits and incentives for the proliferation of on-farm or community-based energy sources. Wisconsin Farmers Union is committed to partnering with rural electric coops to develop a positive vision for rural renewable energy into the future.

Wisconsin Farmers Union affirms its support for the research and development of the various types of renewable energy in Wisconsin to provide a stronger market for Wisconsin farmers, a local supply of byproduct feedstuffs for dairy and livestock producers, and a safer additive for gasoline and diesel fuel that will also decrease our dependence on foreign oil.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports measures that increase conservation as well as the use of renewable fuels. Both measures are needed to ensure a clean and diversified energy economy. Wisconsin Farmers Union supports a revenue-neutral carbon fee and dividend such as the Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act of 2021(HR 2307). The goal of such a policy should be to meet or exceed the emissions reductions required to meet the targets adopted in Paris at the 21<sup>st</sup> meeting of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the national 25 x 25 program, which calls for renewable energy to comprise 25% of the United States energy supply by 2025.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports research and initiatives to explore ways for farmers to produce energy that does not contribute to global climate change or groundwater pollution.

Under Title IX, under Rural Energy for America Program, the Secretary shall provide financial assistance and loan guarantees for purchase and installation of equipment and preparation of location therein to farmers, agricultural producers, and rural small business for establishing renewable energy from wind, solar, etc.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports creating market and educational opportunities among producers and consumers through investment in energy efficiency and local renewable energy that generates a reasonable and profitable return, and efforts to revitalize communities with agricultural businesses that utilize new technologies and that create markets for diversified and specialty crops to provide flexibility to farmers

adapting to changing weather patterns.

## **STATE POLICIES**

### **RENEWABLE ENERGY BUYBACK PROGRAM**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports a program administered by the Public Service Commission that will set utility payment rates for small renewable energy producers who want to create and feed energy into the electric grid. By establishing known buyback rates, it encourages distributed generation of renewable energy and enables farmers, small businesses, homeowners, churches, and others to install renewable energy systems.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports increasing the statewide feed-in tariff/net metering to cover systems up to 40 kilowatts, so that owners of such systems will have the assurance that they will be paid at the retail rate, on a monthly basis, for energy produced over and above what is used by their household, business, or farm.

Wisconsin Farmers Union opposes raising the connection rates for public utilities to acquire electricity from individual homeowners and farmers beyond the present levels, and in fact in some cases advocates lowering the rates and costs which exceed the actual cost of connection equipment.

### **LOW CARBON FUEL STANDARD (LCFS)**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the establishment of a LCFS in Wisconsin. An LCFS calls for a reduction in carbon emissions from transportation fuels, based on the carbon content of all fuels and transformations in the market over an extended period of time. This standard should take into consideration the energy production potential of Wisconsin, instead of being based on other states' LCFS, such as California.

### **FOCUS ON ENERGY PROGRAM**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports better tailoring of Focus on Energy programs to better meet the needs of farmers and rural residents, including those who use propane for heating. This includes a commitment to robust funding for customer-sited renewable energy under the Focus on Energy Program as well as supporting electric cooperative programs that support energy efficiency and renewable energy in lieu of the Focus on Energy Programs.

### **RENEWABLE ENERGY FINANCING**

Wisconsin Farmers Union endorses customers hosting renewable projects such as solar, digesters, small hydro, and wind systems provided through third-party financing.

### **FAIRNESS IN STATE ALTERNATIVE ENERGY SUBSIDIES**

If the state of Wisconsin will provide financial assistance to induce larger farming livestock operations to install anaerobic digesters, Wisconsin Farmers Union, in the spirit of even-handedness, calls for the state to also provide equitable financial assistance to other farmers in their installation of alternative energy production systems.

### **PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION (PSC)**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports requiring the PSC to develop a clear, consistent, and stable framework for supporting increased investments in distributed renewable generation, whether customer-driven (e.g. behind-the-meter solar or direct sale to utility) or utility-driven (e.g. community solar). Policies for facilitating small-scale renewables include reasonable export rates for customer-sited renewable generation, safeguards against discriminatory billing and interconnection practices, and reasonable terms/tariffs that enable utilities to apply customer-sited generation towards their environmental or renewable energy requirements.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the addition of four (4) commissioners to the Public Service

Commission (PSC). Each additional member diminishes the impact of each politically appointed commissioner. Their decisions, which have an outsized impact on rural communities, are far too important to be left to three (3) political appointees.

### **WISCONSIN'S RENEWABLE ELECTRICITY STANDARD**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports an increase of Wisconsin's Renewable Electricity Standard to 25% by 2025 (comprised entirely of renewable energy generated in the state).

### **ELECTRIC AND HYBRID VEHICLES**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the development of a robust electrical vehicle charging network. To compensate for dwindling gas tax revenue, Wisconsin Farmers Union supports revenue alternatives that do not single out and penalize electric and/or hybrid vehicles.

### **LARGE-SCALE SOLAR**

Large-scale solar installations are becoming more prevalent in our rural communities. The proposal and development process are becoming increasingly fractious. Powerful companies and investment-backed programs are coming to our communities and asking us to host these renewable installations.

Wisconsin Farmers Union requests that farmers, landowners and neighbors of installations and wider communities be treated fairly, have access to all information, and get a fair share of revenue generated by the projects that they are hosting.

For all commercial energy we support requiring an Agricultural Impact Statement that assess impacts to crop production, soils, and impacts to related businesses that aggregate, store, process or use crops as feed from acres that will be shifted to solar production. Projects should also make fully transparent information on project sizes, payments to landowners and neighbors, municipalities, and utilities, that is fully available before projects are approved.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports strong Community Benefits Agreements as a condition of any commercial, renewable installations. These Community Benefits Agreements must be developed in a transparent process and ensure that a fair share of revenue from the installations is shared with all those impacted.

## **LOCAL POLICIES**

### **COMMUNITY SOLAR**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports community solar generation and encourages communities to offer such programs to local citizens.

### **BIODIESEL**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports:

1. Consumer and distribution incentives to further the inclusion of biodiesel in Wisconsin. Biodiesel is a cleaner, homegrown, renewable fuel that reduces our consumption of fossil fuels and supports Wisconsin agriculture.
2. A recommendation to focus state resources to increase the use of biodiesel and the availability and reliability of biodiesel fuel sold in Wisconsin.
3. Expanding the distribution network for biodiesel fuel throughout the state by instituting tax incentives for wholesale and retail distributors.
4. Increased use of biodiesel fuel through the development of informational and educational materials and programs for the public and diesel product manufacturers.
5. State adoption of a definition of biodiesel that conforms to current federal standards.
6. Establishing proper testing labs and enforcement resources for biodiesel fuel within the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection or the Department of Commerce.
7. Elimination or reduction of the state road tax for biodiesel and Straight Vegetable Oil (SVO) fuel.

Wisconsin Farmers Union opposes the reduction of federal subsidies for biodiesel production until the biodiesel industry becomes established at a self-sufficient level.

## ***ETHANOL***

The ethanol industry is important to the United States independence from reliance on foreign oil and to the local agricultural economy. Roughly 40% of the United States corn crop is refined into ethanol and provides farmers with a market for lower quality corn that is less suitable for livestock feed.

The U.S. EPA has improperly handled the administration of the Renewable Fuel Standard (RFS) by lowering total volume requirements and granting numerous “hardship waivers” to large corporations. The RFS was passed by Congress to spur growth in the American-grown biofuels industry and has reaped significant economic and environmental benefits for rural America. EPA’s trend of undermining this law on behalf of the oil industry is disturbing, and it flies in the face of the Trump Administration’s numerous promises to farmers and rural communities to support the RFS.

Wisconsin Farmer’s Union recommends that the EPA National Renewable Fuel Standard increase the target volume of cellulosic fuels to incentivize the production of perennial biofuel crops, and address soil and environmental quality issues associated with the production of annual biofuel crops.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports:

1. Biomass production of renewable fuels from any potential source, as long as they do not significantly contribute to climate change and groundwater pollution.
2. Aggressive and ambitious cellulosic ethanol development and production, geared to rapidly developing necessary technology, to complement traditional ethanol supplies of motor fuels.
3. Extensive research on usage and marketing of distillers’ grain for feed and other value-added uses.
4. Development of infrastructure to improve pipeline distribution and accessibility to filling station/pumps of biofuels across the United States.
5. Government purchase and use of flex-fuel vehicles fueled with renewable fuels.
6. Blender pumps at all fueling stations throughout the U.S. and cost-sharing through federal and state subsidies of at least 20% to reduce the cost of improved infrastructure and protection of the environment required for fueling stations.
7. The USDA and the EPA allowing the year-round use of E-15 and encourages the sale of E-15 at all fueling stations in the United States.
8. Implementation of the federal regulation allowing E-30 to be used.
9. Vehicle manufacturers improving motor fuel efficiency and expanding availability of ethanol compatible powertrains.
10. The RFS mandate to blend ethanol to at least 10% with gasoline be restored to its originally intended level.
11. The 10th Circuit Court’s decision in early 2020, which concluded the temporary small-refinery exemptions Congress provided, could not be extended if they had previously expired.
12. An EPA mandate for blended ethanol to be no less than 18 billion gallons per year or the maximum amount of production generated. No further waivers to the RFS should be granted if that limit is not met.

## ***ETHANOL WAIVERS***

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports:

1. The RFS mandate to blend ethanol to at least 10% with gasoline be restored to its originally intended level.
2. At least 10% of the gasoline sold in the US be non-exempt for refiners to receive waivers exempting their blending under the RFS.

3. The EPA be required to mandate that blended ethanol be no less than 18 billion gallons per year or the maximum amount of production generated. No further waivers to the RFS should be granted if that limit is not met.

### **WIND ENERGY**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports community-based and farmer-supported development and distribution of electric generation from wind. With today's technology, farmers have the ability to supply a substantial portion of the nation's electricity from wind and recognize new income potential. Contracts with project developers or utilities must be clear and transparent.

Wisconsin Farmers Union calls for federal legislation to require all utilities to allow community-based wind projects access to the electric grid by actively pursuing power purchase agreements.

In order to help expand the use of smaller wind energy systems, we support net metering for systems up to 100kW. Wisconsin Farmers Union supports billing small wind generators on an annual basis. Net metering allows bidirectional metering of electricity, measured by one (1) meter, where there is no discrimination between electricity produced and electricity consumed by the small electricity consumer-generator.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports uniform wind siting standards that are consistent and enforced, ensuring transparent regulatory and approval processes that protect public health and safety, and are based on peer reviewed literature, research, and sound science. Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the development of a system of uniform testing standards for wind turbine systems, to enable potential buyers to compare systems.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports a comprehensive policy that protects landowners from speculation and unfair contracts in the development of natural resources such as wind development.

### **WIND AND SOLAR ENERGY LANDOWNERS' RIGHTS**

Wisconsin Farmers Union calls for the following principles in any wind turbine or solar farm siting contract:

- a. Prohibition of non-disclosure or secrecy clauses in leases. Non-disclosure clauses serve only to protect the interests of the contractor/developer. Landowners should be allowed to review leases with attorneys, lenders, and other holders of leases to ascertain the relative value of a lease offer;
- b. Establishment of a registry of current standard wind leases and that the registry is made accessible to the public. A registry allows landowners to compare offered leases with standard leases and better ascertain the relative value of a lease offer. It also allows landowners to compare other lease terms with standard leases;
- c. Prohibition of mandatory arbitration clauses. Mandatory arbitration requirements are becoming more common in contracts. Prohibiting such clauses in contracts will ensure the right of civil litigation for landowners in lease disputes and help balance the legal interests of landowners and developers;
- d. Limiting length of lease options. Limiting the term of lease options will prevent companies from tying up large tracts of land for extended periods, thus encouraging the use of lease options for actual development instead of speculation;
- e. Authorizing collective bargaining of leases. Allowing landowners to bargain collectively for standard lease terms throughout a region or development project would encourage fairness in the application of lease terms among multiple landowners;
- f. Bonding and reclamation protections. This would encourage responsible energy development and transmission at outset of the lease by providing funds up front for reclamation of land after turbine, tower or project life has expired;
- g. Prohibition of prior investment as a condition of lease or option of fulfillment. This discourages the use of option development to coerce investment by landowners;



- h. Prohibition of farmland ownership by energy development or generation companies. Compliance would ensure that agricultural land remains in the hands of producers and retains the agricultural value of the land used in energy development;
- i. Prohibition of rights of first refusal by developers. Developers should not be able to obtain the right of first refusal in lease options/contracts. Right of first refusal allows a developer to tie up land, and/or reduce marketability of landowner's land without purchasing an option;
- j. Disclosure of actual lease payments in contracts. This requires that actual lease payments, potential premiums and formula used determine said premiums be established and disclosed as a condition of a final lease agreement during negotiation of a contract;
- k. A five (5) working-day cooling-off period after a lease agreement is signed. This allows a landowner a window to reconsider if, for example, their attorney has an objection to the contract language;
- l. Prohibition of severability of surface rights and wind. Land ownership should not be severed from natural resources associated with the surface.

### ***ALTERNATIVE FERTILIZER/PLANT FOODS***

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports research to develop alternatives to petroleum-based nitrogen. We urge regional cooperatives to become more involved in manufacturing of basic plant food nutrients and ownership of such facilities.

### ***ANAEROBIC DIGESTERS***

- 1. Wisconsin Farmers Union supports research to make anaerobic digesters a profitable venture for smaller livestock operations. Wisconsin Farmers Union further supports funding and development assistance for community digesters.
- 2. Wisconsin Farmers Union calls for the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin to permit biogas generated and emitted by anaerobic digesters on Wisconsin farms, which has been cleaned and compressed according to federal natural gas pipeline standards, to be placed directly into Wisconsin-regulated pipe lines and calls for Wisconsin utilities to pay a true market price for both renewable natural gas and electricity generated by these digesters which are reducing greenhouse gases and other environmental problems.

### ***ELECTRIC UTILITY DEREGULATION***

Proposals have been discussed to deregulate the electric power industry. However, Wisconsin Farmers Union believes deregulation would benefit a few large industrial users of electricity and the stockholders of a few investor-owned utilities, while increasing electricity costs to residential (rural and city) ratepayers, small businesses and farms. Wisconsin Farmers Union opposes adoption of legislative or regulatory action at either the national, state or local level that may have negative effects on rural consumers.

### ***ELECTRIC TRANSMISSION LINES***

Any new high-voltage transmission lines constructed in the State of Wisconsin may impact unique eco-regions and scenic landscapes that possess important environmental values. The construction, operation, and maintenance of future transmission lines may significantly impact agricultural practices as well as regional ecology. New high-voltage transmission lines should only be approved when demand for cleaner electricity is clearly demonstrated by a publicly transparent assessment process carried out by an independent public agency and not a private developer. Increased need for electricity should first be addressed by development of non-transmission alternatives and local resources including energy efficiency, wind power, solar power, demand response, and energy storage.

When the construction of new transmission lines is being considered, Wisconsin Farmers Union demands that local governments are provided adequate information and input into the permitting process. Wisconsin Farmers Union also asks that, when new transmission lines are built, farmers and landowners are compensated, including adjacent property devaluation. New transmission lines should be constructed with the capability to

accept energy generated by renewable- energy facilities along the line.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports distributed solar generation and avoiding installations that permanently take productive farmland out of production. For larger installations, the Wisconsin Farmers Union urges the Public Service Commission (PSC) of Wisconsin to require that all public utility solar energy projects and any non-utility solar energy projects under their consideration must include pollinator habitat plantings and agrivoltaics.

Wisconsin Farmers Union advocates for the following principles when developing or enhancing the energy generation and transmission system:

1. Maximizing cost-effective conservation, efficiency, and load management;
2. Relying to the greatest extent possible on state-based renewable generation;
3. Supporting local ownership of energy generation that includes dispersed renewable energy, which contributes to the local economy and creates jobs;
4. Minimizing the size, scale, voltage and environmental impacts of electric transmission.
5. Basing decisions on a full comparison of alternative solutions, including aggressive energy efficiency, demand side management, distributed generation incentive programs, and scheduled low voltage improvements to meet in-state reliability.
6. Requiring the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin to provide the public easy to understand cost-benefit comparisons of non-transmission and transmission alternatives that the Public Service Commission writes, and that take into account short and long-term monetary and environmental impacts over the life of the project;
7. Requiring the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin to provide this cost-benefit information to the public and at Environmental Impact Statement scoping meetings;
8. Requiring the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin to contract with an impartial third party to conduct an equally comprehensive economic and environmental impact analysis of various transmission and non- transmission alternatives and to include this in the agency's Environmental Impact Statements.

Wisconsin Farmers Union may intervene in any Public Service Commission proposal to construct new high-voltage transmission lines within any region of Wisconsin. Wisconsin Farmers Union may file public comments as part of the Environmental Impact Statement processes carried out by the federal Rural Utility Service and State of Wisconsin Public Service Commission and Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

### **STRAY VOLTAGE**

Wisconsin Farmers Union urges the state legislature and involved state agencies to require power companies to correct stray voltage problems and electrical pollution, and to provide financial reimbursement to injured parties. Possible remedies include compensating farmers for damage from electrical pollution and requiring necessary upgrades in the existing electrical transmission system. We support legislation that defines objectionable current flow on grounding rods and prohibits utilities from returning current through the earth.

### **NUCLEAR POWER**

We oppose lifting the moratorium on new nuclear fuel generation in Wisconsin. Additionally, we oppose new nuclear waste storage sites in Wisconsin.

### **TAX CREDITS**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports federal tax credits for solar, wind energy, geothermal, and other renewable and alternative energy sources at the level of 30% and tax credits for combined heat and power (CHP) systems at the level often (10) percent. We support the extension of production tax credits to provide financial incentives for wind energy development. We support a national Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) of 25% by 2025 that includes a strong local ownership component. We also support

making the Federal production tax credit for wind energy more applicable to farmers by extending the Federal production tax credit to offset schedule F income.

### **III. INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND AGRICULTURE-RELATED INVESTMENT**

#### ***INTERNATIONAL TRADE STANDARDS***

Wisconsin Farmers Union will aggressively seek the inclusion of the following provisions and objectives in United States trade policy, international trade negotiations and agreements to be contained in any international trade negotiations and agreements:

1. Acceptance of the multi-functionality of production agriculture.
2. Requirement that all commodities be fully negotiated and no preferential treatment be granted to specific commodities.
3. Initiation of a commodity-by-commodity study on the impact of an agreement on exports and imports, which should be made public.
4. Development of an effective mechanism to offset the negative impact of differences in exchange rates.
5. Retention of Domestic Trade Remedy Authority.
6. Elimination of unilateral sanctions on agricultural and medical products.
7. Coordination of efforts internationally to reduce the anti-competitive results of increased concentration in agriculture.
8. Preservation of United States rights and policy flexibility to provide economic safety net assistance to agricultural producers, including inventory management and Trade Adjustment Assistance for agriculture.
9. Support for international cooperation to achieve improved commodity prices by balancing supply and demand.
10. Imported food or feed must have been produced, processed, and packaged under standards consistent with United States standards.
11. A United States ban on all imports of dairy, livestock, and poultry, including any products containing hides or feathers, from any nations with documented Foot and Mouth Disease.
12. Verification that farmers and farmer organizations in local counterparty importing countries are receptive to the terms of the proposed treaties.
13. Requirement that all trade agreements comport with the Trade Reform, Accountability, Development, and Employment (TRADE) Act, which requires that all trade agreements include provisions that ensure other countries have environmental, food safety, health, and labor standards equal to or greater than those in the United States.
14. Seeks to improve harmonization of health, consumer and worker safety, human rights, and environmental standards using scientific criteria, without limiting the ability of nations to establish higher domestic standards in cases where scientific questions remain, or important domestic concerns exist.

Wisconsin Farmers Union is opposed to fast-track authority for future trade agreements.

Wisconsin Farmers Union opposes protectionist measures of any kind except for those necessitated by verifiable national security reasons that are verified by multilateral non-governmental entities such as the United Nations and World Trade Organization.

#### **TITLE III IN FARM LEGISLATION**

Require that Food for Peace be determined based on priority of need and not on political, military, or diplomatic relationship with recipient country.

In Agricultural Trade Promotion and Facilitation, increase technical assistance for specialty crops by including small grains in specialty crops.

For technical assistance for specialty crops, increase funding from \$9 million to \$12 million to develop foreign

markets for these crops.

### ***EXECUTING STABLE TRADE PRACTICES FOR AGRICULTURAL PRODUCE AND AVOIDING TARIFFS BY CONTRUCTIVE, COLLABORATIVE NEGOTIATING***

The vast majority of farmers rely on exports both to act as a release valve for their overproduction and to be a major factor in deterring price drops for their commodities. Whatever criticisms, however valid, against bilateral and multilateral trade agreements and the World Trade Organization (and its predecessor, the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs) may exist, foreign trade for US agriculture is essential for both exports and imports and much of US farming. Protectionist measures such as embargoes and tariffs destabilize commodity markets, create artificial incentives that distort market structures and economically rational market functions, induce inefficiencies, and raise consumer costs. Recent US trade policy utilizing tariffs and non-tariff trade barriers have resulted in needless, ineffective, and non-productive trade wars with retaliatory tariffs on US agricultural produce. The amount of payment in the USDA's Trade Reconciliation program of \$28 billion only marginally compensates farmers for their lost market share in their traditional markets and the lost revenue accruing from the extraordinary drop in commodity prices (for soybeans, dairy, wheat, corn, pork, etc.), that exacerbates the continued loss of farm income.

Wisconsin Farmers Union prefers open market access, to the extent that it does not destabilize market supply management, where farmers can compete with other exporters of agricultural products, rather than relying on US government compensation subsidies. Notwithstanding the aforementioned, the USDA and the federal government should provide compensation payments to farmers in an amount that actually covers farmers' market losses and their lost income in commodity prices when the federal government causes farmers' lost revenue because of deficient policy.

Wisconsin Farmers Union advocates that the US Administration, the US Trade Representative, and the US government use more conciliatory approaches in resolving trade disputes with US' traditional and major trade partners, rather than ineffective practices like tariffs and embargoes.

Wisconsin Farmers Union calls on Congress, the US Trade Representative, and the Administration to desist from injudiciously applying tariffs, to negotiate trade relations in a more collaborative, open, and non-confrontational approach to settle trade imbalances and disputes, and to make better use of organizations such as the World Trade Organization in addressing trade imbalances and disputes.

Wisconsin Farmers Union calls upon these same parties to remove tariffs imposed on certain US imports from traditional trade partners which will result in the removal of retaliatory tariffs on US farm exports. Wisconsin Farmers Union requests that the USDA increase its appropriations (a) for expanding traditional US agricultural product export markets that have been harmed because of imprudent US trade policy resulting in loss of market share and (b) for developing new markets.

### ***OWNERSHIP OF FARMLAND BY INSTITUTIONAL INVESTORS IN ALL COUNTRIES***

Wisconsin Farmers Union opposes the investment in forestlands and arable lands in all countries by institutional investors (corporations, commercial and investment banks, pension funds, life insurance companies, endowments, high net-worth individuals, sovereign wealth funds, all of which apply to both domestic and foreign entities, amongst others). These lands should primarily be owned, managed, and farmed, if so desired, by domestic family farmers. We also urge DATCP to vigorously enforce the law limiting ownership by foreign entities to 640 acres of land in Wisconsin.

## **IV. AGRIBUSINESS CONCENTRATION AND ANTITRUST**

### ***FEDERAL ANTI-TRUST LAWS***

Enforcement of federal anti-trust laws has been ineffectual for decades, with very few meaningful investigations into mergers and acquisitions of large-scale agricultural producers, suppliers and processors. Farmers are facing the increasingly deleterious effects of lack of competition in numerous markets. For example, when four (4) large beef packers control over 80% of the market, it does not allow for a fair, competitive market environment. This is true in beef, poultry, hogs, dairy, grain, seed, fertilizer, farm equipment, and transportation. The lack of competition in these markets, as well as in the retail food sector, has coincided with a decline in the vitality of rural communities.

Given the rapidly changing nature of the marketplace, we call for the United States Department of Justice to write guidelines on monopsony and oligopsony in anticipation of further concentration of buyers, as well as sellers, in the marketplace.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports state policies that limit vertical integration within agricultural industries in order to protect family farms from unfair competition and monopolistic (or non-competitive) business practices.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports policies to limit vertical integration and to protect family farms from unfair competition and monopolistic (only one (1) seller), oligopolistic (only a few sellers), monopolistic (only one (1) buyer), and oligopolistic (only a few buyers) business practices. Federal regulators should enforce current laws utilizing structural definitions as well as marketplace impacts, and revise and reform applicable legislation to insure fair market pricing and the avoidance of non-competitive market control.

Wisconsin Farmers Union calls on the new administration to enforce federal anti-trust laws and aggressively prosecute violators of anti-trust laws.

### **ANTI-TRUST ENFORCEMENT BY THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE AND FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION**

Wisconsin Farmers Union calls for a congressional investigation of monopolistic business practices and growing concentration of ownership in the agricultural sector. Wisconsin Farmers Union calls on the United States Department of Justice and the Federal Trade Commission to more rigorously appraise merger and acquisition permits and to aggressively prosecute violators of antitrust laws. We urge enforcement of all antitrust laws pertaining to agribusiness concentration.

### **USDA GRAIN INSPECTION, PACKERS AND STOCKYARDS ADMINISTRATION (GIPSA)**

Wisconsin Farmers Union urges the USDA to adopt more stringent GIPSA rules such as those currently under consideration.

### ***WISCONSIN ANTI-CORPORATE FARMING LAW***

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports state policies to limit non-family corporate farming in the state.

Wisconsin Farmers Union calls upon the Wisconsin State Legislature to update Wisconsin's anti-corporate farming statute to prohibit non-family corporations, partnerships, or Limited Liability Corporations (LLCs) from owning farmland or farming operations. A family corporation, partnership, or LLC is one where all of the shareholders or partners meet at least one of the following criteria: Shareholders are related by blood or marriage, they live in the county or county adjacent to the county where the farm operation is based, and/or all shareholders of the corporation are actively engaged in the farm operation in question.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports adding hemp and cannabis to the list of crops listed in Wisconsin's anti-corporate farming law.

## **ADDRESSING THE IMPACT OF LIVESTOCK CONCENTRATION**

In 2010, 2015, and 2019, the Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection (DATCP) assembled teams of technical experts to recommend updates to the technical standards on odor, setbacks, engineering, and nutrient management for the state's large livestock facilities, including Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFO's). The Livestock Siting Technical Committees' recommendations reflect the best available science and practice, and Wisconsin Farmers Union urges DATCP to adopt the recommendations of the most recent committee.

The DATCP technical committees did not address economic or social impacts of large livestock facilities. Wisconsin Farmers Union urges DATCP to consider the social and economic impacts of livestock operations when reviewing and adjusting the ATCP 51 rules. More consideration must be made to the effects of unchecked expansion of very large livestock operations. If these necessary changes cannot be made within the limitations of the livestock siting law, Wisconsin Farmers Union urges the state legislature to revisit the legislation to better address the needs of farmers, rural communities, and municipalities.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports lifting the preemption of local control of siting of large livestock operations. Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the following changes to the Livestock Siting Rule:

1. Increased setbacks.
2. Require stricter engineering standards for controlling leachate.
3. Require bonding of CAFOs so local communities are not burdened if bankruptcy or disaster cleanup occurs.
4. Increased fees to cover all real expenses involved with processing, consulting, and investigation of the permit application to be paid by the applicant.
5. Add air emission standards that protect health, safety, and welfare of citizens.
6. Require financial responsibility for polluted wells, road repairs, and damage created by CAFO operations.
7. Assure local governments' rights to develop ordinances related to CAFO operation including but not limited to manure spray irrigation.

Wisconsin Farmers Union urges the legislature to amend the statute to require that the findings of the Technical Committee must be presented in writing to the Board of DATCP, and that the Board must present a scope statement to the Wisconsin Secretary of Agriculture within 90 days, and if DATCP fails to take action on the scope statement within six (6) months, the scope statement must be sent to the Joint Committee for Review of Administrative Rules and scheduled for a public hearing.

Wisconsin Farmers Union recognizes the authority of ATCP 51 to set statewide, minimum standards and procedures for CAFOs but supports lifting the preemption of local control in ATCP 51 and allowing local governments to pass more stringent standards and procedures that are based on reasonable and scientifically defensible findings of fact that clearly show that the standards are needed to protect water and air quality and public health or safety without seeking DATCP or DNR approval.

Wisconsin Farmers Union calls upon DATCP to take steps immediately to remove the fee cap in ATCP 51, relying instead on the existing statutory requirement that any fee imposed by a town or county must be reasonable.

Wisconsin Farmers Union calls upon DATCP to take steps immediately to remove the provision in ATCP 51 that prohibits towns and counties from requiring permitted facilities to provide a bond or other financial assurance to protect taxpayers from a costly cleanup.

## **BAN ON PACKER OWNERSHIP**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports reform of packer ownership of livestock operations and opposes vertical integration of livestock operations.

### ***TRANSPARENCY IN LIVESTOCK MARKET PRICES AND REQUIRING PACKERS TO PRICE MORE THAN HALF OF THEIR PURCHASES IN CASH MARKET***

Wisconsin Farmers Union calls for price transparency in livestock markets that can be attained by requiring meat packers to purchase from non-affiliated growers at least half of all their livestock for slaughter in the open or cash markets and report those prices to the USDA Secretary and by requiring packers to slaughter this livestock within 14 days. This will increase competition and greater market efficiency.

### ***PACKERS AND STOCKYARDS ACT***

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports enforcement of the Grain Inspection Packers and Stockyards Act (GIPSA) to enforce anticompetitive/antitrust laws. Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the GIPSA rules as proposed in 2010.

### ***FARM SYSTEM REFORM ACT***

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the Farm System Reform Act of 2019. This legislation would:

- Place an immediate moratorium on new and expanding large CAFOs and phase out by 2040 the largest CAFOs as defined by the Environmental Protection Agency.
- Hold corporate integrators responsible for pollution and other harm caused by CAFOs.
- Provide a voluntary buyout for farmers who want to transition out of operating a CAFO.
- Strengthen the Packers and Stockyards Act to protect family farmers and ranchers, including:
  - Prohibit the use of unfair tournament or ranking systems for paying contract growers;
  - Protect livestock and poultry farmers from retaliation;
  - Create market transparency and protect farmers and ranchers from predatory purchasing practices.
- Restore mandatory country-of-origin labeling requirements for beef and pork and expand to dairy products.
- Prohibit the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) from labeling foreign imported meat products as “Product of USA”.

### ***PATENTING LIFE***

Wisconsin Farmers Union declares that all living things, all species of native plants, animals, living organisms, and life itself and their basic genetic traits and make-up exist for all of humanity and nature itself and cannot be patented nor may be permitted to be used for monopoly-controlled purposes. As stewards of nature, particularly related to life for plant, animal, and micro-organism, no monopoly control of related life, even in the case of human-made biotechnologically developed life, should be permitted to the extent that humanity and nature is deprived of the use thereof.

### ***RESTRICTING GMO PATENT RIGHTS AND ENFORCING GMO LIABILITIES***

Wisconsin Farmers Union recognizes the rights of genomic companies to earn a profit on their human-made living matter but opposes the extension of those rights after the product has entered the stream of commerce or after the leasing right has been acquired and paid. Wisconsin Farmers Union demands that United States patent law be changed to reflect the above.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the seed sovereignty rights of all farmers, especially those in the developing world. Seed sovereignty includes the right to retain their seed for future planting. Wisconsin Farmers Union demands that monopolized patent rights be restricted and be shared through greater competition when the public good and welfare of society necessitates.



## ***GRAIN FARMERS RELEASE OF CONFIDENTIAL PROPRIETARY DATA TO SEED AND IMPLEMENT COMPANIES***

Wisconsin Farmers Union encourages farmers to be cautious in releasing their confidential and proprietary information to seed and implement companies who can be expected to take on an ever-larger share of farmers' profits, increase farmers' dependency on input providers, and promote greater concentration of direct and indirect control and influence over individual farmer-entrepreneurial operations.

Wisconsin Farmers Union recommends that farmers who enter into such service agreements to consider appropriate remuneration in fees or sale proceeds for the transfer of this data.

## ***RIGHT TO REPAIR AND OPPOSITION TO MONOPOLY CONTROL OVER PURCHASED EQUIPMENT AND TECHNOLOGY***

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports Fair Repair and Right to Repair legislation that would allow farmers and independent mechanics access to diagnostic software, information, and other tools in order to repair modern equipment.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the rights of farmers to retain the right to repair equipment purchased inclusive of related technologies without violating warranty.

## ***US SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION CONTROL OF COMMODITY FUTURES, OPTIONS, AND OTHER MARKERS FOR AGRICULTURAL COMMODITIES***

Increasingly over the last decade, commodities market no longer are indicative of supply and demand. Index and hedge funds and other speculative investors have undue influence on markets. Under this erratic volatility engendered by speculators who have no other interest than short-term speculative profit-taking, farmers find it increasingly difficult to plan for production and attain profitability. Therefore, the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) must assure that investors in these financial instruments related to agricultural commodity markets do not disrupt the important supply- demand functions exercised by these markets.

Wisconsin Farmers Union calls upon the SEC to ensure market transparency and to ensure that that speculative profit- taking by a select minority of investors does not destabilize supply and production of necessary food and feed products.

Wisconsin Farmers Union opposes any weakening through legislation or regulation of the Dodd-Frank "Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act" related to swaps, futures, options, and other instruments regulated by the SEC as they pertain to commodity financing and hedging.

## ***TRANSPARENCY IN BUSINESS ENTITY OWNERSHIP***

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports legislation previously introduced in Congress that would require business entities to list the true beneficial owners at the time of incorporation, in order to prevent shareholders and partners from evading taxes or legal liability.

## ***FARMERS BILL OF RIGHTS***

Formerly there were legal protections for farmers and consumers. The Packers and Stockyards Act of 1921, which became part of the Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration (GIPSA) in 1994, was previously known as the Farmers and Ranchers Bill of Rights.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the finalization of the Farmer Fair Practice Rules within GIPSA, which would bolster fundamental protections for family farms.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the Farmers Bill of Rights, which includes, but is not limited to the following provisions:

1. Right to fair, open markets
2. Right to feed their community
3. Right to fair capita
4. Right to protect natural resources
5. Right to local land control, property rights, and protection of tribal lands and sovereignty
6. Right to food security
7. Right to repair
8. Right to transparent labeling
9. Right to rural opportunity
10. Right to preserve a diverse community of farmers and farming practices

## V. COOPERATIVES

History shows that co-ops are a powerful means by which American farmers can further their own well-being in our market economy. As unique business organizations, cooperatives comprise an important segment of the American economy. Cooperatives are based on the fundamental principles of ownership and control only by member/patron users, initial financing by member/patron users, with distribution of benefits to patrons based on their participation in the cooperative business, protection of the interests of small and mid-size members and exemptions from the anti-trust laws.

Experience has demonstrated that any substantial deviation from these fundamental principles has eventually proven fatal to cooperatives and detrimental to their farmer members. Further, cooperative incorporation statutes of the various States, as well as the Capper-Volstead Act of 1922, the Cooperative Marketing Act of 1926, federal income taxation rules, and many other laws, recognize fundamental cooperative principles. These statutes allow substantial flexibility for innovative cooperative business practices and structural adaptation to modern times.

The promotion and encouragement of farm cooperatives should be emphasized as an effective means to increase farmers' bargaining power. We reaffirm our belief in the cooperative principles, including:

- One-member, one-vote
- Continuing education
- Voluntary and open membership
- Patronage refund
- Competitive prices
- Limited return on investment
- Political and religious neutrality
- Autonomy and independence
- Cooperation among cooperatives
- Concern for community

Wisconsin Farmers Union believes cooperatives should set aside the full amount of educational funds permitted by law.

Wisconsin Farmers Union opposes modification of any state laws or additional state laws that will have the effect of eliminating requirements and definitions that establish the essential cooperative characteristics of ownership and control by member/patron users, financing by member/patron users, and distribution of benefits to patrons based on their participation in the cooperative business.

Wisconsin Farmers Union opposes the use of the label "cooperative" to refer to any entity that does not meet the above-stated criteria.

## **CAPPER-VOLSTEAD ACT**

1. The rights of agricultural producers to act together to handle, process and market agricultural products through cooperative activity, as guaranteed under the Capper-Volstead Act of 1922, must be continued. These same rights should be formally extended under law to farm supply and consumer cooperatives.
2. The rights of cooperative members to organize and operate regional and interregional cooperatives (marketing agencies in common) or to merge with other cooperative associations should not be restricted by law or government regulation. However, Wisconsin Farmers Union is not in favor of regionals absorbing local cooperatives until other options of maintaining local control have been exhausted, including merger or joint venture with a nearby cooperative. When necessary for a regional to absorb a local cooperative, we strongly urge every effort would be made by the local members or a nearby cooperative to purchase the cooperative back when it is feasible. We demand that regional cooperative boards work together, and with local cooperatives, to help them continue operating for the benefit of the members.
3. The responsibilities of administering the Capper-Volstead Act should remain with the U.S. Department of Agriculture.
4. Because cooperative businesses are member-owned and controlled, we oppose any governmental regulation that would infringe upon the rights of cooperative members to determine the policies or operation of their cooperative.
5. Value-added cooperatives maintaining cooperative principles of member-ownership and control should be supported by Wisconsin Farmers Union.
6. Wisconsin Farmers Union opposes modification of any state laws that will have the effect of eliminating requirements and definitions that establish the essential cooperative characteristics of ownership and control by member/patron users, financing by member/patron users, and distribution of benefits to patrons based on their participation in the cooperative business. We encourage vigilance against such actions and support renewed educational efforts to preserve the critical cooperative principles that have served American farmers and others in rural America for more than two (2) centuries.
7. Wisconsin Farmers Union opposes co-ops joining legal defense fund schemes to avoid full equity payment to co-op patrons. Wisconsin Farmers Union encourages co-ops to follow the 1922 federal law, the Capper Volstead require Act, co-ops pay back a minimum of 20% of earnings as cash to members for a given fiscal year.

## **CONDUCTING COOPERATIVE BUSINESS**

1. Member-owners should take an interest in the business operation of their cooperatives and should attend annual meetings to receive directors' and management reports and holding the Board of Directors responsible to represent the best interests of members.
2. Members of boards of directors should be elected from among the members; persons carefully selected who have sound business judgment, Wisconsin Farmers Union philosophy and who will not use their position for personal advantage. Ideally, the elective process assumes more than one (1) candidate for each position. We recommend patrons consider elected nominating or candidate search committees.
3. Directors should set policy and direction for the cooperative. Managers should be charged with the responsibility of managing day-to-day operations. To ensure that directors of cooperatives are responsible to their member- patrons, only member-patrons should be involved in the selection and election of directors. Delegates representing co-op members must be regular voting members of that cooperative and should be elected by the members. Executive compensation at producer coops should be based on the level of returns to producer members.
4. Several larger cooperatives have adopted bylaws that allow managers to acquire directorial status and voting rights on the cooperative board. Core cooperative principles require that directors of co-

ops are the “producers at risk,” and the managers serve an advisory role. Grassroots control of cooperatives is lost when non-producers serve as directors. The direction and purpose of cooperatives can be changed considerably when “at risk” members no longer guide the co-op. Wisconsin Farmers Union opposes proposals to allow local or regional managers or other non-producers to become voting directors.

5. In light of the growing trend of consolidation and mergers among manufacturers of farm inputs such as seed, fertilizer, and implements, Wisconsin Farmers Union calls for all member-driven and -controlled cooperatives to place pressure and influence on manufacturers of farm inputs to reduce their level of profitability at the expense of farmers.
6. Either spouse should be able to represent the family farm in voting at cooperative meetings.
7. Wisconsin Farmers Union is opposed to a cooperative forming a public corporation in order to sell stock on Wall Street as a means to raise capital. This is a departure from cooperative principles. We oppose the regional cooperatives leasing or purchasing property from local cooperatives and delivering products directly to local co-op patrons. We are opposed to undemocratic trends in cooperatives including corporatization and managerialization of cooperatives.
8. Wisconsin Farmers Union affirms the value of transparency in the carrying out of cooperative business. Wisconsin Farmers Union discourages the practice of cooperatives prohibiting board members from publicly expressing a dissenting opinion on matters of concern to the cooperative.
9. Wisconsin Farmers Union urges systematic retirement of patronage stock, so the capital requirements of co-ops are provided by the current member-users of the co-op.
10. Wisconsin Farmers Union opposes a rebate system based on purchase volume.

### **COOPERATIVE FINANCING**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the current 50% membership criteria for CoBank borrowers. We oppose any effort of CoBank to lend money to non-cooperative agribusiness.

Wisconsin Farmers Union urges the government to initiate federal funding programs along the lines of the original REA program to assist farmers in forming value-added cooperatives.

### **CREDIT UNIONS**

Wisconsin Farmers Union encourages the organization and growth of credit unions. We oppose any effort to impose a tax on member-owned non-profit credit unions. We support maintaining the National Credit Union Share Insurance Fund as a separate and independent agency from other federal deposit insurance systems. We support the right of all Americans to choose how and where they deposit their earnings and transact their personal financial business.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports any change in credit union structure to a bank must be made by a majority vote of its membership.

### **COOPERATIVE MERGERS AND CONSOLIDATION**

Retaining local cooperatives is the last hope of survival for many communities. Wisconsin Farmers Union urges local cooperatives to consider sharing services. We encourage the formation of new umbrella cooperatives formed by existing cooperatives for the purpose of bulk purchases or sharing services.

We oppose joint ventures or mergers between cooperatives and multinational corporations that diminish member control over the cooperative.

### **COOPERATIVE AFFILIATIONS**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports and promotes the expansion of agricultural marketing, supply and service cooperatives on local, regional and national levels. We recommend that farmer-owned and -controlled cooperatives work together whenever and wherever possible to obtain more marketing and bargaining power for farmers. We encourage marketing cooperatives, especially in dairying, to continue their efforts toward the

creation of marketing agencies in common for the purpose of improving marketing efficiency and producer prices.

### ***BLOCK VOTING***

Because the “one person, one vote” principle upon which the individual democratic rights of this country were founded has been eroded by permitting block voting by cooperatives on behalf of their farmer-members, Wisconsin Farmers Union strongly supports repealing “block voting” provisions wherever they exist in cooperative America. Individual farmers need to be afforded an opportunity to disagree with their marketing cooperatives whose interest may differ from that of the farmer.

### ***OUTSOURCING PRODUCT***

Some regional cooperatives have begun buying or selling goods from outside interests that are normally sourced from members. Such examples include buying extra-territorial and sometimes distressed milk at prices well below prices paid to members, selling unbranded fuels to nonmember companies at lower prices than typically negotiated with member co-ops, and purchasing commodities from outside the United States for prices lower than those paid to members selling the same commodity.

These practices are often detrimental to co-op members and local co-ops. Such practices often result in undercutting members and local co-ops prices and eroding their position in the marketplace. Wisconsin Farmers Union strongly urges such cooperatives to curtail such practices and develop compensation formulas to ensure that those harmed by such initiatives be promptly compensated. Prompt compensation might involve cooperatives holding any additional income derived from such practices in escrow, and disbursing payments to its members within the same fiscal year.

### ***USDA COOPERATIVE DEVELOPMENT SERVICES***

The Cooperative Marketing Act of 1926 provides for a USDA program of research, technical assistance and educational programs on the cooperative form of business. Wisconsin Farmers Union supports revitalization of cooperative services programs in USDA, restoration of agency status, and support for cooperative specialists in rural development state offices.

### ***WISCONSIN COOPERATIVE LAW***

The Wisconsin State Legislature has passed legislation regarding a change in Wisconsin Cooperative Law, and this change undermines the Cooperative Principles. These changes allow 20% of cooperative board seats to be given to non-members, cooperative members lose the ability to review financial records older than five (5) years, and members of a cooperative holding company may lose the time-honored principle of one member one vote. Additionally, removal of the eight percent patronage dividend cap will prioritize outside investments and diminish the role of traditional member investments.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports educational efforts for cooperatives to resist implementing these changes in their own bylaws and operations. We support educational efforts for cooperatives to implement bylaws that restore member rights to access the records of their cooperatives.

## **VI. RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports rural development programs that benefit rural Wisconsin. We urge the direction of rural development initiatives to sustain and increase viability of family farms and rural businesses that will result in prosperous rural communities. Rural economic development is economic development for Wisconsin. Agriculture generates tens of billions of dollars per year for the Wisconsin economy and provides hundreds of thousands of jobs. We support state efforts to grow Wisconsin's rural economy.

### ***DEFINING DAIRY MODERNIZATION***

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the work of the state to assist family-sized dairy farms and businesses to be competitive in a rapidly changing marketplace. We call on state and federal policy makers to explore alternative sources of capital for growing Wisconsin dairy infrastructure while strengthening family farms and farmer-owned and controlled cooperatives. State programs dedicated to aiding dairy farmers and the dairy industry should consider that modernization is not simply about large-scale expansion.

### ***LOCAL AND REGIONAL FOOD SYSTEMS***

Wisconsin Farmers Union support efforts to grow, manufacture, and distribute agricultural products for local and regional food systems, which may include community-supported agriculture, local feed supplies and farmers' markets, as well as medium-scale value-chains that support close and just producer-consumer relationships. Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin grant program, which seeks to develop an infrastructure to support the distribution and consumption of Wisconsin-grown and -processed food in Wisconsin institutions and retail establishments. Wisconsin Farmers Union supports increasing funding and support for farmers' markets, including programs that enable customers to purchase produce from local farmers.

We also support well-funded hunger relief efforts that ensure adequate food access to all people, especially those that prioritized purchasing from Wisconsin producers at fair prices.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the Local Food and Market Supply Act (The "Local FARMS Act") passed in the 2018 Farm Bill. Wisconsin Farmers Union supports programs that help communities prosper through farm to fork investments and supports job creation by improving programs and policies that help grow local and regional food economies.

Furthermore, Wisconsin Farmers Union explicitly supports value-chain and food systems that help and protect all farmers and food workers, noting that BIPOC farmers and food workers face disproportionately hard challenges, socially, politically, and economically.

### ***LOCAL AND REGIONAL FIBER SYSTEMS***

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports developing regional and regenerative fiber systems on behalf of independent working producers, by expanding opportunities to implement carbon farming, forming catalytic foundations to rebuild regional manufacturing infrastructure and expertise, and through connecting end-users to farms and ranches through public education.

In order to create a robust network of local growers, dyers, mills, tanners, makers and retailers, Wisconsin Farmers Union supports transparent supply chains that go all the way to the soil. Much like in "slow food," fewer ingredients are better: an undyed wardrobe can embrace naturally colored wool, flax, or hemp, and can evolve over time with layers of natural dyes. Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the work of the existing Fibershed affiliates in the region and the creation of additional affiliates to fully represent the spectrum of fiber and textile producers throughout all of Wisconsin.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports developing an economy that no longer depends upon synthetic compounds for textiles, requiring us to focus collectively on profitable and ecologically beneficial alternatives – Local Fiber, Local Labor, Local Dye.

## ***PASTURE-BASED FARMS***

Pasture-based systems have many benefits that offer opportunity to family farms to continue and find renewed prosperity in the agricultural landscape including improved flexibility, diversification, growing and direct market appeal, fulfilling lifestyles, increased sustainability, and means of generational transfer as well as numerous environmental benefits. Wisconsin Farmers Union recognizes the promise and appeal of pasture-based agricultural systems and supports the formation of voluntary marketing, educational, and promotional programs for pasture-based systems that seek to increase consumer demand for pasture-raised products and prominence of these production systems in agriculture.

## ***VALUE-ADDED AGRICULTURE***

Many farmers are searching for ways to remain viable as agricultural producers. Adding value to commodities and capturing a greater portion of their market value has been shown to be an effective means of keeping many farms viable. Wisconsin Farmers Union supports programs that will provide planning grants to producers who are considering development of “value-added” marketing and/or processing enterprise on their farm. One such program is the Wisconsin Agriculture Development and Diversification (ADD) Grant, which provides small grants to help stimulate Wisconsin’s agricultural economy through the development or exploration of new products, markets or technologies. Further, Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the formation of cooperatives and other marketing structures to facilitate the marketing of value-added products.

## ***RIGHT TO FARM AND LIVESTOCK SITING***

Wisconsin Farmers Union believes in the right to farm, but not the right to pollute or to harm our neighbors’ rights. We call upon the Wisconsin legislature to preserve the current right to farm laws that protect family farmers in Wisconsin and the property rights of all. Wisconsin Farmers Union calls on the state to re-evaluate whether the Livestock Siting Board is the best system for balancing the protection of farmers’ rights with the rights of the community and the environment. Social and economic impacts should be major factors in the decision-making process for siting very large livestock operations. If the Livestock Siting Law is not able to meet these expectations, Wisconsin Farmers Union supports legislative action to ensure that state law helps keep family farmers in Wisconsin.

## ***RURAL TOURISM***

Tourism provides an economic bonus to rural areas. Family farmers stand to benefit by educating the urban public about farm lifestyles and issues, since they hold a unique position in our society. Wisconsin Farmers Union should seek opportunities to involve the organization and its members in efforts to promote and expand rural agriculture-tourism. Family farmers should share the benefit from the economic advantages of tourism. Farmer ties to tourists enlighten the non-farm public on important agriculture issues and their relationship to the greater culture and economy. Wisconsin Farmers Union supports a state program to provide aid in maintaining barns, silos, and other traditional farm buildings.

## ***AGRICULTURAL TOURISM***

The Wisconsin Farmers Union supports funding in order to assist farmers in offering value added specialty agricultural tourism experiences to their farms.

Wisconsin Act 73 (SB 268) presents an unprecedented attack on the livelihoods of small- and mid-sized Wisconsin farmers and decimates a growing segment of Wisconsin’s agricultural tourism industry — “wedding barns” — by incorrectly expanding the long-standing definition of “public places” to include privately-owned event venues and restricting such venues to either operating as a tavern / pub with a Class-B liquor licensing or to operating on no more than six (6) days per year and a maximum of one (1) day per month.

Wisconsin Farmers Union calls for lawmakers to remove regulator changes affecting Wisconsin’s wedding barn industry. Support future legislation (Trailer Bills) that will correct the unnecessary/ unconstitutional regulation of the “Wisconsin Wedding Barn Industry” Agricultural event venue on working farms.



## **LOCAL CONTROL**

A number of important issues currently facing farmers and rural residents, including livestock siting, wind turbine siting, sand mine siting, telecommunication towers single-use plastics, and water quality and quantity, are inherently issues of local concern. Local units of government (towns and counties) are better able than state or federal governments to tailor their policies to fit local conditions and preferences. In addition, citizens are closest to and therefore most able to monitor and influence the activities of their local unit's government.

Wisconsin Farmers Union urges local units of government to make full use of their zoning, planning, and taxation authority to better protect citizen health, safety, and welfare. State aid to local units of government should be increased in order to support these functions.

Wisconsin Farmers Union opposes state and federal preemption of local government authority except when the need for preemption has been clearly demonstrated.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports state, county and local governments to reduce restrictions on all farms offering agricultural tourism experiences building retail centers and holding events.

Wisconsin Farmers Union encourages citizens to become actively engaged in local government affairs.

## **MAINTENANCE OF ROADS AND HIGHWAYS**

### **FAIR SHARE FOR LOCAL ROADS**

Local roads are the backbone for Wisconsin commerce and industry, stimulate growth and promote a healthy economy. The percentage of state transportation funds devoted to local road projects is shrinking. The overall size of the state Transportation Fund is also shrinking because motorists are driving less, driving more fuel-efficient cars, buying fewer gallons of gasoline, and paying less in gasoline taxes. Local governments are subject to tight levy limits on local levies, and state shared revenue has been cut for local governments, which further restricts the local governments' ability to fund local road maintenance. For these reasons, Wisconsin Farmers Union supports an amendment to the State of Wisconsin constitution that requires that one half (1/2) of all revenues in the state Transportation Fund be distributed to local governments in the state of Wisconsin.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the following options for increasing funding for road projects: general fund/income tax, gas tax, vehicle registration fees based on gross vehicle weight, local sales taxes, new vehicle tax, and local wheeltaxes.

### **LOCAL CONTROL OVER ROAD FUNDING OPTIONS**

Based on the fact that local governments know their transportation priorities better than the state and federal government, Wisconsin Farmers Union supports giving local governments the authority to design policies that address the unique transportation challenges in their communities. This would include the authority to raise the funds necessary to keep their infrastructure in place. Wisconsin Farmers Union also supports changing regulations so that local governments have the flexibility to pursue realistic options that fit within their budget.

### **SEASONAL WEIGHT LIMITS FOR AGRICULTURAL OPERATIONS**

Given current debates in Wisconsin regarding overweight manure hauling, Wisconsin Farmers Union should be a leader in the discussion to find an equitable, negotiated solution to support family farmers and the farm supply and contracted services businesses, while at the same time respecting the common pool resources of municipalities and communities, such as roads and other infrastructure.

Because of the time frame in which farmers can get their manure pits empty in the fall of the year, and because of the length and weight of tractors, trucks, and tankers, Wisconsin Farmers Union approves a fall seasonal weight limit for manure similar to the fall weight limit for crops, such that manure hauling equipment can be 15% overweight between September 10 to November 30.

**IRRIGATION ORDINANCE**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports policies that would prohibit irrigator end guns to spray over or onto any public paved roads, graded roads, or trails.

***WINERY AND CIDER-HOUSE HOURS AND SAMPLES***

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports lifting the current 9 PM limit for winery and cider-house hours, and supports granting tasting rooms the ability to sample and sell wines and ciders made by other producers.

## **VII. QUALITY OF LIFE IN AMERICA**

### ***GENDER AND MINORITY EQUALITY***

Wisconsin Farmers Union recognizes the important role of women and minorities in agriculture as farmers and ranchers and supports gender and minority equality in all aspects of agricultural and rural life. Wisconsin Farmers Union advocates that all local, state, and federal farm programs and agencies, as well as Wisconsin Farmers Union, operate without assumptions of roles in farm ownership, operation, and participation, and that proper notification and documentation within these programs and agencies occur without regard to race, color, religion, creed, national origin, ancestry, gender, gender expression, sexual orientation, family/parental status, age, disability, socio-economic or military status.

### ***CIVILITY AND INCLUSION IN CIVIC LIFE***

As members of Wisconsin Farmers Union, we pledge to have respect for people of all abilities, beliefs, cultures, races, age, and sexual and gender identities. We support teaching inclusion and inter-group relations in our schools and our communities. We call upon all of us at all levels of society to speak up and never accept or allow hate speech or acts.

Wisconsin Farmers Union commits to policies and practices of gender, disability, and racial justice and recognizes our responsibility to address the complex structural inequities to create equitable outcomes for all.

#### **CIVICS EDUCATION SUPPORT**

Our country is divided in many different areas in understanding the principles of a democratic society. We have different understandings of what our Constitution says and especially what it means, and we have different understandings of historical events and people.

Wisconsin Farmers Union is dedicated to the work of trying to break down these barriers and differences through efforts of coming together to talk and to listen to others with different life experiences and with different values.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports a greater emphasis on civics and history in school curricula.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports educational programs such as an exchange between urban and rural youth.

### ***IMMIGRATION REFORM***

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the reform of United States immigration law by the United States Congress impacting all immigrants (documented and undocumented), guest workers, asylum-seekers, and children of undocumented immigrants. The United States of America has long been a beacon of justice and inclusion in the world. In welcoming immigrants to our country, we reinforce our long-time commitment to the human rights of workers.

1. Wisconsin Farmers Union supports fair immigration reform including paths to citizenship for immigrants and children of immigrants. The inclusion of immigrants in the census process, and the state and federal tax structure is needed.
2. Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the development of a workable permanent guest worker program. The current H2A is not intended for non-seasonal employment. Operations such as dairy farms rely on workers year-round and need a guest worker program to support employment for longer than a season at a time. Currently millions of essential workers cannot return home for wedding, funerals, or graduation of loved ones because they will be barred from re-entering the country. Visa reform is essential and just. Addressing the labor needs of United States agricultural producers must include the role of guest workers in our country's agricultural work force.
3. Wisconsin Farmers Union supports driver licensing for guest workers and immigrants.

4. Wisconsin Farmers Union supports regular public education of immigrant children, which will make them responsible contributing members of society.
5. Meeting the basic health-care needs of all immigrants (and all U.S. residents in general) reduces the overall cost of healthcare to society.

### **MASS INCARCERATION AND RURAL PRISONS**

Wisconsin Farmers Union recognizes that prisons have become a growing presence on the rural landscape in the last 50 years, and the social inequities, such as race and class, that exist within that system.

Wisconsin Farmers Union recognizes that the development of prisons is not an economically viable nor socially just means of fixing the structural problems of rural and agricultural economies, nor do higher incarceration rates and punitive justice systems solve the structural problems of the urban areas and communities most affected by mass incarceration.

Wisconsin Farmers Union recognizes that committing to policies and practices of racial justice means addressing and reforming our criminal justice system.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports safe and socially just means of ending mass incarceration in the state, such as criminal justice reform, appropriate alternatives to incarceration (such as education/training and drug and health treatment), post- incarceration systems that provide former inmates the adequate support to transition to civilian life, and public investment strategies that will prevent incarceration (such as education, public transport, accessible health care, and living wages).

### **EDUCATION**

Wisconsin Farmers Union believes in adequate and equal education opportunities for all and an educational system that will deal effectively with the growing stigma of illiteracy in our nation. We believe that it is a shared responsibility of local, state, and national government to finance our schools. We support state government funding of 90% special education and increasing revenue limits to keep pace with inflation. We support efforts to remove the major portion of school funding from the property tax that was never intended to support the burden of education. Wisconsin Farmers Union urges state government to provide not less than 66% of the funding needed by local school districts. Wisconsin Farmers Union is opposed to public school funds going to support independent charter schools and vouchers for private schools. We favor the continuation and expansion of federal programs to provide financial assistance to qualified students in higher education and vocational training.

Wisconsin Farmers Union calls on the Wisconsin Legislature to reverse all provisions within 2017 Act 59 (the 2017-19 Biennial budget) and any related legislation that reduces, eliminates, or circumvents minimum educational qualification of a bachelor's degree to obtain licensure to teach in Wisconsin schools.

#### **EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the four-year old kindergarten program and the Student Achievement Guarantee in Education (SAGE) program that provide funds for early childhood education and reduced class size.

#### **AGRICULTURE EDUCATION**

Every child needs a baseline understanding of where their food and fiber come from. There is a severe disconnect between current agriculture educational offerings and actual and future agriculture market conditions and opportunities. Renewable energy opportunities, lack of affordable land access, rising equipment and input costs, and changing climate conditions have resulted in a new market in which current educational offerings simply do not adequately prepare producers, nor inform consumers.

Wisconsin Farmers Union encourages schools to add (or maintain) agriculture curricula as part of their course offerings. In addition, we support agricultural extracurricular and inter-curricular activities at the high school

and collegiate levels.

New and beginning farmers will require enhanced education on how to produce and market their product to compete in a concentrated agricultural market in which non-subsidized farm income has seen a decrease over the past decades. Agricultural education offers a broad array of knowledge and skills, most of which are readily applicable to other career paths. Due to evolving market demands surrounding social, economic, and environmental sustainability, producers who use a holistic approach to agriculture will hold a long-term competitive advantage.

Wisconsin Farmers Union will collaborate with various allied organizations to urge policy makers to find and create funding opportunities for public education institutions to increase education surrounding sustainable agriculture practices.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports maintaining the policy of allowing certain agriculture courses, as approved by the Department of Public Instruction, to count as science credits to be applied to state requirements for high school graduation.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports every effort to continue and expand educational programs supportive of family farm agriculture and rural communities. We encourage educators to consider innovative approaches to family agriculture, including organic, value-added, and sustainable agriculture.

### **NATIONAL FARMERS UNION (NFU) EDUCATION**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports NFU's efforts to educate the public, consumers, and policy makers about issues of family agriculture. Wisconsin Farmers Union urges the NFU to expand its programs such as the Farmer's Share information that it so successfully puts together.

### **CHILDCARE**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports safe, engaging, readily available, and affordable daycare, after school care, and summer care.

Wisconsin Farmers Union advocates for governmental policies, that ensure that each Wisconsin child can receive high quality childcare.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports policies which facilitate caregivers receiving appropriate compensation and being able to develop career paths.

## ***NUTRITION***

### **SCHOOL MILK**

Studies show a large percentage of children in the United States are calcium deficient. Nine (9) out of ten (10) teenage girls and seven (7) out of ten (10) teenage boys do not get enough calcium in their diet. Less than half of all children age six (6) to eleven (11) consume the recommended amount of milk.

USDA must retain cow's milk as the beverage qualifying for reimbursable school meal programs. Because less than 60% of public and private schools participate in the state funded program, Wisconsin Farmers Union members encourage greater participation by local schools in the Wisconsin School Day Milk Program by having the state fully fund the program. Wisconsin Farmers Union supports efforts to make school milk r-BST free. We support the installation of milk vending machines in all schools. Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the inclusion of whole milk in the school milk program.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports having traditional milk as well as the availability of a nutritionally equivalent milk alternative beverage to all school children.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports making available to children who are lactose intolerant an A2A2 certified milk, should research show it to be effective.

## **UNIVERSAL BREAKFAST PROGRAM**

Studies prove that a student that eats breakfast performs better academically and has better behavior. Wisconsin Farmers Union supports a nutritious, low sugar Universal Breakfast Program. Wisconsin **ranked 50<sup>th</sup>** in the country in the number of schools that participated in the School Breakfast Program in SY 2018-2019 (last year of data collection). Wisconsin Farmers Union supports programs that source local products for school breakfast programs, when local sourcing is not possible USDA commodities must be provided for school breakfast programs.

## **SNACK MILK PROGRAM**

Wisconsin Farmers Union urges the USDA to provide a snack program that includes milk or dairy products.

## **GOVERNMENT NUTRITION PROGRAMS**

Wisconsin Farmers Union calls upon state and federal lawmakers to fully fund programs that provide locally produced foods to school cafeterias and government nutrition programs, including state institutions.

Specifically, we call upon the Wisconsin Legislature and DATCP to fund the DATCP Farm to School Grant Program to support schools in procuring Wisconsin grown and raised foods and the development of local food supply chains in Wisconsin. Following the passage of **2009 Wisconsin Act 293**, these grants have never been funded.

In addition, Wisconsin Farmers Union supports full reinstatement of the dairy portion of the Women, Infants and Children program (WIC).

Wisconsin Farmers Union calls on the USDA to expand funding and programs for nutrition for the elderly.

Wisconsin Farmers Union calls on the USDA to protect critical investments in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) at a time of rising food prices and food insecurity. Wisconsin Farmers Union supports expanding supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP) coverage to include subscriptions to CSAs and on-farm sales of produce.

## **SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAM**

Wisconsin Farmers Union calls upon the state of Wisconsin and USDA to re-write or pass legislation required to provide nutritious meals following the National School Lunch Program's (NSLP) guidelines at no cost to all students and families, regardless of household income. Investments in school meal infrastructure should include procurement, preparation, and service of local foods via farm-to-school networks, scratch-cooking resources, and increased wages and benefits for foodservice employees. Efforts in this regard remain in conjunction with the Wisconsin Healthy School Meals for All Coalition.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports programs that source local products for school lunch. Wisconsin Farmers Union calls upon the USDA to mandate that all foods and commodities used in the School Lunch Program (and other federally subsidized school nutrition programs) contain only products and ingredients certified as safe under FDA's safety program.

Meals described in this section should be free for all non-voucher public k-12 students.

## **FAST FOOD INDUSTRY**

While Wisconsin Farmers Union appreciates the efforts of the fast-food industry to offer nutritious meals to their customers, we call upon the industry to provide higher quality, nutritionally packed meal items. Nutritionally deprived diets lead to higher levels of obesity and chronic disease. Further, we call upon the fast-food industry to purchase raw commodities from local producers.

## **COUNTY PROGRAMS**

### **COUNTY EXTENSION PROGRAMS**

As a land-grant institution, the University of Wisconsin (UW) has a long history of providing education to its citizens, as articulated in the Wisconsin Idea: “the borders of the state are the borders of the university.” Users of the University of Wisconsin Extension (UWEX) Program want county UWEX programs to be effective. However, county governments are increasingly limited in providing funding for extension programs due to decreasing tax returns and additional spending burdens that have arisen due to cuts at the state level. In addition, some county boards have lost sight of the usefulness of UWEX programs in their counties because of their unfamiliarity with the program. Therefore, Wisconsin Farmers Union strongly urges the state legislature and the governor to take action to increase funding levels for university extension programs so that county governments are not expected to bear the majority of the costs.

### **COUNTY FAIR PROGRAMS**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the full funding of county and state fair premiums by the state of Wisconsin and the creation of a statewide fair coordinator position within the DATCP.

### **RESEARCH**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports research and education within the University of Wisconsin (UW) that is balanced – supporting the interests of family farms as well as agribusiness. UW research, extension and university educational curricula must not support the interests of agribusiness at the expense of family farmers. Wisconsin Farmers Union calls on the UW education and research community to develop and address the needs of family farmers and rural communities including the following issues.

#### **DAIRY ECONOMICS**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports research that examines the flow of money within the Wisconsin dairy economy; alternatives to federal dairy policy; potential state action to enhance the profitability of Wisconsin dairy farmers and processors; and recommendations for dairy policy changes that would enhance the viability of Wisconsin dairy farms.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports filling a position at the center for dairy profitability that will support the dairy farm benchmark system.

#### **VALUE-ADDED AGRICULTURE**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports efforts to document the existing value-added producers in Wisconsin and their contribution to the Wisconsin agriculture economy. Wisconsin Farmers Union supports research that develops alternative processing methods for small scale and on-farm processing and explores alternative products from Wisconsin commodities.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports examining the feasibility of changing regulations and zoning ordinances that inhibit small scale and on-farm production and sale of finished food products.

#### **CENTER FOR INTEGRATED AGRICULTURAL SYSTEMS (CIAS)**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the work of the UW Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems (CIAS) and encourages the continued funding of the Center. CIAS is one of the few programs at the UW that focuses on the needs of the diverse farm-sized structure in Wisconsin and the diverse crops and products produced.

#### **HEALTH CARE RESEARCH AND ADVOCACY**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports efforts among college and University of Wisconsin campuses, departments, schools and supportive advocacy or charity organizations to collaborate in constructing a comprehensive solution to the problems of access to and affordability of health care. Wisconsin Farmers Union calls upon members of these entities to provide leadership in clearly articulating the principles of a comprehensive solution, to correct public misinformation and work with lawmakers and public leaders to facilitate the adoption of a structure for health care system that would serve all Wisconsin residence.

#### **HEMP**

Wisconsin Farmers Union joins all major agricultural associations in Wisconsin in supporting cultivation of

hemp and in adopting means to promote its infrastructure development and encourages university research to improve crop varieties and cultivation and processing techniques and to develop new end-uses for hemp.

### **GRAZING RESEARCH**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the creation of more intensive grazing research facilities in active and retired research facilities. Forage research in the state should also include the research needs of small to medium size rotational grazing as well as larger farms that may focus more on stored forages. Wisconsin Farmers Union supports research on the nutritional composition of milk, meat, and poultry from intensive grazing systems.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports extensive funding for research on the integration of grazing systems and solar installations.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative, which provides funding for grazing education and helps farmers develop managed grazing plans.

### **FARM-BASED ENERGY**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports research on farm-based energy, including small-scale anaerobic digesters, biofuels, and energy crops for biomass and biofuels.

### **LESS HARMFUL PESTICIDES**

In light of the deleterious effects that pesticides (insecticides, fungicides, herbicides, and fumigants) have on pollinators, natural enemies, and other beneficial insects, Wisconsin Farmers Union supports research that would reduce or eliminate the need for these pesticides, promote the development of pesticides that target only insects detrimental to crop health, and supports beneficial insect communities.

### **CLIMATE CHANGE**

A bold proposal to transform our society is needed to address the effects of climate change, to ensure food security, a healthy landscape, climate mitigation, and to attain a prosperous rural America through a strong family farm system of agriculture.

Findings in the Sixth Assessment Report of the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change indicate that to avoid the worst potential impacts of climate change, urgent action is needed to reduce carbon emissions, and is described by UN Secretary-General António Guterres as a "code-red for humanity". These changes in climate may also have adverse impacts on Wisconsin agriculture by increasing erosion from extreme rain events, hampering access to fields at critical times, stimulating the spread of plant disease and weed dominance, and causing alterations in late-winter freeze/thaw cycles.

Farmers are on the front line of climate change and, along with an already brutal farm economy driven by agricultural consolidation and the rising costs of inputs, unpredictable weather patterns pose yet another challenge to farmers fighting to survive.

Farmers' livelihoods are tied to the weather, leaving farmers especially vulnerable to changes in climate caused by greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Farmers are also in a unique position to mitigate the impacts of GHG and adapt to changing climate by:

- reducing GHG already in the atmosphere through sequestering carbon;
- investing in perennial crops and cover crops that can hold soil in place especially on land vulnerable to soil erosion during extreme precipitation events;
- employing no-till practices;
- utilizing rotational grazing;
- contributing field level data on the impacts of extreme weather on production, such as early spring impacts, seasonal drought conditions, and insect patterns; and
- leading the business community in energy alternatives to conventional electricity production.



Wisconsin Farmers Union encourages farmers to participate in partnerships with climate researchers to understand how farmers can anticipate and adapt to climate change most effectively and engage in beneficial mitigation strategies.

Wisconsin Farmers Union urges the Wisconsin State Legislature and Congress to expand existing programs or develop new legislation to address climate change consistent with the following:

- Appoint a Climate Change Rural Task Force to inform and articulate an agricultural and rural plan in the emerging climate legislative platform. Farmers must have a meaningful seat at the table.
- Expand and support appropriations for existing USDA programs such as Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) for using marginal farmland that is better served in mitigating climate change, the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), and Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) that focus on building soil health without placing additional regulatory burdens on farmers.
- Support and expand programs like USDAs Rural Energy for America Program (REAP).
- Support programs like USDA Climate Hubs
- Direct USDA to develop a labeling system that informs consumers of food and other consumer goods that are carbon intensive in their production and manufacturing process.
- Pass legislation aligned with the recommendations in the final report of the 2020 Wisconsin State Task Force on Climate Change.
- Enact legislation that would facilitate family farmer participation in carbon credit markets, such as the Growing Climate Solutions Act, that pays a reasonable rate to incentivize farmers to participate.
- If carbon credit markets are enacted, ensure they are fair and provide resources for farmers who have historically enacted carbon-storing practices and provide benefits to farms of all sizes.
- Support Carbon Pricing legislation, such as the Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act.
- Wisconsin Farmers Union calls on Congress to end the annual fossil fuel production subsidy and shift that money towards regenerative and conservation farming practices.

## **YOUTH FARM SAFETY TRAINING**

Wisconsin Farmers Union encourages adequate funding and the use of online training and in person testing for the Youth Tractor and Machinery Safety Certification Program. This is intended to address the shortage of teachers and the lack of adequate funding.

## **HEALTH CARE**

### **COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM OF HEALTH CARE**

Wisconsin Farmers Union members believe that access to quality health care including mental health care should be a right of all people rather than a privilege. Wisconsin Farmers Union supports a comprehensive single-payer universal healthcare system which offers affordable and accessible health care for all.

Wisconsin Farmers Union rejects healthcare products that are designed as if they were insurance products, those of which operate outside Federal regulations of ACA and state regulations for health insurance and healthcare providers.

### **EXPANDED MEDICARE**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports expanding Medicare coverage to include medications, medical transportation and expansion of home-based health care for the elderly and disabled. Rural health care resources should receive comparable public reimbursement in comparison with urban counterparts.

Wisconsin Farmers Union opposes any and all privatization of Medicare or payment limitation subsidy and advocates for increasing and/or expanding the payroll withholding tax (FICA) rate to assure the Medicare trust fund remains solvent.

### **CONTROLLING PRESCRIPTION DRUG COSTS**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports efforts to empower Medicare and Medicaid to negotiate with pharmaceutical companies for lower drug prices for Medicare and Medicaid patients and also make those lower drug prices available to Americans with private health insurance. The maximum price for any negotiated drug should be in line with average global prices. We also support efforts to ensure retail pharmacies make all prescription medications available for purchase, including branded and generic drugs.

### **HEALTH INSURANCE EXCHANGE**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the development and implementation of a health care exchange in Wisconsin to increase competition in the market and provide consumers increased information and a wider choices of insurance plans. The exchange should be overseen by an independent, non-partisan board. Companies with 100 or fewer employees should be mandated to participate in the exchange in order to create a large pool, for the benefit of all consumers. The exchange shall provide full, “apple-to-apples” comparisons of all policy components, including but not limited to, co-pay and deductibles, co-insurance, preventive care coverage, and pre-existing conditions.

### **HEALTH (OR MEDICAL) SAVINGS ACCOUNTS (HSA)**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports affordable and available health insurance for all individuals regardless of age, gender, ethnicity or preexisting conditions. Wisconsin Farmers Union supports insurance policies of community rating where all individuals share in the cost and risks of health insurance. Health Savings Accounts (HSAs), as currently designed, provide an incentive for those who are younger and healthier to ‘opt out’ of traditional health insurance pools thereby raising health insurance rates for those remaining in the pool. Wisconsin Farmers Union opposes HSAs as an adequate solution to reforming the health care system.

### **TAX DEDUCTIBILITY FOR HEALTH INSURANCE**

Wisconsin Farmers Union urges the IRS to allow farmers to use their health insurance as a deduction on their schedule F form, rather than a tax credit on the 1040 form.

### **MEDICAID**

Wisconsin Farmers Union calls upon the federal government to fully fund Medicaid so that Wisconsin receives equitable reimbursement and opposes Medicaid moving to block grant status. Wisconsin Farmers Union calls for the state of Wisconsin to apply Medicaid eligibility at least to 138% of poverty level, and to accept all available Federal funds in order to do so.

### **COMMUNITY PARAMEDICS AND EMERGENCY MEDICAL TECHNICIAN (EMT)**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the Community Paramedic and EMT approach as an option for municipal governments to pursue in order to better serve their rural residents in hard-to-reach areas. Wisconsin Farmers Union also believes that the Wisconsin legislature and private companies in the health care industry should treat Community Paramedics and EMTs as covered providers that are eligible for reimbursement by insurance companies for the services that Community Paramedics and EMTs provide.

### **PREVENTION OF AGRICULTURAL WORKER SUICIDE**

According to the Wisconsin Suicide Prevention Strategy report (2015), “individuals aged 45-54 were at greatest risk of dying by suicide. Nearly four (4) out of five (5) persons who died by suicide were male, while approximately three (3) out of five (5) patients hospitalized for self-inflicted injury were women.” Physical health and job problems were life stressors involved in 23% and 21% of suicides with known causes. The 2018 Farm Bill re-authorized the Farm and Ranch Stress Relief Network, allocating \$10 million in annual funding until 2023 to address training for behavioral specialists for farmers, and the establishment of hotlines. Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the full funding of the Farm and Ranch Stress Relief Network and all similar programs that support suicide prevention.

## **BADGERCARE AND BADGERCARE PUBLIC OPTION**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports legislation to create a public option to buy into BadgerCare, available to any resident of Wisconsin no matter their income. Wisconsin Farmers Union advocates for the inclusion of the BadgerCare public option on the Healthcare.gov marketplace, thereby allowing Wisconsin residents to apply federal premium subsidies to make health insurance even more affordable. Wisconsin Farmers Union opposes cuts to funding and/or more restrictive eligibility requirements, including work requirements, for Medicaid and BadgerCare Plus.

Wisconsin Farmers Union urges the governor, state legislature and Wisconsin Department of Health Services to pursue a Medicaid strategy that:

- a. Prioritizes maintaining eligibility for the largest possible number of residents, opting for modest premium and copay increases rather than wholesale exclusion of participants;
- b. Maintains service delivery centers throughout the state, and not just online, recognizing that many rural residents lack access to high-speed internet;
- c. Leverages all available federal dollars to support Medicaid programs, including the immediate acceptance of the federal Medicaid expansion funding provided through the Affordable Care Act.
- d. Incorporates a methodology that recognizes the fluctuating annual income levels that are characteristic of farming and other self-employment.

## **CANNABIS**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the legalization and substantial taxation of cannabis in the state of Wisconsin under the following conditions:

1. Growers are required to obtain a permit.
2. Each grower is limited to growing no more than a specific number of plants and/or acres.
3. Restrictions on who may grow cannabis in the state of Wisconsin are consistent with Wisconsin State Statute 182 (Wisconsin's Anti-Corporate Farming Law).

Wisconsin Farmers Union recommends that the state retroactively expunge nonviolent convictions related to cannabis.

## **RURAL ACCESS TO TECHNOLOGY AND INFORMATION**

### **TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND BROADBAND ACCESS**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports efforts and regulation to reduce concentration and assure competition in the marketplace for telecommunications, including mobile phones and mobile internet, as well as high-speed broadband access for rural Americans. Wisconsin Farmers Union supports classifying internet service as a public utility to safeguard internet neutrality, to ensure a well-informed public with full access to information. Wisconsin Farmers Union supports public- private efforts that ensure adequate and affordable high speed broadband access to all households and small businesses in Wisconsin.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the use of taxpayer dollars to provide monetary incentives to broadband developers provided they guarantee 30 mbps download speeds and five (5) mbps upload speeds to household customers and enforce no data caps now or in the future.

Furthermore, Wisconsin Farmers Union supports, for the purpose of facilitating timely improvement of service and efficient use of taxpayer funds, first consideration be given to reclamation bids for existing cable or phone systems before funding new installations.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports removing burdensome regulations, such as a three (3) year feasibility study, on municipalities desiring to provide internet service.

## **NET NEUTRALITY**

On December 14, 2017, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) voted on a rule change that could threaten net neutrality, the principle that internet service providers must treat all data on the internet the same – not speeding up, slowing down, or blocking any content, applications, or website.

In the absence of net neutrality, internet service providers could block, slow down, or charge users' money for specific websites and online content. An example of this would be Verizon charging users more to use the Google search engine, since Verizon owns Yahoo, and would likely prefer consumers use it, instead.

In an age where high speed internet is essential to education, lower-income citizens will not be able to afford access to the same information as higher-income citizens. Marginalized groups, who depend on the internet to get their message out or connect with each other may be silenced or blocked. Essentially, the privatization of the internet is a civil rights issue.

For farmers and rural residents, net neutrality would compound an already glaring issue – rural broadband access and service provider monopolies. According to the FCC, roughly 710,000 people in rural Wisconsin lack access to higher download speeds. In areas that do not have access to high-speed internet, the costs of service are often escalated. When only one (1) company offers internet service, they can charge more for less. While service providers in urban areas compete for customers, residents in rural areas often have to take what they can get. If net neutrality is repealed, rural residents may have to pay even more.

Net neutrality provides a level playing field for everyone. Freedom of information is what makes our society thrive as well as provides the opportunity for people to fix problems. If we are to continue to evolve as a civilization, we need to stand up to greed and corporate control.

Wisconsin Farmers Union strongly encourages the United States Congress to pass a Resolution of Disapproval under the Congressional Review Act (CRA), a vehicle to overturn the FCC's net neutrality repeal with a simple majority vote in both the Senate and House.

## **LIBRARIES**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports adequate funding for rural libraries. Wisconsin Farmers Union calls upon local, state and federal governments to renew their commitment to America's libraries. It is through a well-informed public that democracy is best served. Libraries provide access to information for all. Wisconsin Farmers Union opposes any efforts to cut funds for libraries. Funding for rural libraries, material for the blind and visually impaired must be restored. WFU encourages county payments under state statute 43.12 (1)(b) to be increased to 90% from the current level of 70%.

## **POSTAL SERVICE**

Wisconsin Farmers Union opposes changes in postal policy that will result in reduced, less frequent or inefficient mail service for rural areas or would result in increased postal rates. We oppose further privatization of the postal service.

## **SOCIAL SECURITY REFORM**

The current Social Security system is widely supported and has stood the test of time in providing for the needs of elderly and disabled people. Social Security must be a mandatory, universal system. Therefore, Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the maintenance of the public Social Security system and opposes efforts to replace Social Security with a private retirement program. In order to be viable and assure benefits far into the future, we support removing the \$128,400 cap on taxable income. We also support the Social Security system that provides funds for retirement and disability. We believe that the Social Security Trust Fund should be an independent fund, protected from being used by the federal government to meet other financial obligations.

## **SUPPORT FOR VETERANS' SERVICES**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports full funding of Veterans Administration programs to provide services to our veterans.

Wisconsin Farmers Union also supports maintaining the current network of County Veteran Support Officers (CVSOs) as called for in state statute (Chapter 45, Subchapter VIII, 45.80).

Wisconsin Farmers Union encourages DATCP to work with local, state, and national organizations that support veterans who wish to enter into agriculture, including supporting long-term grant funding through the Farm Bill.

### **CAMPAIGN FINANCING**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports legislation in Wisconsin and at the federal level that will provide for full public financing to candidates who agree not to accept special interest contributions and who agree to campaign spending limits. Wisconsin Farmers Union also supports consideration of the Maine model of campaign finance. The Maine model allows candidates to choose whether or not to accept public financing, and also assures publicly financed candidates a one-to-one match of funds raised by privately financed opponents. Publicly financed candidates under this system are required to receive a minimum number of small donations to qualify.

Wisconsin Farmers Union further supports legislation that requires reporting of contributions and disbursements by independent expenditure groups.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports a ban on political fundraising by members of the state legislature during state budget deliberation.

The United States Supreme Court's disastrous 2010 ruling in *Citizens United v. FEC* and 2014 ruling in *McCutcheon v. FEC* opened the doors to virtually unlimited campaign spending. Wisconsin Farmers Union calls upon the United States Congress to pass and send to the states for ratification a constitutional amendment reversing those decisions, and clarifying that corporations are not people and money is not speech, in order to reverse.

### **NONPARTISAN REDISTRICTING**

Both major political parties have gerrymandered Wisconsin voting districts to their advantage. Partisan redistricting leads to the creation of "safe districts" that favor incumbents and lean heavily toward one party, rather than districts that are conducive to competitive races and moderate candidates. This partisan approach to redistricting polarizes the political dialogue, disenfranchises the minority in a given district, and causes elections to be decided at the primary level.

Wisconsin Farmers Union believes that citizens' democratic right to vote is diminished and voter turnout is reduced when voters do not get to vote on competitive races or have meaningful choices at the polls. In November 2016, the United States District Court for the Western District of Wisconsin struck down Wisconsin's state legislative district maps on the grounds that they violated both the First Amendment and the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment because they deprived minority party voters of their right to be represented. The experience of the state of Iowa demonstrates that effective non-partisan redistricting is possible, and the Iowa model can serve as a model for Wisconsin.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the creation of a nonpartisan entity to perform all future redistricting for city, county, state, and federal offices in the state of Wisconsin. Such a commission should conduct redistricting according to logical geographical and jurisdictional boundaries, striving to keep communities of interest intact.

### **VOTING ACCESS AND RIGHTS**

#### **FELONY VOTING RIGHTS**

In Wisconsin, anyone convicted of a felony who has not yet completed the full terms of their sentence including incarceration, probation, supervision, and payment of fines is ineligible to vote. Recognizing that punitive fines and other forms of financial burdens placed upon convicted felons disproportionately impact people of color, people living in poverty, and other marginalized groups, Wisconsin Farmers Union supports voting rights to all Wisconsin citizens who are not currently incarcerated.

## **EXPANSION OF VOTING ACCESS**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the expansion of absentee ballots and vote-by-mail options in all state and federal elections. Further, Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the removal of physical and bureaucratic barriers to voting in all communities.

## **RANKED CHOICE VOTING**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the use of Ranked Choice Voting in Farmers Union board, federal, state, and local elections in order to better capture voters' intent and to encourage participation of third-party candidates.

## **REGULATING PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION (PSC) OF WISCONSIN**

Wisconsin Farmers Union advocates for a number of regulatory and legislative reforms of the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin that will strengthen the ethical safeguards and regulatory procedures of the PSC and strengthen the PSC's regulatory and consumer oversight of Wisconsin utility monopolies.

## **PUBLIC INTERVENOR**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports restoration of and state funding for the position of Public Intervenor.

## **NATIONAL FARMERS UNION INSURANCE**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the sale of National Farmers Union Insurance products in Wisconsin.

## **URBAN AGRICULTURE**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the adoption of local ordinances allowing agriculture use in all zoning districts. Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the adoption of local ordinances allowing for the building of small-scale farm infrastructure, such as hoop houses.

## **COMMON SENSE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports limiting the percentage of committees that can meet on any day or in any week, and the number of bills they can consider at one (1) meeting, so that legislators can attend the majority of their committee meetings, and fully vet the legislation in front of those committees.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports limiting the number of bills that can be considered on any floor session day or in any session week so that legislators have time to review all legislation they will be voting on.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports preventing committees from holding an executive session the same day as a floor session for that house, so that legislators can focus their attention on the bills they will consider on the floor.

## **WASTE MANAGEMENT**

Wisconsin Farmers Union recognizes that waste generation is a national problem while waste management is an inherently local problem borne by counties and municipalities. Currently, the cost of waste management is a burden on Wisconsin communities, with the result that many rural Wisconsin residents have limited access to solid waste and recycling. The best solution to local waste management begins with limiting national waste generation. Wisconsin Farmers Union supports manufacturing and consumer policy that emphasizes reducing, then reuse, then recycle, with solid waste management as a means to contain our evergrowing waste stockpiles.

### **WASTE GENERATION**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports policies which eliminate or reduce the waste generated that is passed onto the consumer, including national policy focusing on improvement of design of packaging material to reduce or eliminate the use of non-recyclable or difficult to recycle materials in consumer products.

### **PLASTICS**

The most difficult material to recycle is plastics. Even most "recycled" plastics still end up in a landfill when market conditions do not support their use. Wisconsin Farmers Union supports local and national policy to reduce or eliminate the use of non-recyclable and difficult to recycle plastic products.

## **WASTE MANAGEMENT**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the creation of waste management systems which emphasize reduce, then reuse, then recycle, then trash on the local, municipal scale in order to build a more unified community accountable for its own waste.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports counties and municipalities right to leverage the resources necessary to provide consistent waste management to all rural Wisconsin residents.

## **VIII. ECONOMICS AND THE FAMILY FARM**

### ***BEGINNING FARMER PROGRAMS***

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports state and federal policies—such as low interest loans, grants, and tax incentives—that provide adequate financing to help maintain Wisconsin’s family farm tradition and provide special assistance to beginning family farmers and minority farmers. Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the University of Wisconsin Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems’ School for Beginning Dairy and Livestock Farmers, School for Beginning Market Growers, Eco-Fruit Initiatives, Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship Program, and other similar programs. Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the maintenance and expansion of on-the-ground technical assistance for Wisconsin farmers through the UW Extension systems, DATCP and private consultants.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act and the inclusion of farming in the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program as an incentive to increase the number of beginning farmers.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports legislation that would forgive a portion of the student loans carried by new farmers in their first five (5) years of farming.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports state and federal policies focused on the availability of affordable agricultural lands for the expansion of existing farmers and the inclusion of beginning farmers. Based on the increased rate of investment and inflation of rural lands it is making it difficult for current family farms to expand as well and making it even more difficult for beginning farmers to begin. Wisconsin Farmers Union supports programs that encourage and incentivize transitions to young/beginning/BIPOC farmers.

Wisconsin Farmers Union urges the State of Wisconsin to set up a Beginning Farmer Tax Credit (BFTC) program providing the seller, a tax credit for the sale of livestock, land, or machinery to beginning farmers.

### ***FARM CREDIT***

Wisconsin Farmers Union recommends that the Farm Credit System (FCS) remain a viable source of agricultural credit and recommit itself to assisting family agriculture by restructuring loans, lowering interest rates and debt mediation procedures. As a growing number of commercial lenders eliminate their agriculture portfolios, and consolidation in the banking industry results in fewer borrowing options for farmers, the farm credit system should remain faithful to its original mission of serving the credit needs of the agricultural community. The FCS must continue to be owned by American agriculture and not be subject to foreign or non-agricultural ownership. We believe the Farm Service Agency (FSA) should effectively address beginning farmers’ credit needs.

### ***TAXATION***

Wisconsin Farmers Union reaffirms our position that taxes should be levied on the ability to pay. Tax reform should address itself to property tax relief. We favor maintaining the state’s share of public-school funding at 66% or higher. We call on the State to examine current spending and revenue-generating policies. We endorse the tax relief benefits under the Farmland Preservation and Homestead Credit programs, and support expanding these programs to provide property tax relief to more family farms. Reduce the age of eligibility down to 18 as was the case from 1947 to 2017. Increase the maximum annual credit amount to \$2500. Increase the maximum household income allowed for recipients to \$35,000.

Most family farmers do not have sufficient income to invest in retirement plans, since any income they have goes into sustaining and paying off their farms. Farmers’ cumulative investment in and funding of their farms should be considered as a retirement fund (such as a traditional IRA or Roth IRA) sheltered by state and federal tax laws.

### ***SHARED REVENUE TO MUNICIPALITIES***

Over the last 70 or 80 years, the state has required local governments to implement certain policies while only



funding a portion of its implementation. This is known as Revenue Sharing. Wisconsin Farmers Union opposes inadequate funding from the state to local municipalities for the services that the state directed the locals to implement. Wisconsin Farmers Union reaffirms its long-standing support for two-thirds (2/3) state funding for public education.

### **REAFFIRMATION OF THE FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS**

Wisconsin Farmers Union strongly supports local government. Wisconsin Farmers Union believes that our local government officials are fiscally responsible, and therefore do not believe it is necessary to enact a constitutional amendment to freeze property taxes at their existing level. Rather our state legislators and government officials should work to balance their budget by reviewing existing governmental spending and revenue sources.

### **CONSTITUTIONAL SPENDING LIMITS**

Wisconsin Farmers Union does not support the use of constitutional spending limits (also known as the “Taxpayer Bill of Rights”) as a deceptive and misnamed effort by some of the Wisconsin legislature to usurp local control and build power at the state level. The Wisconsin state constitution empowers local government to determine local affairs including the taxing of property. While recognizing the obligation of the state to support its portion of shared revenue and school funding, Wisconsin Farmers Union opposes any state legislative efforts or constitutional changes to limit local government’s ability to change the rate of taxation on property.

### **PRIVITIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS**

Privatization of government services such as schools, prisons, drinking water and wastewater treatment facilities and military services and one-time sales of public assets such as power plants is increasingly being promoted as a means to address immediate fiscal deficits. However, such strategies fail to solve the structural issues causing the deficits in the first place and end up costing taxpayers more in the long run.

Therefore, Wisconsin Farmers Union supports retention of public services in a judicious manner and opposes the privatization of deregulation of public services necessary for the well-being of the public good and society.

### **MINIMUM WAGE**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports an increase in the minimum wage, such that all individuals receive a living wage.

### **RURAL INCOME**

A guaranteed income program is a monthly cash payment to low-income families with no strings attached.- Wisconsin Farmers Union encourages the testing and evaluation of a Guaranteed Income Program in a rural Wisconsin setting.

### **NATIONAL AND STATE SALES TAX**

Wisconsin Farmers Union opposes a national sales tax.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports a state sales tax exemption on all items of agricultural production, including buildings, and calls for exempting fiber, flowers, Christmas trees, and other decorative trees, plants, or shrubs from state sales tax when produced and marketed by operations meeting the USDA definition of a small or mid-sized farm.

### **FEDERAL AND STATE ESTATE TAX**

In lieu of estate tax repeal, Wisconsin Farmers Union supports estate tax relief for family-owned farms, ranches, and small businesses in order to facilitate the transfer of those enterprises to the next generation. Wisconsin Farmers Union recommends that individual estates worth less than \$2 million (\$4 million for couples) be exempt from the estate tax, and that any portion of an estate that exceeds the exemption level be

subject to a 40% tax rate. Simplified exemption qualification rules and requirements should be created, along with the implementation of graduated tax rates.

Wisconsin Farmers Union opposes shifting tax liability from the estate tax to the capital gains tax through the elimination of the “step-up” in basis provisions.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the Wisconsin Estate Tax using the federal estate tax guidelines.

### **FEDERAL CORPORATE TAX RATES**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the following with regard to corporate tax rates:

- a. Federal and state corporate tax rates should be set at levels no less than those applied to individual income tax rates.
- b. Corporate tax credits applicable in federal and state taxes should be significantly reduced, such that tax credits are not greater than 10% of income before tax.
- c. Elimination of the Modified Accelerated Cost Recovery System and the 200% Declining Balance Method for accelerating depreciation. These systems allow corporations to abnormally reduce their taxable income, thereby putting a greater tax burden on individual income earners and smaller business entities.
- d. The total corporate tax burden in the United States should be comparable to the tax burden for corporations in other developed countries.

### **FEDERAL DEBT REDUCTION**

Wisconsin Farmers Union advocates for a “both sides of the coin” approach to reducing the federal deficit that includes both increasing federal revenue and decreasing federal spending. Specifically:

- a. Federal and state tax burdens should be shifted increasingly through steep progressive tax rate growth to wealthier income brackets, particularly for adjusted gross incomes of greater than \$250,000 per household and at rates federally no less than 38% applicable for adjusted gross income in excess of \$ 250,000.
- b. State and federal tax regulations should eliminate, or at least severely restrict, tax credits for income earners with adjusted gross incomes greater than \$250,000;
- c. State and federal tax regimes should restrict the payment of government benefits to households with adjusted gross income (AGI) greater than the national median income (which averaged \$53,046 between 2008 and 2012);
- d. Short-term capital gains taxes should be increased;
- e. To aid the Federal government in achieving debt reduction, Wisconsin Farmers Union supports a reduction in all government military spending.
- f. Wisconsin Farmers Union supports elimination of the Mining Depletion Allowance.

### **LIMITING SECTION 179 SINGLE-YEAR EXPENSING**

The Wisconsin Farmers Union calls for the federal government to reduce overall corporate welfare, including to farmers, to reduce the maximum allowable annual deduction under Sect. 179 of the IRS tax code, so that it more evenly benefits all users and farmers and stimulates a more even playing field among all farmers, and promotes a more equitable tax regime.

### **A FAIR AND FISCALLY SOUND FEDERAL TAX POLICY**

In response to 2017 Tax legislation, Wisconsin Farmers Union calls for either:

- a. Significant cuts in military spending to offset the proposed billions of dollars in lost tax revenue; or
- b. A reevaluation of the wisdom of deep income tax cuts. Wisconsin Farmers Union opposes cutting taxes if it will result in either cuts to bedrock government programs like Social Security, Medicare, or Medicaid, or deepening of the already-unsustainable federal deficit.

Wisconsin Farmers Union specifically supports taxing capital gains and dividends the same as other income. Wisconsin Farmers Union opposes the elimination of the deduction for state and local taxes on the federal tax return, because it would make overall tax collections less progressive. Wisconsin Farmers Union reaffirms the general principle of progressive taxation, with the wealthy paying a higher percentage of their income in taxes than the poor. Wisconsin Farmers Union urges the heaviest reliance on the income tax in funding essential government programs.

#### **DOMESTIC PRODUCTION ACTIVITIES DEDUCTION (DPAD) AND TAX CREDIT**

The Domestic Production Activities Deduction (DPAD) or tax credit was implemented to stimulate the economy and encourage companies through tax benefits to process manufactured products domestically in the US rather than outside the country. Not all cooperatives or non-cooperative companies or individuals engaged in domestic production as the majority of their operations and income share the DPAD that they qualify and benefit from with farmers who source these companies with the farm produce. Because farmers supply agricultural produce for domestic firms to process, these processors benefit in domestic production tax credits or DPAD and it seems right that farmers should have the opportunity and right to benefit in these DPAD or tax credits. Wisconsin Farmers Union not only recommends but calls for cooperatives and non-cooperative private and public corporations to share domestic production activities deduction or tax credits with the farmers who source agricultural produce to them for processing.

#### **LABOR GAINS EXEMPTION**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports efforts to implement a “Labor Gains Exemption” for family farm agriculture. This may be accomplished by increasing the standard deduction for all family members’ contributions to a family-owned farm. This standard deduction should be in the form of a refundable tax credit to enable refunds of these credits if no taxes are due.

#### ***ESTABLISHMENT OF A WISCONSIN STATE BANK***

Wisconsin Farmers Union strongly advocates that the state of Wisconsin establish a wholly owned state bank, like the Bank of North Dakota, to partner with Wisconsin state-licensed banks in stimulating state economic growth through underwriting or participating in loans for agriculture (farming), industry, commerce, secondary market real estate, and student loans where obligors are only state residents and whose loan proceeds are used only in the state and that all revenues of the state are deposited in this state bank and a portion of the profits are returned to the state.

#### ***FARM LABOR***

Farm labor is the most important part of the success of family farms.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports fair, just, and safe labor practices on farms that impact all race, color, religion, creed, national origin, ancestry, gender, gender expression, sexual orientation, family/parental status, age, disability, socio-economic or military status with payment of family-supporting wages, promoting both individual and community integrity.

Wisconsin Farmers Union affirms the necessity of maintaining farm workplaces that are free from all harassment, all violence, and all discrimination.

Wisconsin Farmers Union recognizes the critical importance of undocumented farm and other laborers in our society, opposes any legislation that deports non-violent, law-abiding residents, and advocates for a path to citizenship.

#### ***PROTECTION OF AGRICULTURAL LABOR IN THE FOOD SYSTEM***

Laborers in the United States food system need to be treated in a dignified manner such that they earn a living wage, are protected in terms of health and work safety, have adequate and necessary paid leave to protect the health of themselves, their family, and coworkers.

#### ***LAND USE PLANNING***

## **WORKING LANDS INITIATIVE**

In order to effectively preserve farmland, funding for the purchase of agricultural conservation easements should be increased. The state should prioritize these purchases by striking a balance between productivity, price, and proximity to development pressures. Many farmers and ranchers cannot afford the cost of agricultural land to increase their acreage, nor can young would-be farmers afford to begin farming. Purchases of development rights, funded through Working Lands or the Stewardship program, give farmers economic incentives to farm their productive land.

Additionally, the state must provide as much assistance as possible to educate landowners and local governments about the organization of agricultural enterprise zones, which are necessary for land to be eligible for the Working Lands program.

We allow Wisconsin Farmers Union to support individual members' agricultural enterprise zone applications with letters of support if the applications reflect traditional Farmers Union values.

## **FARMLAND PRESERVATION**

The Farmland Preservation Program has been valuable in helping to ensure the economic vitality of Wisconsin agriculture since 1977. Wisconsin Farmers Union affirms its endorsement of the Farmland Preservation Program as a valuable tool for improving the economic condition of our members. Revisions to the program as part of the Working Lands Initiative have strengthened Farmland preservation, with an emphasis on collecting early release fees and the continuation of a refundable tax credit.

Given that Wisconsin is ahead of most states in losing farmland and the USDA census showed that the state lost 620,000 acres of farmland between 2007 and 2012, Wisconsin Farmers Union calls for renewing the funding of the Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easements (PACE) program in order to provide the needed tools for the state and willing landowners to permanently preserve farmland.

Wisconsin Farmers Union proposes an amendment to the Farmland Preservation Program to allow building modifications for non-farm purposes, such as short-term rentals, events, or recreational activities, the dedicated use of outbuildings or houses for these purposes, and permitting recreational uses like dedicated camp sites, provided such modifications and uses do not interfere with normal agricultural operations. This update seeks to expand economic opportunities for farmers while maintaining the primary focus on farmland preservation.

## **USE VALUE ASSESSMENT**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports use value assessment and the agricultural forestland classification for lands owned by Wisconsin family farms. A state investigation should be made regarding the practice of using use value assessment as a tax shelter for developers or other non-farmers. We support an acreage cap on use value assessment for those who are using it as a tax shelter until such investigation takes place.

## **COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the goals of Comprehensive Planning. Wisconsin Farmers Union supports efforts by municipal governments, township officials, and all citizens to work together to create community planning that emphasizes the preservation of community character and community values and discourages urban sprawl and the loss of farmland.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports economic development, funding, and incentives that benefit family farmers, workers, and businesses, not to the detriment of Wisconsin citizens, communities, or environment. We also call for transparency in all state-supported economic development.

## **TRANSFER OF PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the Transfer of Development Rights for effective land planning. The transfer or sale of one parcel of land's development rights to the owner of another parcel allows the development on one (1) parcel while preventing development of the other, by placing a conservation easement or deed restriction on the parcel transferring its development rights. Transfer of Development Rights protects

farmland and other natural areas permanently, and it keeps land private and on the tax rolls. It provides farmers with a financially competitive alternative to development and helps keep farmland affordable.

### **EMINENT DOMAIN**

Eminent Domain has historically been a right of governments to seize private property for public use, such as highway and infrastructure projects, with compensation given to the property owners. State legislatures have recently begun granting eminent domain authority to private corporations that are not elected by the public or held accountable to voters. Governments have declared land and homes in adequate condition “blighted” in order to use eminent domain authority to seize property and turn it over to private corporations.

Wisconsin Farmers Union is concerned by the 2004 U.S. Supreme Court decision, *Kelo v. New London, Connecticut*. Wisconsin Farmers Union opposes the implementation and use of eminent domain whereby unrelated private entities, be they individuals or corporations, become the beneficiaries of farmers' or private persons' assets and no direct benefit to the local public occurs.

Fair and balanced eminent domain guidelines should protect the rights of individual property owners as well as promote the public good. Wisconsin Farmers Union opposes any reduction in landowner rights in eminent domain proceedings. We also oppose allowing private businesses to condemn public land.

We call for comprehensive revision of Wisconsin's eminent domain statutes in order to:

- Revise the definition of “blight” to ensure that it is limited to properties that are abandoned, dangerous, or indisrepair.
- Limit the power of eminent domain to units of government that are accountable to voters. Private, public and/or foreign-based corporations should not have the power of eminent domain.
- Ensure that there is a clear and demonstrated public purpose for any use of eminent domain.
- Permit landowners to have a representative of their choosing in condemnation proceedings.
- Ensure that offers to purchase in eminent domain proceedings reflect the full value of the property being acquired and adjacent property devaluation.
- Consider how taxpayers and the public at large should be compensated for the loss of wetlands, farmland, and green space when property is acquired via eminent domain.
- Investigate eminent domain statutes in other states, such as Minnesota's statute 216E.12 or the “Buy the Farm” law which requires a utility to condemn a fee interest in any amount of land as determined by the landowner.

While we wait for years for Wisconsin's eminent domain statutes to be revised, Wisconsin Farmers Union calls on Wisconsin counties and towns to explore the more immediate option of passing community rights ordinances that would immediately prohibit business corporations from exercising eminent domain authority over the property rights of private landowners.

### **ADVERSE POSSESSION**

Wisconsin Farmers Union calls for a change in the laws related to Adverse Possession, such that a landowner wishing to bring a court case related to Adverse Possession must first seek resolution of the issue with their local municipality, similar to the process for reviewing fence disputes. A court should give great deference to the decision of the local municipality in adverse possession cases.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports re-instatement of laws prohibiting local units of government from obtaining property through Adverse Possession.

### **SAND MINING**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports local control of frac sand mining and does not support state regulation that would preempt the ability of towns and counties to craft their own regulations tailored to their individual circumstances.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports efforts by local governments to effectively evaluate and manage the development of these industrial sand mining and processing operations.

Wisconsin Farmers Union encourages communities to consider the use of zoning as a planning tool for addressing this issue, along with negotiation of development agreements between local governments and the mining, processing and transportation businesses involved.

Wisconsin Farmers Union strongly urges the development of adequate regulatory and monitoring capacity within appropriate state agencies to assure that accurate and timely information is available, and that transparent regulatory compliance is assured.

Wisconsin Farmers Union encourages towns and counties to accurately account for the income-generating capacity of this potential mine, and to establish fees, property tax provisions, or impact assessments to ensure that the economic benefits of frac sand operations are shared by all the local residents that are negatively affected by mining operations.

Wisconsin Farmers Union encourages local governments to require robust reclamation plans and bonding sufficient to cover the costs of returning land to a pre-mined state.

#### **SULFIDE MINING**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports reinstating “prove it first” legislation that requires mining companies to provide specific proof that a sulfide mine can run for 10 years and be closed for 10 years without polluting groundwater and surface waters with acid drainage.

#### ***DEVELOPMENT OF PRODUCTS AND DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL MARKETS FOR SMALL GRAINS***

The Wisconsin Farmers Union advocates for the creation of various small grain associations in both Wisconsin and nationally, for federal funding of these associations to develop new products and create market demand for small grains and their products in domestic and international markets, and for the USDA and Wisconsin DATCP to put greater support into promoting the sale of small grains and their products comparable to that employed for corn and soybeans.

## **IX. THE ENVIRONMENT AND THE FAMILY FARM**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports a rational, nationwide environmental policy. We believe that family farmers are great contributors toward preserving the environment and that society is interested in rewarding their contributions. Farmers work hard and take great pride in providing a safe and healthy product while contributing to the health of our planet through their care of the land. We oppose efforts to dilute federal and state environmental standards for air, land, and water. We support environmental programs that financially encourage farmers to adopt conservation and environmentally friendly practices.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports programs that recognize farms as multifunctional and rewards farmers for their contribution to land stewardship, protecting clean air and water, open spaces, and wildlife, supporting Wisconsin's rural heritage, supporting small town and rural economies and Wisconsin tourism.

Wisconsin Farmers Union recognizes and respects that nature is a living ecosystem with inherent rights that should be protected by law. The value of the natural world does not derive only from its usefulness or economic benefit and not just as a "resource" that can be owned, used, and even destroyed.

### ***SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE***

Soil loss in agriculture is occurring at alarming rates due to erosion caused by wind and water leading to significant loss of soil fertility, dust storms and fouling of surface and ground water resources.

Wisconsin Farmers Union encourages the growing interest among farmers, consumers, and environmentalists in adopting and promoting sustainable agriculture practices that protect the soil and reduce the need for artificial pesticides and fertilizers.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the allocation of resources for dedicated DATCP staff to assist Wisconsin farmers and landowners in implementing organic and pasture-based farming systems and work on market development to support these systems.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports increased emphasis on public interest research at the University of Wisconsin (UW) with a higher priority placed in interdisciplinary research on the social, economic, and environmental effects of agricultural policies, technologies, chemicals, and biotechnologies. We support funding for the UW Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems. Wisconsin Farmers Union encourages the UW to include water quality parameters in nutrient management and soil conservation planning and supports the work that has begun on that front. We encourage the UW to establish policies to expand the availability of public information and disclosure of all research projects, whether publicly or privately funded.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports legislation that requires the Wisconsin Legislature to find a permanent funding source for the goals the Task Force has set forth, these include but are not limited to: fully funding county conservationists, increasing funding for nutrient management planning for farmers, funding a well-compensation grant program, producer-led water protection grants, a grant program to reward counties that collaborate with others on water quality issues, and support for the UW Stevens Point Water and Environmental Analysis Lab or a better system which creates one source of data in the state for monitoring drinking water. The state of Wisconsin should allocate an additional two million dollars per year to monitor changes in private well quality to the entire state.

Wisconsin Farmers Union advocates that DNR, DATCP, and NRCS set state guidelines to address the pollution of water resources through reasonable regulations of nutrient application on karst landscapes to protect public health and safety.

Wisconsin Farmers Union advocates for the prohibition of winter spreading of manure on karst landscapes that lack sufficient soil depth to protect groundwater from contamination.

Wisconsin Farmers Union calls for exemptions or cost sharing mechanisms for farmers that lack the capacity to comply with these regulations to ensure that farmers do not face undue financial hardship from these measures. Wisconsin Farmers Union advocates for sufficient funding for county land and water conservation staff to work with farmers to ensure they are not unduly burdened by these regulations.

## **CONSERVATION**

### **WISCONSIN COUNTY CONSERVATION STAFFING**

County Conservation staffing grants pay approximately one third of the combined salaries of county conservation staff. County conservation staff have a role in the provision of billions of dollars in cost share funds to farmers and landowners, who use those funds to invest in their farms and improve soil and water quality. County Conservation staff also ensure that farmers maintain eligibility for farmland preservation tax credits, which can be reinvested in farm businesses.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports robust federal, state and county funding for county conservation staffing, and the creation of a system of uniform job descriptions to be overseen by the state Land and Water Conservation Board.

### **CARBON SEQUESTRATION CREDITS**

The Wisconsin Farmers Union supports a carbon credit program administered by the U.S. government based on the best available science to encourage practices that ~~do~~ effectively sequester carbon instead of serving as greenwashing.

### **GREENHOUSE GAS REDUCTION**

The Wisconsin Farmers Union supports a tax imposed by the U.S. government on carbon emissions based on the best available science and including the following three pillars.

First, the federal government would impose a gradually increasing tax on carbon dioxide emissions. It might begin at \$50 per ton and increase steadily. This tax would send a powerful signal to business and consumers to reduce their carbon footprints.

Second, the proceeds would be returned to the American people on an equal basis via quarterly dividend checks. With a carbon tax of \$50 per ton, a family of four would receive about \$2,500 in the first year. As the tax rate rose over time to further reduce emissions, so would the dividend payments.

Third, American companies exporting to countries without comparable carbon pricing would receive rebates on the carbon taxes they've paid on those products, while imports from such countries would face fees on the carbon content of their products. This would protect American competitiveness and punish free riding by other nations, encouraging them to adopt their own carbon pricing.

### **IMPROVEMENT OF SOIL HEALTH THROUGH MANAGED GRAZING, COVER-CROPPING AND REDUCED TILLAGE**

- a. Wisconsin Farmers Union strongly advocates that its members and farmers engaged in cash cropping grain and vegetables employ sound stewardship soil management through multi-year crop rotation, use of different covercrops, and no-till or minimum till practices.
- b. Wisconsin Farmers Union strongly advocates that permanent groundcover and managed grazing, dairy, and livestock systems are the Best Management practice to control soil erosion and phosphorous pollution in our nation's freshwater resources.



- c. Wisconsin Farmers Union supports increased funding for conservation practices that increase the soil health on any farm.
- d. Wisconsin Farmers Union supports a state property tax credit much like the Farmland Preservation Tax Credit (FLPTC) for Farmland that is maintained in perennial cover that is vetted by a land conservation professional. The amount of the Managed Grazing tax credit will be determined by a stakeholder group.

#### **SCIENCE-BASED TRIALS OF ROWCROPS INTEGRATED WITH PRAIRIE STRIPS (STRIPS)**

Wisconsin Farmers Union encourages the implementation of Science-based Trials of Rowcrops Integrated with Prairie Strips (STRIPS) into row-cropped fields in Wisconsin, incentivized by costs-share opportunities through the Farm Service Agency's Conservation Reserve Program; NRCS's Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP); the United States Fish and Wildlife Partners Program; and Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) grants for soil and water protection.

#### **CONVERSION OF MARGINAL LAND AND WORLD CARBON SINK GREEN ZONES INTO CROPLAND**

Wisconsin Farmers Union advocates that marginal lands and world carbon sink green zones be protected from industrial cash-crop farming and opposes conversion of marginal land, inclusive of wetlands, highly erodible land, grasslands, and tropical rain forests into farming, and that the United States takes the lead in providing the funding that would make this sequestration possible.

#### **PROTECTION OF WATER BY THE STATE**

Wisconsin Farmers Union members and their neighbors should not need to worry about their family's health, need to buy bottled water, find it necessary to install expensive water filters, have to construct new deeper wells, experience property value loss, or endure a general decline of their community.

The use of water is a basic human right with inherent rights and responsibilities and is a public trust to be used for the good of all. Water is not a commodity for exchange in the marketplace. Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the following principles for water management in Wisconsin:

Wisconsin Farmers Union calls for the protection of Wisconsin's groundwater resources and recognition of the connection between ground and surface waters.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports new legislation and policy, which includes the development of adaptive management, locally-driven tools, as well as state-wide mechanisms to protect the quantity and quality of groundwater, equitably available for all interests, including water necessary to support healthy ecosystems. This includes support for nutrient trading mechanisms that are designed to allow participation by those who have already implemented practices and provides incentives for those landowners moving toward desired nutrient levels, using a broad suite of conservation practices.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports watershed management efforts by public-private partnerships and encourages farmers to be active participants in such efforts.

Wisconsin Farmers Union strongly supports steps be taken during the 2023/24 Wisconsin legislative session to enact the recommendations prepared by the Speaker's Task Force. These include, identifying best practices for testing and data collection, measuring water quality in different parts of the state and types of soil, determining the sources and causes of contaminants impacting water quality, consulting with stakeholders to assess current practices to manage runoff as well as suggestions to improve these efforts, investigating remedies that will protect a healthy and stable supply of water for residents and industry, and studying best practices for designing and constructing wells.

#### **GROUNDWATER MAPPING**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the development of coordinated, statewide groundwater mapping efforts. Wisconsin Farmers Union respectfully encourages, on behalf of all counties, that the state legislature makes available additional resources for counties to plan and implement groundwater testing and mapping that will lead to better understanding, protection, and utilization of our groundwater and drinking water supplies. We

support adding additional positions at the Wisconsin Geologic and Natural History Survey and at UW-Stevens Point for the purpose of groundwater testing and mapping. All groundwater testing results should be recorded in the Center for Watershed Science and Education at UW- Stevens Point so as to improve the accuracy of the well water viewer.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports legislation authorizing the state to fund detailed bedrock and depth-to-bedrock surveys in all counties that have not yet commissioned the production of highly detailed maps and models for groundwater vulnerability and movement.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the use of groundwater mapping technology to enable science-based siting, zoning, well-permitting, nutrient management planning, and waste management decisions at all government subdivisions, including township, village, city, county and state levels, as well as the DNR.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports targeted application of “special rules” to all “sensitive areas” of the state with notable vulnerabilities to contamination by land-spread manure, industrial waste, or commercial and residential fertilizers.

Wisconsin Farmers Union encourages the acknowledgement of detailed groundwater mapping, modeling, and predictive technology in all pending groundwater legislation, including the following provisions:

The DNR shall use groundwater mapping technology to trace draw-down and contamination events to their sources and hold permit holders accountable for appropriate fines and penalties, including loss of permits.

Permit holders shall be required to purchase insurance for fines and/or compensation and clean-up costs of draw-down and contamination events that are verifiable through said mapping technology, with insurance held in the name of private individuals rather than corporate entities.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the use of temporary development moratoria imposed by those local and county government subdivisions which have commissioned groundwater mapping surveys until such time as the surveys are completed.

### **PROTECTION OF WATERS IN SENSITIVE AREAS**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports efforts to preserve the quality of all waters in Wisconsin. Furthermore, we support changes to NR 151 that will restrict manure and other waste application rates and the spreading of these materials on frozen soils in areas of the state deemed to be sensitive areas. These sensitive areas would include places with shallow soil depth above Karst bedrock, areas with sandy soils, and areas where the groundwater quality standards are not being met.

### **PFAS**

The drinking water quality supplied by groundwater in many rural areas of Wisconsin is experiencing contamination which includes microbial contamination, nitrate levels that exceed the Environmental Protection Agency’s drinking water standards, and/or detectable PFAS (Per/Polyfluoroalkyl substances) concentrations, all of which negatively impact human health.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports research into health and environmental impacts from PFAS and determining appropriate safe levels.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports banning the use of PFAS and their disposal as land applied waste until research has determined safe levels.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports legislation that requires PFAS producing companies to contribute to a fund that compensates farmers and homeowners who have been impacted by PFAS contamination in their wells, soils, livestock, crops, or their own health.

### **TEN STATE MISSISSIPPI RIVER PACT**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the formation of a compact by the ten states bordering the Mississippi

River to oppose any diversion of its water.

### ***PEAK PHOSPHORUS***

Wisconsin Farmers Union encourages the acknowledgement of peak phosphorus, its effects on agriculture, and calls for a prioritization of research into this area. Wisconsin Farmers Union calls for further study on how to minimize the entry of phosphorus into place. In addition, Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the use of state and federal resources to improve manuremanagement in the area of capturing more of the phosphorus that is being put into and onto the ground.

### ***ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY (EPA)***

The Wisconsin Farmers Union opposes any weakening of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and affirms the increasing need for its function in the face of a deregulatory environment.

In addition, Wisconsin Farmers Union calls on the EPA and other applicable regulatory agencies to conduct a complete, transparent, and scientific study of the impact that construction and ensuing maintenance and infrastructure of a "wall" between the United States and Mexico would have on the migratory and residential habitats of migratory species (i.e. monarch butterfly) and species listed under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 before any such construction begins.

### ***RESTORATION OF THE FEDERAL CLEAN WATER ACT (CWA)***

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports federal legislation to reestablish the original intent of the Clean Water Act of 1972. Federal legislation must replace the term "navigable waters of the U.S." with its definition from the 1972 Act "waters of the U.S." in order to reestablish and clarify the historically understood scope of the Clean Water Act. This change will enable the CWA to achieve the original goals of restoring and maintaining the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the nation's waters.

1. Because non-point source pollution which is coming largely from our farms remains the major, unresolved cause of water pollution in Wisconsin and in the United States, Wisconsin Farmers Union advocates that more effective agronomic practices such as cover-cropping, no or reduced tillage, inserting more small grains into the rotation system, terracing on highly erodible land, and enhanced buffer strips should be employed.
2. Exemptions for normal agricultural activities need to be enforced to the extent that pollutant runoff-reduction agronomics are employed.
3. Wisconsin Farmers Union supports in principle and in practice the EPA's and the Army Corps' intent to implement the basic objectives of the Clean Water Act and the Clean Water Regulations.
4. Wisconsin Farmers Union understands (a) that channels of pollutant runoff come from more than traditionally understood navigable waters, come from upstream at the source of pollutants, namely also from intermittent and ephemeral streams and waterways, and incorporate all the waters referenced under the Clean Water Authority Restoration Act, and (b) that, with or without using the word navigable, the Clean Water Act in no way results in the taking of private property which would contravene the United States Constitution.

### ***ENSURING RESPONSIBLE CHEMICAL USE***

Wisconsin Farmers Union recognizes that the responsible use of agricultural chemicals is an important and essential production tool for farmers. Farmers understand and accept the responsibility for using these chemicals in a safe and responsible manner, and for following all regulatory provisions, including the completion of appropriate training, record-keeping, and application protocols. Regulatory standards should support farmers who are committed to maintaining these standards and should also provide fair and reasonable provisions for addressing those situations where either accidental problems or unauthorized use and practices occur, especially if harm is caused to adjacent crops, farms, people, animals, pollinators, or the environment. Wisconsin Farmers Union advocates for the establishment of provisions for responsible and timely allocation of responsibility and compensation for damages.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports:

1. A first-time fine to the applicator for spray drift that trespasses onto a neighboring property of \$1,000. A second-time offender should be fined at least \$2,000. The fine can be increased if certain circumstances can be proven -- for example, that the spray was applied during weather conditions that make it more likely for the spray to drift onto another's land, such as during a fog or damp and moist conditions. The fine can also be increased for drift onto a pasture with grazing animals, for drift onto vegetable gardens, commercial fruit and vegetable beds, greenhouses, hoop-houses, high tunnel greenhouses, apiaries, residences, or people.
2. Establishing a compensation fund to make victims of spray drift whole for their losses.
3. Requiring applicators to take continuing training classes every two (2) years.
4. Policy that requires pesticide- and herbicide-use permit holders disclose agrichemical usage to neighbors upon request.
5. Independent and objective research regarding the human and environmental impacts of agricultural inputs for pest and weed control, as well as research into alternatives to pest and weed control methods that are not harmful to humans and the environment.
6. Policy that prioritizes human and environmental health and safety with regard to regulating the use of agricultural inputs.
7. Policies and regulatory efforts to label agricultural products as containing neonicotinoids and that products containing neonicotinoids be properly labeled as such.

Wisconsin Farmers Union believes that the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA) process for vetting agricultural chemicals is inadequate for protecting public health. The scientific studies on which herbicide and pesticide approvals are based should be performed by government or university scientists, not by scientists employed or paid by agrichemical manufacturers.

### **SECONDARY CONTAINMENT UNITS**

Wisconsin Farmers Union seeks environmentally responsible and economically reasonable containment requirements to ensure that stored products are not released in the event of a storage container failure. Wisconsin Farmers Union supports regulations requiring farmers to install secondary containment for liquid bulk fertilizer stored in individual tanks of sizes similar to or greater than retail fertilizer dealers or pesticides in containers greater than the manufacturers' mini bulk containers for a period of longer than 15 days. Further, we support cost-sharing programs to fund such a prevention program.

### **AGRICULTURAL CHEMICAL CLEANUP FUND**

The state of Wisconsin has created an Agricultural Chemical Cleanup Fund, which is funded by a tax on purchases of agricultural chemicals. Clean-ups of all spills in Wisconsin are covered by the fund, even though chemicals purchased out-of-state but ultimately used in-state, are not subject to the fee. Wisconsin Farmers Union supports closing this loophole by making all Wisconsin users subject to the requirement, regardless of point of purchase.

### **LAND SPREADING OF INDUSTRIAL WASTE**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports stringent restrictions and regulations on the allowed land spreading of industrial and municipal waste sludge and liquid, including class B bio solids. Alternative disposal sites and processes should be identified to eliminate the risk of surface and groundwater contamination, protect the health and safety of citizens, and protect the soil and water of agricultural lands, from which the nation's food is produced. Final decision-making authority for determining disposal sites and methods must be vested in the citizens who are directly affected by the site.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports educating the public about the potential hazards of spreading and need for testing industrial and municipal waste sludge relative to what has been spread and landowner liability. We further support nutrient standards be established similar to current nutrient management plans farmers follow.

### **TEXTILE CHEMICALS**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports developing an economy that no longer depends upon synthetic compounds for

textiles, requiring us to focus collectively on profitable and ecologically beneficial alternatives – Local Fiber, Local Labor, Local Dye.

## **CHEMICALS ENTERING THE MARKETPLACE**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports developing laws that require third-party precautionary health impact analysis on all new chemical compounds entering the marketplace and making full disclosure on the impacts of any existing and persistent synthetic chemical compounds that will likely remain in our environment through lingering remnants of material culture.

## **DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES**

### **NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT**

The state and the DNR own large tracts of land in Wisconsin, much of it in marsh- and low-land, a habitat for wildlife. Much of the farmland in Wisconsin drains into these lands. Wisconsin Farmers Union believes state- and DNR-owned land should also be required to have Nutrient Management Plans in place. We further support nutrient standards be established similar to current nutrient management plans farmers follow.

Any farmer who must complete a mandatory Nutrient Management Plan should have access to 100% cost sharing from the state or Federal government.

### **NUTRIENT TRADING**

Legislation has been proposed to encourage the trading of phosphorous nutrient credits to reduce the amount of phosphorous reaching various bodies of water. Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the concept of economically rewarding land use practices that reduce nutrient loss. Any legislation that rewards these land use practices should include provisions that ensure transparency, accountability, and enforcement. Furthermore, any such legislation should be applicable to all farm- landowners, not just large landowners. Landowners with existing conservation practices should be financially rewarded for having a good land use practice already implemented.

### **MANURE MANAGEMENT**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the development of standard rules and regulations for manure management enforcement.

Wisconsin Farmers Union further supports a minimum of 80% cost sharing to family farmers for mandatory manure storage and diversion programs.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports a requirement that Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFO's) of 1,000 or greater animal units provide financial security to cover the cost of emptying and/or retiring a manure storage facility at the end of its useful life or in the event of a manure leak or overflow. Such financial security could be in the form of a performance or surety bond, insurance, guarantee, letter of credit, certificate of deposit or designated savings account, or deposit to a state fund created for this purpose. Wisconsin Farmers Union urges the state of Wisconsin to fund agronomy research exploring the benefits of composting, compared to other forms of manure storage.

Wisconsin Farmers Union advocates that manure haulers display on the truck or tractor the name of the farm generating and contracting manure-hauling. Wisconsin Farmers Union calls on legislators and the DNR to impose heftier fines for spillage and accidents and allocate and deploy personnel as needed to monitor accidents that will deter future accidents and have the means to cover cost of accident clean-up through adequate fines.

## **DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCE (DNR)**

### **REFORM DNR SECRETARY**

While it is recognized that many advocate for reform of the DNR, Wisconsin Farmers Union urges that

any legislation intending to reform the DNR not lessen the environmental integrity of state law or enforcement of environmental law by the Department.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports efforts to remove politics from the management of Wisconsin's natural resources by restoring the appointment of the DNR Secretary to the Natural Resources Board.

#### **DNR FUNDING AND STAFF**

Wisconsin Farmers Union calls for the increase in capable and qualified personnel to adequately and periodically monitor the performance of high-capacity wells and concentrated animal feeding operations to ensure the integrity of and long-term adequacy of natural resources and the protection of the health of the citizenry in their respective areas.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the reallocation of DNR wastewater management resources to focus on field work to monitor compliance with pollution permits and nutrient management plans.

#### **HABITAT STAMP**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the development for all public land users of a Habitat Stamp to generate wildlife funding for public and private lands.

#### **INVASIVE SPECIES**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports DNR efforts to protect our environment from invasive species but not at the burden or expense of the landowner.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports mandatory enforcement of noxious weed laws, on Conservation Reserve Program lands, and land owned by lending institutions, absentee landowners and the government including town, county, and state road rights-of-way. We support the inclusion of multi-flora roses, purple loosestrife, European buckthorn, wild chervil, and wildparsnip on the state's noxious weed list. Further, we support the creation of programs that would pay farmers to eradicate it.

#### **WISCONSIN POLLUTION DISCHARGE ELIMINATION SYSTEM (WPDES) PERMITS**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports increasing the fees required for a WPDES permit for CAFOs from \$1,000 to \$5,000, so that taxpayer costs incurred by DNR staff time and research are repaid by CAFO operators. Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the DNR's authority to require written verification of the rental agreement for manure spreading on rented fields.

#### **GENERAL PERMIT FOR CAFOS**

Wisconsin Farmers Union believes that proposals for very large livestock operations must be individually scrutinized and that any effort to make permits easier to obtain must result in heightened enforcement of state regulations of specific areas of concern. Wisconsin Farmers Union further supports the timely implementation of new environmental standards by supporting the ability for DNR to modify an existing general or specific WPDES CAFO permit to incorporate new statutory or administrative code.

#### **DNR CONTROL OF AND MONITORING OF WATER USE IN HIGH-CAPACITY WELLS**

Wisconsin Farmers Union strongly supports the need and requirement that a state agency, such as the DNR, have the ability to set conditions, to protect surface waters (lakes, streams, wetlands), and aquifer water levels, inclusive of monitoring, such as electronic flow meters on all applications for high-capacity wells and receive adequate state funding to undertake such monitoring, and that the state legislature provide the DNR with such authority.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the use of groundwater provided that surface waters are protected consistent with the state's public trust doctrine and the aquifer maintains its ability to provide water to existing residents and farms for the foreseeable future.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports an active, multi-stakeholder Groundwater Advisory Committee to establish meaningful groundwater protections and planning in the state.

In any proposed groundwater legislation, Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the following provisions:

- a. When evaluating a high capacity well permit, the DNR shall account for the cumulative impacts of all high-capacity wells in the area to ensure no adverse impacts on the surrounding water resources.
- b. The DNR shall consider the surface water impacts of groundwater withdrawals by high-capacity wells.
- c. All water withdrawals from high-capacity wells shall be monitored electronically and reported to the DNR on an annual basis.
- d. The DNR shall conduct a periodic review of permitted withdrawals from high-capacity wells to ensure no adverse impacts are occurring on surrounding water resources.
- e. Permits for the reconstruction, repair, or replacement of a high capacity well in the same general location of the original well that do not result in additional withdrawal of groundwater need not be obtained from the DNR.
- f. Upon ownership change of a property with a high capacity well, the new owner is not required to apply for a permit for the existing well if the existing business or property usage remains the same.
- g. The DNR shall review high capacity well permits in a timely manner, but no high capacity well shall be approved without a thorough review.

#### **DNR SUPPORT FOR FARMER-LED WATERSHED COUNCILS**

Wisconsin Farmers Union urges the State of Wisconsin to change the eligibility criteria of the Lake Protection Grant: Lake Management Plan Implementation program to include farmer-led watershed councils and the agricultural organizations that support those councils.

### **WILDLIFE/ANIMALS**

#### **WOLVES**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the full implementation of DNR's wolf management plan. We encourage the limiting of the number of wolves in the state for the economics of farmers.

#### **OTHER PREDATORS**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports efforts in controlling cougars and other species that hinder livestock agriculture.

#### **CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports more robust efforts by the DNR to control and contain chronic wasting disease. Moreover, Wisconsin Farmers Union supports mandatory testing of all harvested white tail deer and advocates for sufficient funding and resources for prompt testing, analysis, and reporting in order to assess the extent of and contain the spread of chronic wasting disease. We support adequate remuneration to farmers if animals and livestock need to be destroyed.

Wisconsin Farmers Union further supports mandatory testing of all game farm animals being transferred from one farm to another.

#### **WILD TURKEYS**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the expansion of wild turkey hunting in Wisconsin. We support a licensing system rather than a permit system for harvesting wild turkeys. Production agriculture landowners should be allowed to harvest two (2) turkeys per year on their own property.

#### **SANDHILL CRANES**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports allowing an exemption to the hunting season requirement for participation in the State Wildlife Damage Abatement Program. This exemption would allow farmers who

have crane damage to crops to apply for funds from the Abatement program.

We support the creation of a rebate program and funding, for farmers using seed treatment as a deterrent to cranes eating seed.

#### **ANIMAL WELFARE**

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports educational programs to inform the public and animal rights groups on the true nature of animal care on family farms. Family farms base their survival on the personal and humane care to their animals. Farmers share activists' concern about the welfare of animals. Wisconsin Farmers Union supports a farmer's right to grant or deny access to a farm, and to grant or deny permission to distribute images of the farm. We further believe that those who violate the law in the pursuit of their values and beliefs should be prosecuted to the full extent of the law and should be made to provide full restitution for damages incurred by crime victims.

Wisconsin Farmers Union condemns the misrepresentation of animal husbandry practices and the distribution of those images.

#### **NATIONAL DAIRY ANIMAL WELL-BEING INITIATIVE**

Wisconsin Farmers Union opposes the National Dairy Animal Well-Being Initiative, which employs a third-party auditor to monitor the welfare of farm animals, due to potential added costs to producers and consumers.



## **X. WISCONSIN FAMILY FARMERS AND THEIR ORGANIZATION**

### ***WISCONSIN FARMERS UNION KAMP KENWOOD***

Wisconsin Farmers Union Kamp Kenwood is a valuable, unique, and irreplaceable facility that has provided education and recreation for generations of Wisconsin Farmers Union members and their children. It is in Wisconsin Farmers Union's best interest to own and operate the Wisconsin Farmers Union Kamp Kenwood property and to solicit funds for maintenance and improvement in the present property.

### ***EMERGING LEADERS AND FARMERS UNION ENTERPRISES (FUE) LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS***

Wisconsin Farmers Union believes that developing the next generation of farmer leaders is critical for the future of farming and rural communities. Wisconsin Farmers Union is committed to providing educational events and resources to the state's future farm and rural leaders through the Wisconsin Farmers Union Emerging Leaders program and the FUE Leadership program.

### ***PARTNERSHIPS WITH OTHER COOPERATIVES***

Farmers Union has a rich history of promoting and collaborating with cooperative organizations and businesses. Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the development of cooperatives in many sectors of business, including agriculture supply, worker- owned and marketing coops, credit unions and food coops. Cooperatives are an important tool for Farmers Union members to engage in a democratic form of business and support their communities. Wisconsin Farmers Union appreciates the many cooperatives and credit units, including the CHS foundation, which makes possible many of our educational opportunities on cooperatives and rural issues.

## **CONCLUSION**

We, the members of the Wisconsin Farmers Union, have formed this program through free, democratic procedures. We direct our officers and employees to promote this policy and our delegates to the National Farmers Union convention be bound to this policy. We pledge ourselves to support and promote this program.



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