

**Texas Farmers Union  
Policy Manual  
2023**



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## PREAMBLE

We welcome all those to our cause who would join in the fight for the preservation, with dignity, of the family farmer and the rural community.

We encourage into our ranks all farm families in Texas, so that we can work together for a just and adequate program for family farmers.

We reaffirm our strong belief in freedom and we cherish it as a part of our American heritage. We recognize that individual initiative is basic to our American way, but we are equally aware that mutual assistance and cooperation account for many of the noblest achievements of our American system.

We pledge ourselves to be well informed and politically aware and to guard every person's privilege to equal opportunity. We will not tolerate any measure local, state or national that would deny this privilege.

We believe that as tillers of the soil our work is close to the Almighty Creator God and, beseeching His guidance, we solemnly adopt the following policy:

### I. PARITY

The principle of parity is a true standard which measures the degree of balance, equality and fairness applicable to all economic sectors.

We reaffirm our basic commitment to the parity formula (using the base years 1910 1914) established by law as the standard by which to determine prices for agricultural commodities that are fair to farmers and the public.

The parity formula measures the purchasing power for farm commodities in respect to goods and services purchased by farmers for farm production and family living, wages of hired farm labor, interest paid on farm debts, and taxes paid on farm real estate.

Parity, as applied to prices for any agricultural commodity, shall be that price for the commodity which will give to the commodity a purchasing power with respect to articles that farmers buy equivalent to the purchasing power of such commodities in the base period; and in the case of all commodities for which the base period is the period of August 1909 to July 1914, which will also reflect current interest payments per acre on farm indebtedness secured by real estate, tax payments per acre on farm real estate, and freight rates during the base period. The base period in case of all agricultural commodities except tobacco shall be the period August 1909 to 1914.

### II. PUBLIC RELATIONS

We urge Farmers Union to initiate a continuing public relations campaign designed to:

1. Encourage economic specialists to calculate the cost of farm operations just as they would any other business by including the cost of operator labor, management return on high risk, land costs and a reasonable profit when releasing cost of production figures to the public. (The present practice causes people to assume that farm products can be produced at much less than parity and also causes people to compare profits of other segments of industry on an unfair basis with agricultural returns.)
2. We believe that USDA and all other economic specialists should use only farm income and no off farm income in reporting net farm income figures.
3. Utilize every means to inform consumers and their representative in Congress of farm prices that remain low in relation to actual cost of production and of the stabilizing benefits at the retail level that result from the proper and effective administration of price support programs, including direct payments.
4. Considering it is of utmost importance to promote the use and consumption of American agricultural products, we solicit the help of our suppliers of inputs and processors, to promote American agricultural products as well as the American farmers, in their advertisements.
5. Acquaint the consuming public with farm products and the farm programs by illustrating the way in which the consumer's dollar is distributed throughout the various marketing channels.
6. Explain and disseminate Farmers Union policies and goals through a nationwide program.
7. Encourage individual involvement through established committees in each county with specific objectives of working through the printed and electronic media to refute false and misleading propaganda and to insure that controversial issues are fairly presented.
8. Inform the American public that reasonable farm commodity reserves are a vital part of our defense program.
9. We demand that the USDA change their formula for calculating net farm income so it will not include "non money" income. Non money income includes the value of farm products consumed directly in farm households and the rental value of housing provided by farm dwellings.
10. Protect all Farmers Union members by informing them when an individual company or corporation does not adhere to its agreements or contracts.
11. Promote much closer communications with consumer groups, cooperatives, political organizations, educators and other farm organizations which have common goals with Farmers Union.
12. We encourage the establishment of an information program showing that increased agricultural exports at parity prices would reduce trade deficits.

### III. STRONGER BARGAINING POWER FOR FARMERS

1. A national and international food and fiber policy should be adopted.
2. Agricultural producers should be well represented in the making of any international commodity agreements.
3. Since the supply and demand feature is not adequate to protect agricultural producers' bargaining powers, we urge National and Texas Farmers Union to continue to develop methods to obtain strong bargaining power in the market places by such means as marketing, bargaining and farm supply cooperatives.
4. We urge Congress to enact bargaining legislation favorable to farmers.

### IV. FARM INCOME IMPROVEMENT

BE IT RESOLVED that the Secretary of Agriculture take immediate steps to modify the administration of the farm program so that total production of the basic commodities will balance supply with demand and assist in avoiding price depressing carry overs that exist now and projected to develop in the future.

### V. COMMERCIAL FAMILY FARM

Texas Farmers Union believes in strengthening and encouraging the commercial family farm and producing top quality foods.

A "family farm" is an agricultural production unit, economically adequate to sustain modern United States standards of living, using land and other capital investment, operated by one or more farm operator families, who provide the management, take the economic risks and do most of the work required to operate the unit.

A sound farm program is imperative to keep farm families on the land and preserve rural America.

### VI. NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL STRATEGIC RESERVES

1. We support the reenactment of the Farmers Owned Reserve and adequate funding for the Strategic Grain Reserve Program.
2. In addition to a farmer held reserve, we recommend that Congress pass legislation authorizing the establishment of a national strategic reserve supply of cotton, wheat, feed grains, soybeans, peanuts and rice equal to one half of a one year domestic consumption of these commodities, and that reserve supplies of these commodities be bought from domestic growers at not less than 90 percent of parity. Such commodities should not be called from the strategic reserve at less than 110 percent parity based upon the 1910 1914 Parity Index. Farmers should be encouraged to have their own on farm storage; however, when the stored commodity becomes part

of the national strategic reserve, the farmer should be compensated for the storage at a current commercial rate.

3. The strategic reserve commodities should not be considered or included as stocks or reported as stocks in the statistical reports, but as reserves in the upcoming year's production report.
4. Any international grain reserve agreement should provide that each country own, and pay storage, with interest, on their share of the international reserve held in the United States.

## VII. COMMODITY PROGRAMS

1. Commodity programs should be designed to provide assistance to family farms. Payment limitations on farm program benefits should be made on a deescalating scale so as to provide the greatest benefit to family farmers.
2. Farm programs should be announced in their entirety, well in advance of planting time in all areas of the country.
3. The members of Texas Farmers Union reaffirm their commitment to full parity for farm prices based on the 1910 1914 Parity Index.
4. We demand that Congress remove the caps on loan rates and set loan rates at not less than 90 percent of parity. We favor maintaining a target price and that it is set at 100% of parity.
5. Farm program projected yields should be based on actual proven production on records provided by producers, with allowance for farm weighed and stored grain adjusted for disaster, at not less than 90 percent of previous year's projected yield.
6. We support an established standard procedure, based on actual sales, to determine a posted county price to be used to determine LDP's and counter cyclical payments.
7. We oppose any mandatory check off program for any commodity.
8. We urge Congress to reinstate the disaster provision of the 1973 Act, adequately adjusted for inflation with payments made immediately after certifying losses.
9. All payments to landlords and tenants should be made on the same basis as rental agreements. All government farm benefits should be recoupled to production.
10. Any producer who relinquishes government payment for CRP acres should have limited grazing privileges in a declared disaster situation.
11. Farmer held reserves should not be released under any circumstances, at less than 100 percent of parity nor called at less than 120 percent of parity. No CCC stocks should be released at less than 140 percent of parity.

12. We urge that interest be waived on farmer held reserve programs.
13. We further believe that in periods of agricultural depression, mandatory supply management is an essential remedy, and we urge the Congress and Administration to take all steps necessary toward authorizing producer referenda for mandatory supply management.
14. Farmers should not be subject to penalty due to tardiness or errors of the USDA and FCIC.
15. Whereas, aflatoxin continues to be a serious problem and threatens to destroy buyers' confidence in the commodity, causing depressed markets;

BE IT RESOLVED that Texas Farmers Union and National Farmers Union encourage that USDA, the Texas Department of Agriculture and the State Chemist office do the research necessary to devise a system and technology for uniform aflatoxin testing that will avoid conflicting test results. Since it is apparent that more testing is going to be required, the new system must be efficient and rapid enough that loads of commodities can be tested without undue delay. Once a load of any commodity has been tested, it will be certified, and cannot be re tested.

16. Interest rates for Commodity Credit Corporation loans should not be higher to the farmer than the cost of the loan to CCC.
17. We urge the current and future farm bills be improved by introduction of a supply management provision, which is based on cost of production.
18. STATE ISSUE: We urge the Governor and the Texas Legislature to look into the problems involved in all commodity contracting and to correct present legislation to make both buyer and seller liable under the contract.
19. We oppose the use of government funds or check off dollars for the research or development of commodity production in foreign countries.
20. Texas Farmers Union supports a government program that would guarantee a payment on base acres. This payment would be based on yields of prior decade for said commodity.

#### **A. Cotton**

1. Cotton should be a covered commodity in the farm bill.
2. We favor increasing the cotton loan price to 90 percent of parity.
3. Cotton projected yields should be based on actual proven production over the last three years, adjusted for disaster yields each year at not less than 90 percent of the previous year's projected yield. We recommend that yields shall be adjusted to 100 percent of the payment yield for natural disaster.

4. We continue to support that the price of cotton be established on grade and staple through the use of High Volume Instrument classing, and bonuses paid for higher strength cotton.

We urge direct election of members of the Cotton Board and Cotton, Inc. Board of Directors by a majority of producers in referendum, with expenses of the referendum paid out of USDA appropriations.

5. We urge the Secretary of Agriculture to call a periodic referendum to determine if producers favor continuing the cotton research and development assessment program.
6. We urge a resale type program for cotton comparable to the feed grain program, in an effort to prevent government stocks being dumped on the market at harvest time.
7. The cost of instrument classing should be paid by USDA with sales proceeds of loose cotton samples.
8. Re-classing of government owned cotton sold to processors or exporters discriminates against the producers, CCC, and local markets. We therefore urge that government regulations be revised to assure that the first classing of cotton prevails.
9. We recommend that barky cotton not be discounted.
10. We oppose all efforts to lower net income by government or industry action by use of net weight trading.
11. We urge that a loan price on cottonseed be established in relation to other oil seed crops and be not less than 90 percent of parity.
12. We urge that the United States Department of Agriculture continue programs aimed at complete eradication of all cotton insects and diseases and set up research programs funded by state agencies (paid for by the USDA appropriations) aimed at cutting costs of marketing.
13. We urge an increased effort by USDA to develop both domestic and export cotton markets with a goal of increasing net exports yearly. (Cotton exported under PL480 and other government programs should be of the qualities in largest supply.)
14. We urge the use and promotion of domestic cotton products whenever possible in order to save petroleum products and have a cleaner, healthier environment. We urge the use of cotton bagging to be used in packaging of cotton or a suitable biodegradable plastic derived from renewable sources, such as grain starch.
15. When a purpose exists we favor allowing farmers to maintain their base acreage allotment with full government protection in the event of prevented planting.
16. Once farmers have transferred their interest in a crop of cotton, they have no obligation to assume any additional payments which should be the responsibility of the cotton buyer. We urge producers to carefully scrutinize tariff charges to insure that improper charges are not being deducted from cotton crops.

17. We support the effort to control the cotton insects on a statewide basis. Consideration should be made for the areas that already have control measures in place and based on equitable cost shares.
18. We recommend that raw cotton burrs not be classified as feed, to eliminate feed analysis by gins.

## **B. Wheat, Feed Grain, and Forage**

We urge strict enforcement of the 1976 Federal Grain Inspection Standards Act to assure customers of the quality and amount of grain which they have purchased.

We recommend that producers be allowed to resale wheat, feed grain, and forage under their control for a three year period and with protection from USDA's calling in the grain at a price less than 120 percent of parity.

CCC owned grains should not be released in a manner that will be detrimental to market prices during harvest season. As a general rule, no release should be made from June 1 to January 31. In no case should release be made at less than 140 percent of parity.

We urge USDA to increase the loan price to a minimum of the average cost of production or not less than 90% of parity, whichever is the higher.

We urge USDA to use actual sales of grain and wheat to determine county support rates instead of arbitrary price markets.

STATE ISSUE: We want the Texas Department of Agriculture to test and seal all testing machines when they put a seal on the scales on which the grain is weighed, and to require that all machines be operated by trained and qualified operators.

STATE ISSUE: We request that the Commissioner of Agriculture of the State of Texas work with appropriate state and federal agencies to adopt reciprocal agreements on the interstate transportation of corn infected with the European corn borer.

STATE ISSUE: We urge that legislation be enacted establishing the producer's warehouse receipt as the sole legal title for commodities stored by the same producer in warehouses.

STATE ISSUE: We urge that the Texas Department of Agriculture be required to have their yearly audit of public elevators plus a minimum of one spot check by grain inspectors every year.

1. Wheat
  - a. We favor increasing the wheat loan price to 90 percent of parity.
  - b. When a purpose exists, we favor allowing farmers to maintain their base acreage in the event of prevented planting.

- c. We believe as long as there is a penalty on soft wheat, grain elevators should not be allowed to blend soft wheat with hard wheat, since they dock the producer, even if it only has a trace of soft wheat in the sample.
- d. STATE ISSUE: We urge the Legislature to participate in the Interstate Compact on Agricultural Grain Marketing.
- e. BE IT RESOLVED, that any farmer who has wheat in the farmer owned grain reserve be able to redeem his wheat from the reserve at any time the farmer can attain a profit.

## 2. Feed Grains

- a. We favor increasing all feed grain loan price to 90 percent of parity.
- b. We recommend that the county FSA Committee be given authority to make adequate adjustments regarding projected yields due to adverse weather conditions.
- c. We recommend that the loan rate on grain sorghum should be equal to that of corn.
- d. We recommend that barley and oats continue to be included in the feed grain program.
- e. We oppose the assessment of advance storage costs for feed grains and wheat placed in CCC loan.
- f. We support adding a higher grade point on grain sorghum.

## 3. Forage

In case of forage crops, as long as they are planted within the producer's base acreage, we favor NAP to be made if the ton per acre yield is below the normal yield as determined by the FSA County Committee for dry land or irrigated crops.

## C. Peanuts

- 1. Any change in the program should be in keeping 100% of parity returns to growers based on the 1910 1914 Parity Index instead of using the current index or prices paid to farmers.
- 2. We recommend that a research program between the USDA State Experiment Station and growers be continued with increased efforts to remedy serious peanut production diseases, to improve harvesting methods, improve varieties and develop better insect control.
- 3. We urge the continued authorization for the strip crop practices in peanuts and urge that local FSA Committees be empowered to allow for hardship cases in which crops in competing strips with peanuts fail to establish cover.

4. We urge that the School Lunch Division, Consumer and Marketing Service, and USDA approve nationwide the purchase of whole peanuts by school lunchrooms for use in daily food planning and urge that any program, domestic or foreign, not be charged to the peanut price support program.
5. We urge full cooperation by the USDA with the peanut industry in the implementation of a broad, systematic and continuing market development and promotional program for both domestic and export markets, excluding import markets.
6. We strongly oppose a target price system, especially one that would give one production area marketing advantage over another through early crop planting and harvesting. Because of climatic conditions, the southwest area would be forced into the market places after the domestic demands had been filled.
7. We favor a more valid identification method of aspergillus flavus in peanuts since more positive methods of identification are available.
8. We favor an increase in the loan rate for peanuts to 90 percent of parity.
9. We urge reinstatement of a policy to allow re cleaning and regrading of Segregation 2 and 3 peanuts within 48 hours of the original grading.
10. We oppose the use of any government funds or check off dollars for the research and development of peanut production in foreign countries.
11. Established yields should be updated and based on actual proven production adjusted for disaster years established yield.
12. We support an established standard to determine National Posted Price on peanuts so the LDP and counter cyclical payment determinations would be transparent, based on actual sales. We strongly urge full disclosure as to how the determinations are formulated.

#### **D. Soybeans**

1. We favor increasing the soybean loan price to 90 percent of parity.
2. We recommend that check off funds not be taken from producer payments without written permission or must be refunded upon request.
3. Crop insurance on soybeans should have a cutoff date for last day of the planting season so that they can be planted and still be insured. There should be no penalty because soybeans are planted after wheat, if the planting occurs within the proper time. The cutoff date should be set by area to conform to the above provisions.

#### **E. Industrial Hemp and Cannabis**

The Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 legalized hemp production on the federal level. Individual states need to write and approve their own specifications and rules with

final approval from USDA. In the State of Texas regulatory responsibilities will be divided between the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA), which will be responsible to regulate and license the growth and distribution of hemp and non-consumable hemp products, while the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) will regulate consumable hemp products processed and manufactured in Texas. Texas Farmers Union believes hemp will provide another sustainable market option for food, fiber and fuel production for farmers to grow.

**We support laws to allow production of hemp, including, but not limited to:**

- a. Clear federal and state rules on CBD products, as well as truth in labeling what is in said products for any kind of consumption or topical use;
- b. Funding for continued research into benefits of CBD oil, the use of industrial hemp as a supplemental livestock feed, and seed studies, as well as studying ways to use the entire plant;
- c. The delisting of hemp from the Federal Narcotics Schedule, and not be classified as a controlled substance.
- d. Incentives to help boost the building of fiber and oil processing plants in the U.S.
- e. Fair, consistent and science based programs and regulations in the growing of hemp.
- f. Uniformity throughout the States in rules and regulations.
- g. The encouragement of Universities and other research institutions to begin field trials of hemp in a variety of climates around the state and region.
- h. Adopting policies and regulations that ensure the market for hemp and cannabis is accessible to family farms and do not create unfair advantages to large companies and monopolies.
- i. Assuring that hemp growers will have unmitigated access to the banking system and FDIC and banks update the policies to coincide with new hemp rules and regulations.
- j. Processor specifications for states need to be uniform.
- k. The interstate shipment of hemp that is lawfully produced under federal regulations.
- l. Allowing producers to sell and ship seed across state lines ensuring the availability of quality seed.
- m. More updated and accurate testing procedures for hemp. Hemp needs to test 0.3% or lower of THC (Tetrahydrocannabinol) on dry matter to be classified as not marijuana. Current testing has +/- factor of 0.2%

**We oppose:**

A state by state regulatory environment which poses challenges for producers and processors.

## **F. Oil Seeds**

1. We demand that a price support loan for oil seed crops be established at 90 percent of parity.
2. We request the Secretary of Agriculture to establish an Oil Seed Advisory Committee which should be composed of oil seed producers elected by producers through FSA offices.
3. There should be no marketing penalty on cracked guar seed. It should be graded on a system similar to wheat and feed grain.
4. The excessive importation of palm oil, depressing domestic markets should be controlled by one, or a combination, of the following:
  - a. Automatic variable levy tariffs, import quotas, income deficiency payments, and a complete cessation of all imports when the presence of the commodity adversely affects oil seed price.
  - b. International commodity agreements with exporting nations.

## **G. Rice**

1. We favor a rigid control supply management program for the production of U.S. rice.
2. We recommend that Commodity Credit Corporation owned rice be used to meet the foreign commitments incurred under such programs as PL480 and that these stocks not be used in any manner which will depress domestic rice prices.
3. We recommend that exports be expanded, and reclaim previous markets.
4. We request that USDA raise the present rice loan price to 90 percent of parity.
5. We recommend that the USDA reconsider their ruling and return base acreage history to the producer instead of the landowner.
6. We urge the promotion of rice in school lunch programs.

## **H. Sugar**

1. We demand the reinstatement of sugar legislation that assures the Country's sugar need will be met at stable prices which will be reasonable to both the producer and consumer. The Sugar Act was beneficial to our balance of payments, and the sugar program was self-supporting and does not cost the taxpayer. We demand the price support level for sugar be raised to 90 percent of parity.
2. We urge that the domestic quota of sugar be increased to allow for expanded domestic sugar production provided it does not cause an imbalance between supply and demand.

3. We demand that the current federal research development and experimentation of all phases of sugar beet production, including water, soil, herbicides, insecticides, disease, seed improvement resistance, and other phases of production, be increased.
4. We urge that all imports of sugar be stopped until 120 percent of parity is reached on all domestically produced sugar.
5. We oppose any Federal price cap on domestic sugar.

## **I. Fruits and Vegetables**

1. We favor substantially increased state and federal efforts to step up research concerning the fruit and vegetable industry.
2. Vertical integration by large merchandisers has developed to the point that buying power for fruits and vegetables is being concentrated in fewer and fewer hands. We call for all possible countermeasures by appropriate agencies of State and Federal government to provide effective producer bargaining power. We urge amendments to the Agricultural Marketing Agreements Act to authorize marketing research to cover all aspects of marketing problems grading, handling and processing, transportation, market proration and the effective application of cooperative endeavors on the part of producers.
3. Workshops under the sponsorship of our land grant colleges should be held throughout the state to discuss the reasons for the lack of bargaining power of fruit and vegetable producers.
4. The Agricultural Marketing Agreement Act should be amended to extend quality and grade regulations of Section 608 E to other commodities imported into the United States.
5. We urge an investigation of large companies which promote production of fruits and vegetables in foreign countries, exploiting their labor force, only to import these fruits and vegetables into the United States in competition with domestic growers who must pay government established wage rates.
6. We urge that more effective laws be passed and enforced that require buyers of fruit and vegetables to be bonded unless they pay cash.
7. STATE ISSUE: These crops are of increasing economic importance to Texas and will become more important if proper emphasis on research is provided by state educational agencies. To keep Texas producers competitive with producers in other fruit and vegetable producing states, immediate action by the State Legislature is needed to assure adequate funds for research in pesticides, weed control, fungus disease, improved varieties and more efficient harvesting methods.
8. STATE ISSUE: We urge Farmers Union to work for equitable freight rate treatment for Texas grown vegetables, especially watermelons, comparable to rates in other growing areas. Specifically, we urge action to induce the railroads to provide "piggyback" service for watermelons in Texas as is provided in other states.

9. Fruits and vegetables are being imported with pesticides that are illegal in the U.S. We urge that legislation be passed prohibiting the importation of all crops treated with chemicals that are illegal for producers to use in the U. S.

## **J. Dairy**

1. We demand limitations on dairy imports and an increase in the support level to 90 percent of parity to assure adequate domestic supplies.
2. We support and vigorously promote both state and national legislation to require that all milk, including dry milk and milk products, sold at retail, bear a label on the container or dispenser stating content, other additives and volume thereof, with more stringent penalties for violations.
3. We recommend that the same criteria that apply to other commodity programs be enforced in the dairy program.
4. We take a strong stand in favor of the Agricultural Marketing Act of 1949. Federal market orders and agreements should be authorized for application nationally, as well as for local and regional subdivisions of the United States.
5. We demand the Federal Trade Commission review on a continuing basis marketing practices which create monopoly markets, causes undue spread between the prices paid the producer for raw milk and the price paid by the consumer, resulting in denial of producer's bargaining power.
6. Further, we urge the USDA to give careful study to defining and preventing practices concerning milk quality detrimental to the goal of the fair prices to producers. Class 1 milk should be utilized in chocolate milk and ice cream.
7. Producers should be protected at the Class 1 price on dry milk processed into imitation products. We therefore urge USDA to take steps to amend all milk market orders to this effect.
8. All dairy products entering U.S. should be produced and processed under the same standards as U.S. products. All dairy products from subsidizing countries should be rejected.
9. Dairy import relief should be put on a milk equivalency basis, instead of on the specific product basis presently used.
10. We urge the federal government to establish uniform sanitation standards and practices in the production, transportation, processing and sales of fluid milk products shipped in interstate and intrastate commerce.
11. We recommend that all imported dairy products be plainly labeled as such. Any product produced in the U.S. containing, or blended with, any amount of imported product should be labeled as imported.

12. We oppose the USDA's imposition of a milk tax on the producer. However, should any assessment be placed on a producer it should be returned if production is not increased?
13. We oppose any exports of American dairy products at prices below world market prices.
14. We support continuation of regional milk marketing orders.
15. We support a two tiered program to reduce milk production.
16. We encourage the USDA to use off grade milk for animal consumption only.
17. We support labeling of milk where growth hormones are used.
18. We support a transparent pricing plan where commodity numbers can be verified and market manipulation is impossible. This plan should pay dairymen faster, which would ensure that the market could better adjust to the supply and demand faster, shortening times of overproduction or shortages.
19. Due to the very unusual financial market conditions, Texas Farmers Union supports a floor price reflective of cost of production/cwt to insure that overproduction does not leave the nation with shortage of milk in the future.
20. Because of block voting by milk co-ops, we want the federal government to realize that National Milk Producers Federation does NOT represent all dairy farmers.

WHEREAS, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) now requires that all dairy herds in excess of 699 head of milking cattle must have a permit for their waste water disposal and that any dairies are required by law to maintain a no discharge of dairy water from the dairy premises.

WHEREAS, the regulation declares, "It is the policy of the TCEQ that there shall be no discharge of waste and/or waste water from concentrated animal feeding operations into the waters in the state, but rather that these materials shall be retained and utilized or disposed of on agriculture land," and,

WHEREAS, Texas dairyman support prudent environmental practices in preserving the quality of surface and ground water for use in their operation and by their families.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that Texas Farmers Union supports the following concepts:

- a. Reasonable standards for all dairymen to operate under which will protect the state resources;
- b. Close attention to mechanics of implementing these standards so that the cost of developing the program does not result in putting dairymen out of business.

- c. Provisions for a phase in approach, allowing dairymen to address their individual situation over a period of years, thereby giving them time to ingest their effluvium program into their cash flow.
- d. Work for a consistent and coordinated policy from all regulatory agencies that will give the dairyman a defined direction and basis that he can depend on.
- e. Push for state/federal cost share. Since the dairyman cannot always recover this environment cost from the marketplace, every option must be considered to fairly pay for these projects.

We recommend that milk handlers, seeking lower Somatic Cell counts in the milk they buy, achieve this by paying premiums for lower counts. We further recommend that penalties relating to Somatic Cell count not be imposed by milk handlers so long as the cell count is within the law.

We recommend the Somatic Cell count be 750,000.

We recommend that blending or pooling Grade milk with lower value Grade B milk not be allowed. We further recommend phasing out Grade B milk production since Grade A production far exceeds fluid needs.

We further recommend a public comment period to allow dairymen and dairy associations to submit their input.

## 21. Special Dairy Issues

- a. Require USDA to establish a 1% loan program to dairy farmers who lose their milk checks due to a financial default by a milk marketer. This fund should extend low interest loan to producers for the amount of money lost in the default, for a term of up to three years.
- b. Mandate that each USDA commodity promotion program hold a one producer, one vote referendum every three years, on the question of whether or not to continue the commodity promotion referendum.
- c. Mandate that each USDA commodity promotion program require that directors be elected by the producers who are assessed to fund the program.

Reasoning: Again, using dairy as an example, USDA appoints NDPRB directors, who tend to be the same old, same old "big wigs" directing agricultural co-ops. The commodity promotion programs (if sustained by producer votes) would benefit from the fresh ideas of democratically elected directors.

- d. Mandate that USDA's Office of the Inspector General (OIG) study whether NDPRB has violated USDA rules by directors approving grants/loans to wholly owned subsidiaries of the cooperatives to which they belong (and of which they are directors).

Reasoning: Probe potential conflict of interest of "loan to grants" approved at April 2006 NDPRB/DMI board meeting.

- e. IMMEDIATELY cease all imports of Grade A dairy products (particularly yogurt) coming from nations that do not have dairy farms/dairy plants approved under U.S. dairy sanitation codes (the Pasteurized Milk Ordinance).

Reasoning: All yogurt sold in the U.S. must be a Grade A product, and meet all rules of the governing sanitary code (the Pasteurized Milk Ordinance). The U.S., in 2005, received yogurt imports from 20 different nations. Only two nations Greece and Spain have dairy farms/dairy plants that have been inspected by U.S. licensed inspectors. All other yogurt imports are illegal. U.S. Customs Inspectors must be coming from nations other than Spain and Greece.

Reasoning: It's the law, and we should enforce sanitary conditions on dairy imports.

- f. Disallow imports of dairy products and meat/meat products from any nations with active outbreaks of Foot & Mouth Disease (FMD). Further, maintain zero imports of dairy and meat/meat products from any nations that have been "cleared" of FMD outbreaks for a period of one year following announcement of eradication.

Reasoning: This nation's food security is severely threatened by potential import of FMD (and other diseases). Because, the FMD virus may live in processed food products (and packaging) for up to six weeks following pasteurization (and other heat treatments), it is vital to disallow ANY dairy/meat/meat product imports from FMD infected nations.

Reasoning: National self-interest, to protect livestock and poultry industries.

- g. Amend the Capper Volstead Act and Internal Revenue Service rules to limit Antitrust exemptions for agricultural cooperatives only to the original procurement, pricing and marketing of raw agricultural products and commodities.

Reasoning: the marketing and transportation realities that existed when Capper Volstead was passed are no longer relevant. The growth and sophistication of major agricultural cooperatives bear little resemblance to co-ops back in the 1920s. All agricultural producers would be better off if their cooperatives' activities (beyond transportation, marketing and sale of raw farm products) were governed by the same set of laws that oversee proprietary food and energy processors.

- h. Require USDA Secretary to enforce rules of agricultural marketing orders that require adequate competition exist in all regional marketing orders.

Reasoning: Competition is virtually nonexistent in some federal milk marketing orders such as the Northeast. Two related entities DFA and DMS hold virtual exclusive rights to supply fluid milk to the three largest fluid processors in that region. Those three processors hold more than 80% market share of all fluid milk processed in the Northeast. USA rules for the Northeast fmmo require all marketers to sell at least 20% of their milk during late summer/fall months to fluid processors. It's impossible for some marketers not to be forced to sell their milk to Class 1 processors through DFA/DMS.

Reasoning: It's the law! Competition is mandated in the federal milk order system, but not adhered to.

- i. Require the USDA Secretary to act upon the mandate found in U.S.C. 7, Chapter 26, Subchapter III, Section 608c 18: rules requiring the USDA Secretary to adjust milk prices in the federal milk order system, based upon regional grain prices.

Reasoning: It's the law! USDA is directed by Congress to adjust farm milk prices in regional federal orders, based upon grain costs. Higher fmmo milk prices would help dairy farmers offset far higher grain costs.

- j. Require 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 GRAS (Generally Recognized as Safe).

Reasoning: Here's a good way to expose the Milk Protein Concentrate MPC is used in a number of foods sold in school meals programs. Requiring all foods sold in the school meals program to contain 100% GRAS ingredients is merely looking out for the safety of our school children and the integrity of the food served in schools.

- k. Milk Protein Concentrate (MPC), Blends and Food Preps Circumventing Trade Laws

**Texas Farmers Union supports:**

- i. Maintaining FDA's current definition of milk to prevent additives such as sodium gluconate and MPC from being used in standardized cheese
- ii. Actions that restrict the importation of MPC blends and food preps.
- iii. Properly informing consumers about the use of MPC, blends, and food preps in food production.
- iv. Making MPC and other dairy blends subject to Tariff Rate Quotas.
- v. Strong penalties for those dairy plants using MPC in standardized cheese production.
- vi. Requirement of an end use certification on all imports of MPC blends and food preps.

## **K. Raw Dairy**

### **We support:**

- a. The production and sale of raw/unpasteurized milk as it provides another market for dairies.
- b. Policies, practices and standards for responsible raw/unpasteurized milk production for dairy producers that choose to produce raw milk or dairy products for human consumption.
- c. Access to raw milk and dairy products for human consumption for all consumers that choose to consume raw milk.

### **We recommend:**

Due to the possible risk of cross-contamination that raw/unpasteurized milk be bottled as the product of a single source and wherever possible at the physical location of that source. Single source will keep intact the chain of responsibility and greatly aid in the tracking of possible cases of contamination.

## **L. Livestock**

1. We are in favor of stopping beef imports, live and dressed, until cattle prices are 110 percent of parity. We want limits placed on imports of processed food that will make it impossible to violate existing regulations and quotas. Imported meat products should be required to meet the same requirements as products produced in the United States, including strict inspection under the Pure Food and Drug regulations. In fairness to the American consumer, all imported meat and meat products should be labeled as imported and show country of origin in every retail situation.
2. We continue to urge the USDA to purchase U.S. livestock, poultry and pork for the School Lunch and Food for Peace programs. All products for such programs and for military consumption should be purchased exclusively from domestic resources. We deplore the situation that has existed in the so called "commodity purchase program" because processors have used these programs to increase their profits without increased benefits to the producer. We request that in the future, with programs of this nature, such purchases be made directly from the producer, but in cases where necessary to buy from the processor, the Department of Agriculture require the processor to certify that at least 90 percent of parity prices be paid to the producer of the commodity. We also recommend that penalties be established to ensure processor compliance with this provision.
3. Because of the importance of weight as an indication of the real value of an animal, we ask that firms or persons engaged in public auction of livestock be required by law to exhibit in a conspicuous manner during the time of the sale the weight of each animal or group of animals being sold.
4. We urge continued funding of the Screwworm Eradication Program, soliciting the aid of other states and countries and full cooperation on the part of farmers and

ranchers and State and federal governments toward the objectives of freeing the entire nation from this pest.

5. We also support the efforts to build and staff more diagnostic laboratories for livestock.
6. In the interest of greater returns to all farmers and ranchers producing livestock, we urge full cooperation and funding in effective programs to eradicate brucellosis, hog cholera, trichomoniasis in breeding bulls, and other infectious diseases and eliminate financial losses incurred in participating in these programs.
7. We urge a compulsory brucellosis vaccination program for heifer calves, permitting owner administration. All heifer cattle entering the state under one (1) year of age must be vaccinated before entry. All female stock entering the state must have clean health certificates.
8. We support the Texas Animal Health Commission's ruling that heifers born in the State of Texas will have to be vaccinated for brucellosis before change of ownership. State funds should be made available for brucellosis vaccination.

After a herd of beef cattle is tested and found to be free of brucellosis, the herd should be declared brucellosis free and made exempt from any further testing until time of sale, if no unvaccinated, untested cattle not from certified free (of brucellosis) herds are introduced into the herd.

a. Test Herds

- i. Vaccinate all susceptible animals with approved vaccine.
- ii. Retest no less than 180 days after vaccination. Animals that test negative should be declared brucellosis free and made exempt from any further testing.

b. Method of Testing

- i. Statewide Test
- ii. Followed by:
  1. Testing all eligible cattle going through a sale.
  2. Testing all eligible cattle going to a packer.

9. The State of Texas should mandate tuberculosis testing of all cattle imported from Mexico into this state. All cattle shipments from Mexico should be halted until the bovine tuberculosis has been cleaned up in Mexico.
10. Any livestock entering the U.S. from another country known to have a disease or parasite problem should be tested for that disease before entering.
11. All stockyards, auction sales, truck or gathering points for cattle should be required to maintain clean premises and to spray with disinfectant at periodic intervals to ensure the safety and wellbeing of livestock.

12. We urge a more accurate census of livestock in all classes, with this information being made available to livestock producers. This information should include both live and dressed beef imports when reported by USDA.
13. Allow for the Interstate shipment of state inspected meat if that inspection equals or surpasses Federal Inspection Standards.
14. An incentive should be provided to encourage more top graduating veterinarians to return to agricultural areas for this vocation.
15. We urge adequate governmental reimbursement to producers of herds quarantined and destroyed due to disease.
16. We urge a strict enforcement of the existing state livestock statute. We urge the amendment of the Beef Check off Program to require a producer working referendum and an annual referendum thereafter.
17. Texas Farmers Union encourages production of beef to meet the demand of specialty markets, including the demand for beef free of synthetic hormones.
18. We urge the legislature to amend state check off programs to permit producers to request and receive funds.
19. STATE ISSUE: We urge the State Legislature to study the existing statutes and make the necessary changes needed to establish an adequate statewide brand inspection and brand registration program.
20. We urge the Texas State Legislature to enact Legislation putting the Texas Animal Health Commission under the direction of the Texas Department of Agriculture.
21. We oppose any methane tax on any livestock.
22. Animal Welfare

**We believe:**

An uninformed public presents tangible threats to U.S. agriculture's ability to efficiently produce food and fiber, and several misconceptions exist relating to necessary confinement of livestock.

**We support:**

- a. Strengthening risk management and livestock indemnity programs to help farmer and ranchers affected by extreme weather;
- b. A review and reform of livestock checkoff programs at the Federal and State levels;
- c. The use of trade policy to limit the importation of animal products;
- d. Reauthorization and full implementation of mandatory Country-of-Origin labeling by Congress and USDA;
- e. The humane treatment of animals.

- f. The producers' rights to own and raise livestock and have livestock and their products recognized as personal property.
- g. Working with responsible organizations to properly educate the American people on this issue.
- h. Efforts to counter legislation detrimental to the agriculture industry.

### 23. Animal Cruelty

Although Texas Farmers Union supports the prevention of cruelty of animals, we are not blind to the fact that without a market place, we can and will have horses that reach ages beyond their usefulness and healthy lives. The vast expense of caring for these animals have left them malnourished and abandoned.

Texas Farmers Union supports the reopening of all horse processing plants.

### 24. National Animal Identification

Texas Farmers Union (TFU) believes proactive steps are necessary to maintain and endure consumer confidence in the safety of U.S animals and food products, as well as to stabilize our domestic and export markets and minimize any economic damage resulting from any animal disease outbreaks or bioterrorist attacks.

TFU opposes any mandatory National Animal Identification System (NAIS) until all of our questions and concerns are answered. Any NAIS needs to have the following considerations:

- a. Have the least possible cost to the producers and fully paid for by the Department of Homeland Security;
- b. Any NAIS should be administered by USDA;
- c. Encourage full participation and shared responsibility throughout the industry;
- d. Data collected shall be controlled by the federal government;
- e. Provides adequate liability protection firewalls including, but not limited to, an exemption from the Freedom of Information Act;
- f. Is conducive to the collection of data that will be compatible with, and complimentary to the Country-of-Origin Labeling (COOL) law;
- g. The immediate reauthorization of the COOL law; and
- h. Establishes an educational component within the program to educate producers.

## 25. Livestock Health

The Texas and United States livestock industry is a significant contributor to the agricultural and overall economy. Livestock health is critical to production agriculture and our nation's ability to provide a safe food supply. Texas Farmers Union believes in the initiatives to ensure livestock health:

- a. Mandatory Country-of-Origin Labeling;
- b. Prevent Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) and Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD) and any other diseases through:
  - i. Not allowing imports of any kind to be brought into the U.S. from any country or region that is not recognized as being disease free;
  - ii. Continuing the site-specific ban on processing, blending, and shipping of meat from a plant where BSE has been found, until tests results show the plant is free from BSE;
  - iii. Increasing federal and international research to understand and prevent BSE/FMD and any other disease;
  - iv. Rescinding the USDA and APHIS rules that allow the importation of livestock and meat products from countries with active disease outbreaks;
  - v. Continuing the ban on livestock and meat imports from countries with BSE/FMD outbreaks until the disease is controlled and eradicated; and
  - vi. Banning all meat or feed imports from countries that have not implemented and enforced a ruminant-to-ruminant feed ban.
- c. Provide an economic safety net for U.S. livestock producers, if the importation of cattle and beef products from BSE/FMD positive countries negatively impacts domestic profitability; and
- d. Ban livestock, animal protein products, and meat imports that would jeopardize U.S. efforts to eradicate livestock diseases, including BSE and FMD.

## 26. Livestock Market Reform

We support the following initiatives to reduce livestock market concentration and enhance competition.

- a. Restriction of all forms of direct and indirect ownership or control of agricultural products by agri-businesses, including the prohibition of ownership, control and feeding of livestock by packing companies;
- b. Encouraging development of farmer-owned cooperatives for marketing and processing;
- c. Placing restrictions on the percentage of captive supply and that firm-bid pricing be established in forward contracts;
- d. Making mandatory price reporting permanent law;
- e. Efforts to increase transparency of mandatory price reporting information, including but not limited to:

- I. Eliminating or lowering the kill capacity reporting exemption;
  - II. Regular reporting after the fact, even when a proprietary exemption precludes price and volume reporting on a daily basis; and
  - III. Enhancing the reported date to be user friendly.
- f. Protecting livestock producers from unfair competition and monopolistic practices by strengthening the definition of the Packers and Stockyards Act. All livestock producers should have equal access to markets that do not discriminate against family-farm livestock producers; and
  - g. Enacting legislation that clearly defines and prohibits volume-based price discrimination in livestock markets.

## **M. Swine**

1. STATE ISSUE: Texas pork producers are being unfairly paid for their efforts to increase the quality of pork they produce. Texas producers should be paid as the Corn Belt producers are, i.e., on the grade and yield.
2. STATE ISSUE: We support the state hog cholera eradication program and stronger action to eradicate pseudo rabies.
3. We request that check off dollars be refunded to producers upon request.
4. Legislation should be adopted to prevent large feed companies, processors and chain stores from producing swine or pork.
5. We support the elimination of open lagoons for new construction or expansion for swine confined animal feeding operations that exceed 2500 head capacity. Also promote the use of new available technology or organic digesters to process wet animal waste to dry usable organic waste.

## **N. Poultry and Eggs**

1. We endorse the appointment of national advisory committees, composed of producers, to advise the Secretary of Agriculture in the formulation of programs designed to manage the supply of poultry and poultry products and to improve the economic position of the growers.
2. We ask the USDA to investigate and conduct experiments in the use of feather meal and poultry by product meal, including digestibility, and to determine whether use of such products has any relationship to outbreaks of poultry cholera.
3. We urge the support of marketing orders for turkeys, broilers and eggs.
4. Legislation should be adopted to prevent large feed companies, processors and chain stores from producing poultry and eggs.

## **O. Wool and Mohair**

Congress should reenact and permanently extend the Wool Act, with incentive levels established at 100% parity.

## **P. Honey/Pollinators**

We support the strengthening and continuation of the Honey Program.

Pollinators are essential and vital to production agriculture. The recent observations of the collapse in the bee populations (referred to as Colony Collapse Disorder) has brought on concern from all aspects of the agriculture community.

Texas farmers Union supports:

- a. Agricultural research and education to encourage innovative approaches to protecting honeybee health;
- b. Development and expanded research to enhance native pollinators;
- c. Encouraging collaboration between pesticide manufacturing and pollinator industries to educate applicators and producers about the potentially harmful effects of certain pesticides on pollinator populations; and
- d. Public research of effects of pesticides, such as neonicotinoids, on bee colonies, especially related Colony Collapse Disorder.

## **Q. Packers and Stockyard Act**

The Packers, and Stockyards Administration – part of the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) is the agency responsible for enforcement of antitrust laws in meatpacking business and protecting farmers and ranchers from predatory and retaliatory trade practices through enforcement of the Packers and Stockyards Act of 1921.

**We support:**

- a. The reinstatement and adequate funding of the Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyard Administration to promote competitive trading practices;
- b. Full enforcement of the Packers and Stockyard Act with special focus on the monopolistic control and manipulation of prices within the livestock industry;
- c. Congress to reinstate the rate making and condition of sale provision authority of the Packers and Stockyard Administration. All custom feed lot operators and livestock management firms that buy and sell, sell for commission or engage in public livestock transactions, should be brought under provision of the Packard and Stockyard Act.
- d. Full funding and enforcement of the provisions of the Act.

**We oppose:**

- a. The decision by the USDA Secretary of eliminating the Grain Inspection, Packers, and Stockyards Act (GIPSA) as a standalone agency and transferring its delegation to the Agricultural Marketing Agency (AMS).
- b. Any legislation or regulatory action that would weaken the effectiveness of the Packers and Stockyard Act.
- c. The 2019 USDA proposed rule “Undue and Unreasonable Preferences and Advantages” under the Packers and Stockyard Act as written. We urge USDA to strengthen its definition of “Undue and Unreasonable Preferences and Advantages” and introduce additional rules to ensure fair treatment and completion in the livestock sector.

**R. Ag Mergers**

The consolidation of small agricultural companies into large mega companies over the years has slowly taken away the farmers and ranchers ability to seek a fair price for the purchasing of or the selling of their products. In the last couple of years, we have seen these mega companies start merging with one another. The Bayer/Monsanto merger is one of many ongoing mergers in the seed, chemical and beef industry.

**Texas Farmers Union believes:**

- a. Competition in the industry is a must for the survival of America’s farmers and ranchers;
- b. The Nation’s Anti-Trust enforcement has failed U.S. farmers and consumers;
- c. Vertical integration makes it harder for new and small companies to enter and compete in the industry;
- d. Consolidation will diminish critical research and development initiatives, which drive innovation and technological advances for agriculture;
- e. It reduces choice and raises prices of chemicals and seed for the farmer;
- f. It drives cattle prices lower due to less competition; and
- g. All the mega mergers are in complete violation of U.S. Anti-Trust laws.

**Texas Farmers Union supports:**

- a. The U.S. Congress to abide by and enforce all U.S. Anti-Trust laws;
- b. No Mergers between companies that cause any financial harm, loss of access to technology, traits, and chemicals to the American farmer and rancher.

**S. Glass-Steagall**

We urge congress to reinstate the Glass-Steagall Act to regulate banking and Wall St.

## **T. Research and Commodity Checkoff Program**

We recommend that any mandatory research and promotion check off program for agriculture commodities also are placed on all commodities traded by the Board of Trade.

The following criteria should be included in all state and federal research and promotion programs:

1. The program is presented to producers in referendum and approved by two-thirds of the producers voting.
2. The Agriculture Commissioner or Secretary of Agriculture should strictly enforce the use of check off funds for research or promotion for American grown products only.
3. A research and promotion program can be terminated at any time by a simple majority vote of the producers voting, with such referendum held on the call of 10 percent of the producers.
4. Permitting producers to request and receive a refund of checkoff dollars from any Federal or State checkoff.
5. Audits of each program every 3 years to ensure all activities are in compliance with the laws.
6. Increase transparency of the individual boards' actions by showing how Federal and State checkoff funds are spent and the purpose of their expenditures.
7. Stopping federally mandated funds from being used for anti-competitive programs or from being spent to disparage another commodity in the marketplace.
8. Stopping federally or state mandated checkoff dollars from being transferred to parties that seek to influence government policies or actions relating to agriculture issues.
9. The enforcement of the prohibition against conflicts of interest in contracting and all other decision making operations of the checkoff program.
10. We urge that the major emphasis in agricultural research be shifted from production to marketing.
11. All research and promotion programs must be under the control of a farmer elected board of directors made up solely of producers who derive two thirds or more of their gross income from farming.
12. We demand the Legislature or Congress closely scrutinize all appropriations requests for agricultural research programs conducted by government agencies, educational

institutions or private contractors to ensure that public funds be spent only on projects beneficial to family farmers and consumers.

13. STATE ISSUE: We hereby urge the Attorney General to enforce the regulations concerning all agricultural check off programs.
14. We oppose proxy or block voting by cooperatives.

## **U. Agri-Tourism**

### **We support:**

1. The inclusion of agri-tourism, including farm-bed and breakfasts and short-term rentals, as part of the definition of agriculture;
2. Encouraging USDA to recognize the value of agri-tourism and on-farm education programs as a critical value-added product; and
3. USDA developing and implementing a program to educate producers about liabilities associated with agri-tourism operations.

## **VIII. NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE AND ADMINISTRATIVE NEEDS**

### **A. Farm Bill**

The U.S. family farmers have always worked hard to provide for their families. Texas Farmers Union (TFU) has advocated for Farm Bills to help set guidelines to keep family farmers on their farms.

Texas Farmers Union believes that a supply management program will address the problems of cheap prices and cost. A supply management program supports net farm income by providing price support for the major crops that farmers produce. Supply management programs would take into account the cause of low prices (supply that exceeds demand) by taking a marginal amount of supply off the market so that crop prices rise to a profitable level and if necessary, inducing farmers to reduce their production through paid acreage reduction programs. With crop prices well below the cost of production for the foreseeable future, revenue programs will be too expensive and still provide inadequate support to farmers.

### **Texas Farmers Union supports a Farm Bill with the following:**

- Non-Recourse Loan Rate at 95% of the full cost of production for corn, all other crops set at their historic ratio to corn;
- Release price set at 130% of the loan rate;
- Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) held reserves will be implemented to control commodity prices;
- Voluntary acreage reduction program in which farmers bid acres into a 3-year set aside based on environmental considerations;
- Acres need not be contiguous;
- Planting flexibility;

- Yield-only insurance subsidized by the government, (farmers who want revenue insurance products can obtain those in the commercial marketplace;
- To qualify for crop insurance subsidies, you must be enrolled in the acreage reduction program;
- Cotton as a covered commodity;
- A revised dairy program to meet the needs of family dairies;
- Provisions that enable family farmers to market their products locally and regionally;
- Value the environment by fully funding authorized conservation programs, and
- Value the less fortunate by fully funding food and nutrition programs.

## **B. Joint Resolution**

Proposing an amendment to the Constitution of the United States to expressly exclude for-profit corporations from the rights given to natural persons by the Constitution of the United States, prohibit corporate spending in all elections, and affirm the authority of Congress and the States to regulate corporations and to regulate and set limits on all election contributions and expenditures.

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled (two thirds of each House concurring therein), that the following article is proposed as an amendment to the Constitution of the United States, which shall be valid to all intents and purposes as part of the Constitution when ratified by the legislatures of three-fourths of the several States within seven years after the date of its submission for ratification:

### *ARTICLE*

*Section 1. The rights protected by the Constitution of the United States are the rights of natural persons and do not extend to for-profit corporations, limited liability companies, or other private entities established for business purposes or to promote business interests under the laws of any state, the United States, or any foreign state.*

*Section 2. Such corporate and other private entities established under law are subject to regulation by the people through the legislative process so long as such regulations are consistent with the powers of Congress and the States and do not limit the freedom of the press.*

*Section 3. Such Corporate and other private entities be prohibited from making contributions or expenditures in any election of any candidate for public office or the vote upon any ballot measure submitted to the people.*

*Section 4. Congress and the States shall have the power to regulate and set limits on all election contributions and expenditures, including a*

*candidate's own spending, and to authorize the establishment of political committees to receive, spend, and publicly disclose the sources of those contributions and expenditures."*

### **C. NASS Reports**

We acknowledge that farm reports and surveys could be a helpful tool in gauging the amount of crops being grown or stored on farms.

Texas Farmers Union believes that the way the National Agricultural Statistic Service (NASS) conducts and reports these findings are inaccurate and can be price damaging to the specific crops being reported.

Texas Farmers Union urges USDA and NASS use a method of all farmers reporting for more accurate reports or no reports at all, since a weighted survey would be totally inaccurate.

### **D. Structure of the USDA**

The USDA plays the lead role in administrating vital programs. Under USDA's umbrella are agencies such as Farm Service Agency (FSA) and Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) that deliver Farm Bill programs. Texas Farmers Union believes FSA and NRCS offices are understaffed of employees.

#### **We support:**

- a. All USDA local offices be fully funded and staffed to administer programs and handle peak workloads to deliver all farm programs in a fair and timely manner.

#### **We oppose:**

- a. The transfer or reorganization of any functions of the USDA to any other department of the federal government.
- b. The presentation of large cash awards to employees of any branch of USDA for doing their job.

### **E. Agricultural Inputs**

1. We demand the President and Congress move forward with all deliberate speed in developing an energy program that will make our country self-sufficient at the earliest possible time. We demand the federal government take whatever steps that are needed to ensure that ample fuel, oil, fertilizer and other chemicals are supplied to the farmers in the United States at a cost in line with the economic return on production. It is necessary that agricultural uses of energy be second in priority only to essential domestic uses.

2. We encourage the research and development of raw farm products for the development of energy sources, i.e., alcohol fuels, including exemption from taxation and excessive regulations.
3. We recommend that there be adequate state and federal funding for research in solar, wind and other related energy sources.
4. We recommend that a study be undertaken to research shortages of supplies to find out if it is a true shortage, if overseas exports have caused these shortages, or if it is devised to increase prices.
5. We support legislation to use agriculturally produced biodegradable by products (i.e., plastic bags made from corn).

## **F. Rural Electrification and Administrative Needs**

1. We urge the investigation by the appropriate congressional committee into the activities of electric power monopolies in their efforts to weaken, harass and destroy Rural Electric Cooperatives.
2. We urge the Rural Utilities Service be continued with adequate administrative and loan funds.
3. No electric or other utility should be allowed to count as cost, in rate making and expenditure for tax deduction purposes, the money they spend, either directly or indirectly, to influence political action at any level.
4. We urge that the Rural Electrification Administration use all diligence in making generation and transmission loans available to the cooperatives in Texas and the country as a whole with minimum of delay in order that the cooperatives may be in a position to generate their own power when and wherever the economic need arises.
5. We strongly support the preference and withdrawal clause to protect first priority rights of Rural Electric Cooperatives to electric power generated in publicly owned facilities.
6. We urge the RUS administrator to increase the availability of 2% loans for those cooperatives serving in low density areas. Cooperative financial arrangements and source of funding should not be subject to assignment, transfer or obligation, or delegated to any institution without approval of 80% of the effective cooperative.
7. Since Electric Cooperative members have adequate protection from excess rates by virtue of their vote in the administration of their co-ops, regulation of rates by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), and Public Utilities Commission (PUC), could only result in harassment and would make no beneficial contribution to the protection of electric co-op members. We oppose the entry of FERC and PUC into this field.

We urge continuing efforts to secure legislation giving territorial integrity to the Rural Electric Cooperatives in Texas.

8. We oppose the deregulation of electrification, especially rural areas, "retail wheeling" or "cherry picking."

## **G. Rural Areas Development Programs**

1. We recognize that the only meaningful rural and revitalization program that will permanently stabilize the rural economy is a program which ensures a parity of return on farm commodities; therefore, we place prime importance on a fair price for farm products as the most important way of strengthening rural and national economics.
2. The Rural Development Act affords the opportunity for broadening the base of economic and social stability in rural areas and on Main Street. The opportunities for application of this program should be fully explored by Farmers Union leaders. Farmer's Union members should participate in and accept leadership responsibilities in civic, service, and economic development and provide health, recreational, educational, and other facilities.
3. The cost price squeeze makes it imperative that farmers be in a position to form both marketing and purchasing cooperatives.

## **H. Expanded Consumption of Food and Fiber**

1. Expansion of Exports
  - a. We believe that long range extension of the authority to use constructively U.S. Food and Fiber under Public Law 480 IS in the interest of the United States as well as recipient countries. We fully endorse food and fiber loans with provisions for repayment over a number of years. Cost incurred under Public Law 480 are in the interest of all citizens and U.S. foreign policy and, therefore should not be charged against the budget of the Department of Agriculture.
  - b. We favor additional international commodity agreements.
  - c. Inform the American public that reasonable farm commodity reserves are a vital part of our domestic economic security program.
  - d. We believe that it is reasonable to develop trade in wheat, feed grain, oil seed crops, livestock, dairy products, or other farm commodities for which any nation is able to pay in dollars or gold, provided that the purchasing nation shows willingness to cooperate in orderly marketing of farm products in international trade.
2. Expanding Domestic Consumption.
  - a. The Food Stamp Program should be extended to all areas to protect the needy. We feel that guidelines should be strictly administered to eliminate the improper uses of the Food Stamp Program.

- b. The school lunch and school milk programs should be extended.
- c. We urge greater emphasis on market expanding research, especially in finding new uses for the farm commodities.
- d. We urge reenactment of the Farmer to Consumer Direct Marketing Act.
- e. We urge the USDA to use appropriate American agriculture products in their promotions.

## **I. Coordination and Organization of Farm Agencies**

### 1. Farmer Elected Committees:

We believe the Farm Service Agency (FSA) should be the lead agency to administer all Farm Bill programs.

#### **We support:**

- a. The farmer elected committee system;
- b. The integrity and independence of the farmers elected committees in carrying out farm programs;
- c. Sufficient funding so the committee members can be properly trained and can function effectively;
- d. Greater authority given to FSA county committees in determining the disaster designations and the appropriate program applications;
- e. Continuing an independent appeals process and the producer's right to mediation;
- f. Appointees to the State FSA committees, which administer farm programs, should be family farmers and ranchers. Appointees shall be chosen from a list of family farmers and ranchers provided by each county committee;
- g. Better working agreements and cooperation between all farm agencies; federal, state and county;
- h. The consolidation of USDA program offices into one building per county;
- i. Sufficient funding to adequately staff USDA program offices with qualified personnel to handle peak workloads so that services and payments can be distributed in a fair and timely manner.

#### **We oppose:**

The closing of any county FSA office where production agriculture is still practiced.

## **J. Conservation**

### 1. Soil and Water Conservation

Since conservation of our soil and water resources is in the best interest of all Americans, we recommend that sufficient government aid be provided to family farmers and

ranchers to conserve our land and water resources. We specifically recommend additional fund appropriations for the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) to provide and enact agricultural conservation programs.

We encourage framers and ranchers to take advantage of any program to meet the soil, water, and woodland conservation needs of their farms.

**We support:**

- a. The conservation of water be given priority through all workable means;
- b. Special allocations for disaster areas so that 100 percent payments may be made for practices carried out to prevent erosion and depletion from flood and drought;
- c. Funds being available at all times for repairing conservation projects destroyed by natural disasters, without time limitations;
- d. That range improvement practices under conservation programs be funded at 50 percent or more of cost share;
- e. The continued depletion allowance for underground irrigation water;
- f. Increased appropriations for small watershed flood prevention programs, and call upon the Administration to spend all small watershed funds that are appropriated;
- g. Ownership of ground water supplies remain the property of the landowner;
- h. That a proportionate number of agricultural producers be appointed to, elected to, water authorities, boards, and districts;
- i. That any and all wetlands determination throughout Texas rely on the presence of all three of the following mandatory wetland criteria, simultaneous appearing on the same site year round:
  - i. Hydrology
  - ii. A predominance of hydric soil
  - iii. A prevalence of hydrophilic vegetation.
- j. Legislation regulating the use of toxic materials that are widely used in cloud seeding for weather modification and that the location of any such weather experiments be formed into special areas by vote of the people. Any toxic material that is going to be used in the atmosphere or otherwise should be published in the affected area's newspapers. The State Health Department should be required to run test of the water and soil to determine how much contamination is being done to the water.

**We Oppose:**

Any new soil conservation program which would deny federal farm program benefits to family farmers without providing sufficient time and a variety of methods for complying with such program rules. The rules for implementing any soil conservation plan should be fair and reasonable and should take into consideration all other existing rules and regulations which family farmers must follow.

2. Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP)

We support the continuation and expansion of the EQIP program, which provides federal cost share and technical assistance to enable family farmers to comply with environmental requirements and help put into place certain conservation practices.

**We support:**

- a. The full appropriation of existing authorized funding and an increase in future funding; and
- b. Changing the rules that apply, so that farmers can clean out existing ponds during droughts on a cost-share basis;

**We oppose:**

- a. Conservation program provisions which exclude or penalize producers who are early adopters of stewardship practices;
- b. Penalizing producers for non-compliance with program requirements resulting from “Acts of God” such as drought, fire, and floods;
- c. Any action from county offices or employees that reward contracts, first to friends or relatives and discriminate against the other applicants; and
- d. Any cuts to funding to existing contracts. All signed contracts should be fully funded for the entirety of the contract and paid out to the farmer.

3. Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

**We Support:**

- a. Full funding, implementation, and expansion of the CSP program;
- b. Implementation of CSP in a manner which recognizes conservation practices appropriate to different climatic regions and provides for such agricultural production practices to be adequately scored by the Conservation Management Tool (CMT);
- c. Allowing new conservation enhancements made to land in an existing CSP contract to count as credit on subsequent CSP contracts as way of rewarding early-adaptors; and
- d. Consistent interpretation of the rules and guidance and documents among all NRCS offices.

4. Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

**We support:**

- a. Offering an opportunity to re-bid and extend the expiring contract for an additional 10 years;
- b. Allowing an additional 20 million acres be enrolled into CRP;
- c. An option for a reduced payment rate should be allowed if limited grazing is permitted; and
- d. We urge county committees to enforce existing rules and regulations concerning noxious weeds.

## **K. Clean Water Act (CWA)**

The Clean Water Act is the primary federal law in the U.S. governing water pollution. In 2015 the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) created rule under the law called “waters of the U.S.” (WOTUS) that was so broad and vague that almost any spot where rainwater flows or pools would be a federally protected body of water, causing farmers and ranchers financial hardships in performing routine maintenance on their land. We feel farmers and ranchers are committed to improving their environmental stewardship and strive to leave the land and water in better shape for the next generation. They embrace both traditional and new conservation practices, such as planting cover crops and buffer strips to protect the water and soil.

### **We support:**

- a. Protecting and keeping a safe, clean water supply for future generations.
- b. Regulations for the process to identify waters protected under the Clean Water Act (CWA) being made clearer, simpler and faster.
- c. Voluntary compliance and incentive-based, cost-sharing programs currently working to minimize production agriculture’s impact on our water supply.
- d. Fully funded compliance programs to help mitigate any financial hardship placed on farmers and ranchers.
- e. Exemptions for normal agricultural activities being re-affirmed.

### **We oppose:**

- a. The “waters of the U.S.” (WOTUS) rule as currently written.
- b. Broadening the definition of what waters are considered jurisdictional under the CWA.
- c. The deletion of the word “navigable” waters from the CWA which would expand the taking of private property rights.

## **L. Climate Change**

TFU is concerned about the connection between catastrophic weather and climate change. We believe the scientific evidence that indicates that human activities are a contributing factor to climate change and believe human activity has the potential to help mitigate climate change.

### **We support:**

- a. Reducing more carbon emissions.
- b. Research funding for soil health and climate-smart production.
- c. The promotion of conservation practices that focus of water quality concerns and the ability to capture carbon and store it.
- d. Investing in and continuing to grow renewable fuels and alternatives.
- e. Incentives to reduce forest loss.
- f. Searching and funding for new technologies to combat and reverse damage that has already occurred.

- g. The U.S. becoming a global leader in the efforts to adapt and mitigate climate change, and continuing to educate farmers, ranchers and rural communities on climate change.
- h. The acknowledgement that climate change is real and that any and all efforts should be made to combat the problem immediately.
- i. Efforts to preserve rainforest land and convert cleared rainforest land back into a productive rainforest area.

## **M. Information Collection and Protection**

Agricultural data collected by organizations, companies, education institutions, and other entities should not be used, monetized, or distributed without the permission of producers from whom the data is gathered, to:

1. Ensure data collected remains the property of the producer;
2. Protect privacy;
3. Avoid consolidation of market power;
4. Maintain competition; and
5. Prevent manipulating markets.

## **N. Environmental Issues**

1. We call on the federal government to narrow the definition of "facility" and "navigable waters" in an appropriate manner so that maintaining fuel storage tanks on the farm will not require agricultural producers to meet heavy insurance requirement or make them subject to the stiff fines and penalties called for under the Oil Pollution Act of 1990.
2. We oppose the storage and ultimate disposition of the Special Nuclear Materials (SNM), plutonium, uranium, tritium and other weapon components, resulting from the production of further nuclear weapons and from the dismantlement of the existing stockpiles in the agriculture producing areas and above or near groundwater supplies.

We support a mutual verification and non-proliferation policy and urge a national broad base dialogue addressing dismantlement, storage and disposition of SNM.

3. We favor an aggressive program to immediately stop acid rain and clean up toxic waste dumps. We strongly oppose the dumping of either nuclear or toxic waste anywhere in the State of Texas.
4. NATIONAL ISSUE: We oppose the purchasing or leasing of any land by the Department of Energy or any other government agency for the purpose of dumping or storing nuclear waste.

## **O. Endangered Species**

Texas Farmers Union strongly supports efforts made by state and federal agencies to increase populations of threatened species. These efforts should not impair the

farmer's right to manage their own land. Producers and landowners should be offered incentives to manage wildlife populations.

## **P. Land Policy**

The Texas Farmers Union strongly supports owner operator family farms and opposes the growth of large corporate farms. Therefore, when agricultural land is sold by a government agency, TFU advocates that such sales be made first to owner operator families, with smaller units receiving priority over larger units. The long range goal is to bring all small operations up to a size which is adequate for a family unit and consistent with other family operated farms in the given vicinity.

We urge Congress and the Administration to uphold the original provisions of the Reclamation Act of 1902. We urge strict compliance with the reporting provisions of the Foreign Agricultural Lands Disclosure Act.

We recommend that all federally owned lands utilized for agricultural production be sold or if not sold, leased to the highest bidder every 5 years and taxed on an equitable basis with properties in the area.

## **Q. Conservation Reserve Program**

1. When a Conservation Reserve Program contract expires, we support offering an opportunity to re bid and extend the contract for an additional ten (10) years and to further allow that an additional 20 million acres be enrolled in the program. The payment should remain equivalent to the present program. An option for a reduced rate should be allowed if limited grazing is permitted.
2. We urge county committees to enforce existing rules and regulations concerning noxious weeds.

## **R. Farmer Cooperatives**

1. Since the Farmer Union was organized, it has built more farmer cooperatives than any other single organization in America; therefore, we reaffirm our support of farm cooperatives and ask continued federal support with low interest rates.
2. We encourage farmers to use their cooperative organizations to strengthen their bargaining positions by using their Rural Electric Cooperatives, Rural Telephone Cooperatives, Production Credit Associations, Federal Land Banks, gins, elevators, processing, supply and marketing associations.
3. Enactment and establishment of a nationwide REA type program is needed to provide loans and technical assistance to farmer owned and controlled business enterprises to acquire (or build) and operate farm marketing, storage and processing facilities and services to serve as a yardstick to measure a realistic spread between prices received by farmers and those paid by consumers.

4. We firmly take our stand against unfair taxation of farmer cooperatives, and we urge each and every Farmers Union member to resist any attempts to undermine the Capper Volstead Act.
5. We support strong lobbying by bona fide farmers in support of cooperatives, with attention focused on securing legislation which is in the best interest of farmers.
6. We urge revision of anti-trust legislation in order to permit farmer owned cooperatives to acquire processing plants and other facilities and the revision of other legislation which would permit members of cooperatives to negotiate with other individuals and groups.
7. Recognizing that the success of the cooperative movement is totally dependent upon each farmer cooperative filling its primary function of rendering a service to its patrons, we urge all patrons of all cooperatives to be particularly alert to the proper functions of the cooperative to which they belong.
8. We recommend that cooperatives schedule their directors and managers to attend training schools or institutes as a requirement for board members.
9. We support consumer food cooperatives in order to establish better understanding between the consumer and the food producer, and provide better services through cooperative buying of its members.
10. We urge that an educational program be established on cooperative marketing for all farm commodities to gain more efficiency in making cooperatives our marketing tool.

## **S. Agri-Terrorism**

As the agriculture sector continues the rapidly increased move towards a more computer, satellite and data controlled industry, so does the increased threats of cyber-attacks and other agri-terrorism attacks on our nation's food chain, equipment and data, rural America must be educated, prepared and vigilant of all potential circumstances. Another rising threat to agriculture, is the Animal Extremist or Animal Rights Groups that will do almost anything to get their agenda out into the public's eye. Most of the time these extremist groups choose a farm/farms and trespass onto them and either stealing animals has a way of protesting the way they are raised or doing damage to crops by setting out foreign items, such as chains, t-posts, spikes and many other things hidden in crops that if not seen will cause major damage to farm equipment or by doing damage to equipment themselves.

### **We believe:**

- a. As more and more home equipment and software devices are hooked up to networks and tasks are turned over to automation, the opportunity for more cyber-attacks will grow;
- b. Farm computers, ag-retailers, autonomous equipment and data sharing are very susceptible to these kinds of attacks;
- c. That our farmers and ranchers are some of the best at raising and caring for their animals and crops;

- d. Extremist groups targeting farms and ranches are a direct threat to farmers and ranchers livelihoods; and
- e. Farmers and ranchers need to be prepared and proactive and know their legal rights when dealing with these kinds of threats.

**We support:**

- a. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and USDA immediately developing mechanisms to combat agri-terrorism with full funding provided by DHS. Such mechanisms should ensure the safety of the consumer and agricultural industry;
- b. Increased cooperation between USDA, DHS, Department of Health Services (HHS), and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to establish, expand and continue to determine vulnerabilities within the agricultural and food industries;
- c. Establishing a USDA public awareness and education campaign for producers;
- d. Providing federal guidance and funding to states and localities to develop and implement plans for agricultural disease prevention, recovery and response activities; and
- e. Putting into place the strict laws and regulations to prosecute any person or persons, foreign or domestic to the full extent of the law.

**T. Consumer Protection**

1. We support legislation requiring that all import products be plainly labeled as such. We urge that imported foodstuffs be required to meet the same USDA standards of domestic foods (Country of Origin Labeling).
2. We urge more accurate labeling and uniform grading of processed food items, including livestock, dairy and poultry products and eggs, in the interest of greater consumer acceptance. We support the Congressional investigations that are being made of food processors and meat packers and urge that legislation be enacted to prevent deceptive labeling and other practices which mislead consumers.
3. We especially ask the Department of Agriculture to investigate the addition of synthetic and other products of feeds for the purpose of raising the protein content, and we urge that the digestibility percentage of such products be shown.
4. We urge Congress to include agricultural credit in the Truth in Lending Act.
5. We favor a truth in advertising law requiring telephone solicitors to clearly identify their employer and purpose at the beginning of each call.
6. We feel there should be substantial proof of danger to the health or environment before a product is declared harmful.
7. We advocate legislation requiring that patent holders or owners of GMO technology be held strictly liable for safety, health, and environmental effects.

**U. Producer Protection**

1. Legislation at the state and federal levels should be enacted to protect producers from losses incurred in the selling of commodities to all commodity buyers.
2. We support bonding requirements for any entity that contracts to purchase any ag commodity.

Farmers and ranchers who buy commodities for planting or for feeding livestock that they own should be exempt.

3. The Texas Farmers Union should work with the grain industry, livestock industry, commodity groups and other interested parties to assure the producers the protection they deserve.
4. We support regulatory action what would require firms that buy or sell agricultural commodities to have scales that are simultaneously visible to both producer and weigher.
5. Farmers are not to be held liable for food safety, human health or environmental problems, including cross pollination, related to the use of GMOs as long as generally accepted crop production practices are followed. Monetary damages to the producer shall be the responsibility of the GMO technology owner.
6. Texas Farmers Union encourages Congress and the Department of Justice (DOJ) to investigate any mergers and conduct full and thorough investigations which will serve to educate congressional members and the general public about the impact these types of mergers would have on farmers and consumers throughout the U.S.

We respectfully ask the Senate and House Judiciary committees initiate investigations in order to highlight the detrimental impact mergers of this kind if allowed will have on farmers and consumers.

## **V. Immigration Policy**

Texas Farmers Union believes the growing influx of legal and illegal immigration into this country must be addressed by Congress in a bi-partisan effort that considers all aspects of the issue.

### **We believe:**

- a. Our immigration system has flaws that need to be addressed in a timely manner;
- b. Immigration is a federal issue that should be addressed at the federal level with support from the states and other countries;
- c. Our immigration system must be flexible enough to address the needs of all businesses while protecting the interest of workers;
- d. That the ongoing illegal border crossing could present a risk to National security and any policy should include border countries help in curtailing the issue;
- e. Immigration has played a critical in our nation's history and economy in both our rural and urban communities;

- f. Our immigration enforcement strategy shall focus on public safety and consider consequences to business, workers, and consumers;
- g. Any immigration reform should include a path to determine reliably and affordably who is permitted to work, ensuring an adequate labor force for a growing economy;
- h. Immigration policies should provide a sensible path for those of good character, pay taxes, and are committed to becoming fully participating members of society;
- i. The legalization of undocumented workers may occur after paying appropriate fines and incurring penalties for illegal entry into the U.S.; and
- j. Expediting and streamlining the process to allow approved immigrant workers to travel back and forth from their home country.
- k.

**We oppose:**

The separation of children from their parents as a border security policy.

**W. Radio and Television**

1. We strongly support reestablishment of the "Fairness Doctrine" of the Federal Communications Commission requiring radio and television stations to present all sides of controversial issues.
2. We urge the news media to be more diligent in the reporting of increases in food and fiber costs as they relate to actual prices received by farmers and increases in their cost of production.
3. We urge congress to act to eliminate concentration of ownership of the media.

**X. Trade and Negotiations**

1. Trade Promotion Authority (TPA) or (Fast Track)

**We support:**

The immediate repeal of Trade Promotion Authority.

**We believe:**

- a. Trade agreements should be a fair deal for all parties- farmers, workers and consumers, both in the U.S. and abroad; and
- b. That Congress should have full opportunity to review and amend provisions of a trade agreement consistent with the authority and power endowed by the U.S. Constitution.

**We oppose:**

- a. Fast Track negotiating authority for the President of the United States;
- b. The Fast Track system of ratification of trade agreements in which the entire package must be approved without amendments or rejected in total by Congress.

## 2. Agricultural Trade Negotiations

Texas Farmers Union believes fair trade, not free trade holds the potential to increase family farm profitability and U.S. food security. Any trade agreement should have a goal of reducing the U.S. trade deficit, not just increasing trade flow. TFU calls for the immediate halt in current trade negotiations that perpetuate the race to the bottom of agricultural commodity prices. Future trade agreements must address differences in labor standards, environmental standards, and currency manipulation, not just domestic supports, export subsidies, and market access. Furthermore trade agreements must provide the opportunity for farmers and ranchers across the globe to receive a fair price for their commodities, which will grow the economies of agricultural based Nations', regardless of whether they are undeveloped, developing, or developed.

In creating fair agricultural trade environments, we feel the following goals, objectives, and provisions should be included in any U.S. trade policy and in international trade negotiations and agreements.

### **We support:**

- a. Allow U.S. producers the right to distinguish their products from those of other countries. United States products should not be categorized just as North American products or Products of the U.S.;
- b. Strong international commodity agreements with a 100 percent parity price floor;
- c. That exports of wheat, cotton, feed grains, rice, soybeans, and other products be promoted at parity price;
- d. The U.S. Congress to do a formal and thorough analysis of current agricultural trade agreements to determine their success of meeting their promised goals, before any new trade agreements are negotiated or proposed;
- e. Addressing domestic food safety, security, and inadequate economic returns to producers resulting in market failure, lack of market competition, and an imbalance in supply and demand;
- f. Requiring all countries to meet health, environmental, food sovereignty, working conditions, and labor rights standards equal to those of producers in the U.S.;
- g. Compensation payments to farmers in an amount that covers farmers' market losses and their lost income resulting from embargoes and tariffs on farm commodities;
- h. Any embargo or trade sanctions for National security purposes must be on all the Nations' products;
- i. Allow the U.S. to impose trade remedies against Nations using currency manipulation to gain an unfair trade advantage;
- j. The stabilization of the exchange value of currencies to prevent erratic disruptions in either foreign exchange markets or agricultural markets as required by law;
- k. That trade agreements should be negotiated and enacted through a transparent democratic process that does not undermine U.S. laws, jurisdiction, or sovereignty of a country and its political subdivisions;
- l. Allowing flexibility for individual Nations' to provide economic safety net programs, and address unforeseen production, market, and trade circumstances;

- m. Enhancing producer returns, economic, and individual standards of living;
- n. Having a speedy and fair method of resolving disputes among trading parties;
- o. Establishing tariffs on foreign imports for all dairy ingredients that displace domestically produced milk usage, including animal feed ingredients;
- p. The continuation of the release of all data pertaining to worldwide crop conditions and production as long as it is reported accurately and in a timely manner;
- q. Allowing countries to restrict the import of agricultural commodities that are contaminated or infected with disease or other toxic or noxious organism that threaten domestic production and/or food safety;
- r. The Maritime Cargo Preference legislation requiring American cargo ships to haul at least 50 percent of all exported agricultural products on the U.S. owned ships until such a time as producer prices reach parity level;
- s. The immediate repeal of Trade Promotion Authority; and The producer protection act developed by Iowa Attorney General Tom Miller and will work for its adoption in the State of Texas.

**We oppose:**

- a. The Investors State Dispute System (ISDS) process that gives trade tribunals, staffed by corporate attorneys, power to overturn laws passed by our legislators;
- b. The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)/United States, Mexico, and Canada Agreement (USMCA) partners being used as corridors by other countries to avoid quotas and tariffs on agricultural goods;
- c. The NAFTA/USMCA and the Free Trade Agreement (FTAA) until certain provisions are added that will protect U.S. farmers from unfair competition, inequities in currency, and environmentally unsafe and health jeopardizing produce from other countries;
- d. The World Trade Organization (WTO) since it allows an unaccountable, non-elected, multi-national board to set policy to which the U.S. would be obligated to obey;
- e. Any funding of a “super highway” corridor, otherwise known as the “NAFTA Highway”;
- f. Any proposals or future trade negotiations that do not include all factors of trade. Congress must resume its responsibilities to oversee U.S. trade policy;
- g. Trade Promotion Authority;
- h. Eliminating tariffs, tariff rate quotas and domestic trade remedies utilized to counter the effects of dumping and other unfair trade practices, including the use of monetary, labor, and environmental regulations that create competitive trade advantages;
- i. Requirements that domestic support programs be de-coupled;
- j. Importation of agricultural products from countries that do not grow or produce such products; and
- k. The continued deforestation of any rainforest for agricultural purposes.

## **Y. Competing Imports**

Texas Farmers Union believes all products entering the U.S. must be produced under the same health and sanitary standards and worker protections requirements as are required by domestic producers. With the continuing consolidation of meat packers and large vegetable vendors as well as the ever increasing importation of more of our food supply, it becomes more difficult to maintain the integrity of the food we eat. We also believe the best Bio-Security for our food is the family farm and calls upon the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to promote family farms as the best way to secure our food supply.

### **We support:**

- a. Safeguards be established to prevent the destruction or weakening of agriculture and other domestic industries by the importation of competing products or substitutes. This should be done by means of automatic variable levy tariffs, import quota, income deficiency payments, or a combination thereof.
- b. Legislation be passed prohibiting the importation of all commodities treated or manufactured with chemicals that are illegal in U.S.
- c. No food imports of any kind shall be brought into the U.S. from any country or region that is not recognized as being disease free.
- d. That our State and Nations' top priorities in accepting imports should be keeping the U.S. food supply safe and the economic livelihood of the U.S. family farmers and ranchers viable.
- e. That the USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) start making decisions concerning imports that are on science based standards and does not jeopardize the health and safety of our State and Nations' herds.

### **We oppose:**

- a. The USDA'S APHIS decision to allow beef imports countries or regions that are still battling problems with diseases that have been eradicated from the U.S.

## **Z. Food Safety**

Texas Farmers Union believes protecting the safety of our State and Nations food supply should be at the forefront of any U.S. Congress and that food imports pose a much greater food safety threat to American consumers than domestic food.

### **We support:**

1. All products have mandatory Country of Origin Labeling;
2. Increased funding and number of food inspectors;

3. Vigorous action by U.S. regulatory agencies to prevent the introduction of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) and any other disease into the U.S. livestock herd;
4. Require complete inspections of all imported food, fiber, milk protein concentrate (MPC), animal products and by-products to ensure they meet our Nation's sanitary standards including safe pesticide levels;
5. Food safety policies that can and should protect consumers without limiting farmers, ranchers, or small food processors who sell into local and regional markets;
6. Processing facilities for such imported products should be inspected at least annually. Food products from that facility should be labeled as such, even if the product originated in the U.S., and
7. Expenses for all inspections coming from fees on the imported products paid for by the exporter at the point of origin.

**We oppose:**

The shipping and processing of U.S. beef, pork, chicken and any other food product to and in foreign countries, then is returned to the U.S. for food consumption.

**AA. Labeling of Commodities and Commodity Products**

1. Country-of-Origin Labeling

We support the reauthorization and full implementation of mandatory Country-of-Origin labeling (COOL) for agriculture and agriculture products. Mandatory COOL is a valuable marketing tool for producers, and it allows consumers to know where the meat products they consume are born, raised, slaughtered, and processed. U. S. producers and consumers have the right to distinguish products from those of other countries and U.S. products should not be labeled as a North American product.

We strongly urge that USDA and Congress reinstate mandatory COOL.

We support the following principles in the continued implementation of mandatory COOL in order to qualify and be labeled as a U.S. product:

- a. Meat products must come from an animal born, raised, slaughtered, and processed in the U.S.;
- b. Fresh produce, honey, and nuts must be exclusively grown and processed in the U.S.;
- c. Dairy products to be labeled to indicate Country-of-Origin;
- d. Farm raised fish and shellfish must be hatched, raised, and processed in the U.S.;
- e. USDA should prohibit any third-party compliance reviews and third parties dictating what types of records producers need to keep and the way the records are kept;
- f. USDA should perform any/all producer audits to determine compliance with the law;

- g. In the absence of mandatory COOL, the same labeling standards outlined in mandatory COOL should be maintained to benefit producers and consumers in any voluntary program; and
- h. If a national animal identification program is implemented, the information should include Country-of-Origin distinction for consumers of covered commodities at all retail levels.

## **BB. Credit**

1. Our severe credit problems cannot be cured simply with more credit, but only by a fair price for commodities.
2. Procedural requirements for obtaining credit from federal or federally regulated agencies should be streamlined.
3. Disaster loan through FSA should continue to be available for natural disaster and economic conditions such as unreasonably low prices. Interest rates on disaster loans should be no greater than the Federal Reserve Rate.

Once a disaster loan program is legislated, it shall remain in effect for the original term or longer. It should not be repealed before this date for any reason, such as change of administration or budgetary limitations.

4. The supervised credit program of the Farm Service Agency has had great success in past years in Texas. However, funds have been cut, staff has been decreased, and county supervisors are being transferred so often that many farmers are faced with dealing with total strangers when loan applications are made. We support additional funding in order to maintain the past high-performance standard of the field staff. We urge that no debts other than those owed to FSA be considered in the limitation for operating loans. We oppose FSA requiring payments by certified checks.
5. We favor storage facility loans for all commodities, with low interest rates.
6. We insist the U.S. House of Representatives assert its constitutional authority by reorganizing the Federal Reserve Board to be required to include representatives from small business, labor and agriculture.
7. We urge Congress to maintain and increase the limits on loans for all on farm storage facilities and include the complete cost of construction.

We also urge the President to use executive authority under the Emergency Credit Control Act to roll back interest rates, set up special discount windows for priority groups and limit credit use involving corporate takeovers and mergers.

8. We urge Congress to make more funds available for young farmers and ranchers through the FSA, with strict supervision.
9. We strongly oppose any efforts of Congress or the Administration to weaken the integrity of the farm credit system.

10. We oppose any effort to consolidate the various institutions which make up the Farm Credit System if consolidation would dilute involvement and ownership by farmers and ranchers.
11. We strongly urge that the United States Small Business Administration reevaluate the Small Business farm disaster loan programs on request of recipients and take into consideration the large amounts of annual payments being made by recipients of this loan. We ask that these loans and maturity dates be extended to bring the burden of large annual payments down to a workable budget for each recipient.
12. We urge increasing the limit on FSA direct loans to at least \$500,000.
13. STATE ISSUE: We favor the promotion and development of Farmers Union Credit Unions throughout the state in order to strengthen the financial bargaining power of agricultural producers.
14. We strongly oppose placing farm commodities under the Uniform Commercial Code, thereby reducing their collateral value for production loans. We urge that the central registration of agriculture liens be moved to the Texas Department of Agriculture and that the Legislature appropriate sufficient funds to establish a rapid electronic system for instant lien searches to facilitate quick closing of commodity sales and CCC loans.
15. TFU urges passage of a law requiring notification by FSA of their release of liens.
16. Bankruptcy code chapter 12 is important in that it enables family farm operators who have some chance of surviving to reorganize their debts, keep necessary land and equipment, and repay their obligations out of future earnings. Chapter 12 should be a permanent part of Bankruptcy Law.

### **CC. Social Security**

1. We support the Medicare and Social Security Programs.
2. We strongly oppose any detrimental changes in Social Security and Medicare Programs.
3. Social Security should be compulsory for all citizens.
4. We oppose the taxing of Social Security.
5. We recommend that the Social Security fund be self-sustaining and separate from the annual federal budget.
6. Our Social Security fund should be separate from any other fund.
7. Catastrophic health care should be funded by the general public and provide for needs that are not being met at the present time.
8. We oppose Social Security funds being invested into at risk securities.

9. Social Security benefits should not be subject to garnishment for any reason.

## **DD. Risk Management Provisions**

1. We urge a strong, affordable federal crop insurance program backed up by an adequate disaster relief program in times of declared disaster.
2. We support Federal Crop Insurance coverage and urge continual improvement of coverage for all ag related commodities, based on actual production history (APH) where available; for cases without APH the transitional yield cannot be lower than county FSA yields. We urge the establishment of APH yield floors to protect the producer in the event of successive crop failures.

We call for improvement in the Federal Crop Insurance Program to offer producers the option of the current program or a dollar value per acre program that would protect farmer income.

BE IT RESOLVED, that a viable crop insurance program, at a reasonable premium, be available for all program crops, including fruits, vegetables, and horticulture.

3. Disaster declared years should be excluded from APH and replaced with a yield not less than the NASS yield.
4. Crop Insurance Coverage deadlines should be tied more closely to beginning planting dates in any area.
5. Farmers should have the option of buying crop hail insurance which would be in full coverage 30 days after stand date.
6. Farmers should have the option of not planting crops when erosion is too high due to drought and wind as determined by the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Crop insurance coverage should not be denied as with preventive planting for farms that are too wet to plant.
7. We support food liability insurance products and programs to assure that unprocessed or less processed whole foods, fresh fruits, cheese and dairy products, meats and fresh vegetables continue to remain accessible in the marketplace. This must be addressed if we intend to have farm fresh or less processed foods available to consumers.

## **EE. Predator Control**

1. We recommend the use of compound 1080 be continued in toxic collars in Texas.
2. We oppose any law which would prohibit the use of snares and leg hold traps for the control of predatory animals.
3. We support the control of livestock predators and increased research on rodent control.

4. We support an eradication program of wild and feral hogs. We oppose classifying these animals as wildlife or indigenous and support their classification as pests.

## **FF. Emergency Feed Program**

1. TFU commends the USDA for the development and implementation of the Livestock Assistance Program (LAP) and supports the continuation of this program on an as needed basis (caused by drought, flood or other natural disasters). Regulations should exclude opportunity speculators who may be able to take unfair advantage of this program.
2. We recommend that government owned stocks of low quality grain in CCC be made available at a reduced price to stock farmers and ranchers during time of drought, flood, or any emergency.
3. Baled hay from CRP acres should be allowed to be sold under emergency conditions.
4. TFU demands that USDA implement the Livestock Preservation and Donation Program (LPDP) for farmers and ranchers who can no longer afford to sustain their base herd due to natural disaster, including drought.

## **GG. Energy Policy**

1. Texas Farmers Union supports the development and use of all renewable energy sources to make the U.S. more energy self-sufficient.
2. We support the development of ethanol as a renewable source of energy to reduce our dependency on fossil fuels and make America more self-sustaining.

The predicament in the Middle East makes it clearly apparent that we must maintain stable domestic oil production and must be serious about alternative fuels.

BE IT RESOLVED, that Farmer Union encourages the production and marketing of fuel grade ethanol manufactured from U.S. farm crop bi products.

We urge federal support for developing the fuel ethanol industry through research and public grants. We favor continuation of the exemption from the federal excise tax credits on ethanol fuel. We also favor the continuation of investment tax credits which encourage the production of alcohol.

3. We support expansion of the blending excise tax credit to include ETBT (ethyl tertiary butyl ether) production.
4. STATE ISSUE: We support continuation of the exemption for ethanol fuels from the motor fuels tax in Texas.
5. STATE ISSUE: We support the efforts of the Texas Ethanol Products Association to further the development and use of ethanol for fuel and other commercial and industrial uses.

6. Texas Farmer's Union supports the development of wind power for the production of energy.
7. We support laws requiring the purchase of power generated by individuals, or entities, at prevailing wholesale prices by utility companies.
8. Texas Farmers Union supports tax incentives for individual family farmers seeking to develop and/or utilize alternative and natural resources for the production of energy.
9. Texas Farmers Union opposes any subsidy on non-domestic produced renewable fuel.
10. Texas Farmers Union strongly opposes all cap and trade bills presented to Congress.

## **HH. Futures and Options Trading**

1. We recommend that the Chicago Board of Trade and Kansas City Boards and any other board stop buying and selling privately owned grain and cattle without the express permission of the owners of the commodities.
2. We oppose the trading of commodity contracts on all boards of trade in excess of actual production volume.

## **IX. NATIONAL ECONOMIC ISSUES**

### **A. Labor**

1. Texas Farmers Union is affiliated with no labor organization, but we welcome the support of all groups on issues of mutual interest
2. We recognize the many areas of common interest we have with other Americans who work, both on and off the farm. We, as well as they, should have the right to bargain for a fair and equitable return without fear of harassment or retaliation.
3. In recognition of the support by working people for full parity income for family farmers, we lend our active support for minimum wage legislation to cover workers employed on commercial family farms.
4. Since so much of our agricultural production enters international trade channels and dock strikes hinder this movement, a plan such as a 90 day cooling off period should be developed in order that agricultural products can be moved during a dock strike to prevent damage to farmer export programs.

## **B. Farm Labor**

Farm labor is a vital part of production agriculture, from the growing and harvesting of crops, to the processing of our Nations' food supply. Agriculture needs reliable farm labor to ensure all processes are done in a timely manner.

### **We support:**

1. Reforming the H-2A temporary Agricultural Worker Program by:
  - a. Expanding the number of H-2A visas to year round jobs;
  - b. Modernizing the application process; and
  - c. Creating a more stable wage rate.
2. Offering grants or low interest loans to family farms for new construction and/or remodeling of existing farm labor housing to provide a safe, clear, and healthy living environment for domestic and/or guests workers.

## **C. Child Labor Law**

### **We believe:**

1. In the safe and fair treatment of children and young adults.
2. That growing up on a farm or working on a family farm teaches a good work ethic and provides a good foundation for the children and young adults to develop into a fair, respectful and hardworking adult.
3. The Fair Labor Standards Act concerning child labor laws on the farm would undermine the family farmer's ability to raise their family and teach these family values and determination.

### **We oppose:**

1. The Fair Labor Standards Act and ask the Department of Labor to reassess the Act that would be detrimental to the core family values and teachings of children and young adults.

## **D. Investigations and Control of Monopolistic Practices**

1. Price fixing practices are all too common in the cash commodity markets, especially during the harvest periods. We call for much more vigorous enforcement of anti-trust laws.
2. We commend all investigative efforts of agencies and commissions to expose the monopolistic practices of the food and fiber trades. We urge that these unfair trade practices be eliminated once they are exposed.

3. Farmers Union opposes any manipulation of commodity futures markets by individuals or groups. We urge Congress to prohibit ownership of more than five percent of outstanding contracts for a commodity by any individual or group.
4. We recommend that every agency of the State and Federal government concerned with anti-trust enforcement be provided with adequate funds and personnel to curb the vicious practice employed by corporations in stifling or absorbing small business establishments. We feel that criminal penalties rather than mere fines should be invoked whenever possible to ensure compliance with and strengthen the provisions of the Sherman and Clayton Antitrust Acts.
5. We recommend stronger, more realistic fines (ten times the amount of alleged violations) and a three year ineligible period for government contract bidding by firms convicted of collusion, antitrust and monopolistic practices.
6. We believe that vertical integration by processors and retailers moving into large livestock and poultry feeding operations is just one step in the process of elimination of farmers and ranchers from the meat production business. Other examples are the broilers and vegetables grown by large chain stores. The practice of taking over production and finishing of any farm commodity for the purpose of controlling supply and demand is monopolistic.
  - a. We therefore ask that it be illegal for conglomerates whose major income is from sources other than agriculture to engage in producing agricultural products.
  - b. We urge the continuation of hearings into the "yellow sheet." If the investigation warrants remedial legislation, we demand it.
7. We urge congressional investigation to determine to what extent and to what effect foreign governments are participating in U.S. commodities trading.
8. TFU opposes trading by packers, their subsidiaries, or parent companies, in the commodity market in ways that directly affect cash prices. Insider trader laws and/or anti-trust laws should apply.
9. We urge the investigation of the discriminatory rail freight rates for agriculture commodities.
10. We propose making commodity research and promotion assessments applicable to Futures and Options trading.
11. We oppose private marketing and weather forecasting individuals and/or associated companies from trading in futures and/or options.

## **E. Federal Budget Reform**

The Federal budget has ballooned to astronomical proportions. In past years agriculture has done its share in cutting costs to the federal deficit.

**We support:**

- a. Not punishing the Farm Bill baseline budget for savings generated through farm bill programs.

**We oppose:**

- a. Using budget sequestration in an attempt to reduce the federal deficit.
- b. Any proposed agricultural cuts to relieve the federal deficit.
- c. Attempts to reduce funding for Farm Bill programs through budget reconciliation.

**F. Taxes**

1. We recommend the amendment of the Federal Income Tax Law to raise the personal exemption.
2. Also, we recommend that an additional tax exemption be allowed for college student's expenses.
3. We urge that Congress take action to close the tax loopholes which allow high income individuals and corporations who enter farming to charge off their farm losses against their non-farm income. This tax loss farming situation creates an artificial incentive for non-farm interests to enter farming and creates unfair competition for family farmers. Also, this practice causes all smaller tax payers to have to carry a disproportionate share of the tax load.
4. We recommend that the Treasury Department continue the policy of allowing farmers to use either the accrual or cash basis for income tax purposes.
5. We oppose any further increase in Federal Excise Tax.
6. We demand Congress discontinue the foreign tax credit which the large, multinational corporations use to avoid all or much of their U.S. taxes.
7. We urge the continued exemption of farm trucks registered for farm use from the Federal Highway Use Tax.
8. We support reinstatement of the estate tax with an exemption of \$4 million with that amount to be adjusted annually for inflation (base year 2001).
9. We urge the Internal Revenue Service to allow deductions for loss of the market value of agricultural crops which are destroyed by natural disaster.
10. For the purpose of federal capital gains and estate taxes, the amount of appreciation on assets due to inflation should be excluded from the calculation.
11. We recommend that the cost of medical insurance be fully deductible for the self-employed.
12. We urge Congress to repeal the alternative minimum tax.

## **G. Health Care**

1. We recommend increased Federal and State appropriations for hospital construction, medical research, public health service, expended medical and nursing schools, and federal scholarships for doctors, dentists, and nurses training. Scholarships and college enrollment policies should be administered in such a manner as to at least double the number of students studying to be doctors, dentists and nurses. The American Medical Association should have no control over the number of students so studying.
2. We believe that the Farmers Union should continue to stress the need for more doctors and dentists in rural America and that rural hospitals be excluded from requirements regarding the number of babies born or the number of patients in relation to the number of rooms, in order to qualify for Federal Aid.
3. We commend the dedicated citizens within our communities who volunteer their time and efforts to provide us with Emergency Medical Services. We support the idea that Medicare and Medicaid should reimburse volunteer Emergency Medical Services the same amounts received by paid commercial Emergency Medical Services for the same services rendered.
4. We urge: (a) better drug education in public schools beginning at the elementary level, (b) more drug control programs, and (c) more rehabilitation centers and hospitals.

### **We support:**

- a. The adoption of a single-payer national health insurance program, with no deductible and minimal co-pays that provides comprehensive health care service;
- b. Increased funding for mental health and addiction treatment services;
- c. Increasing funding for education programs, staffing for hotlines and outreach centers to help out the farmer suicide and all other suicide prevention;
- d. Increasing funding for all U.S. veterans and serviceman's healthcare;
- e. Fully staffing of veterans hospitals to ensure the proper care is given to the men and women who have served and protected the United States;
- f. The elimination of any payment or benefit caps including but not exclusive to pre-existing conditions.

## **H. Postal Costs**

1. We support the return of the U.S. Postal System to the status of a federal agency.
2. We are opposed to the elimination of rural Post Offices and changes in mail delivery.

## **I. Law Enforcement**

1. We urge tighter customs control against international drug traffic, to assist in state and local enforcement.

2. We oppose any law that would register or take away guns from law abiding citizens.
3. Texas Farmers Union demands that all officials, including the President of the United States, obey the supreme law of the Constitution of the United States.
4. Any Government employee or elected official convicted of a job related felony shall lose all pensions retirements or all benefits related to that job.

## **J. Pesticide Applicators License**

In 1974 the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) established the pesticide applicator license. Since its beginning farmers and ranchers have been required to obtain a license to purchase and apply restricted use pesticides (RUPs). Farmers and ranchers have had to obtain Continuing Education Units (CEUs) to renew their license.

### **Texas Farmers Union believes:**

That safety should be a top priority and training is necessary;

That the new certification rules to obtain and renew an applicator license are too broad and time consuming for farmers and ranchers to adhere to;

The time to obtain the amount of new CEU's, would prohibit farmers and ranchers from adequately managing their operations;

A farmer or ranchers time is an invaluable commodity;

Inadequate funding for license training has already made it impossible for some areas to conduct training classes;

Without proper funding to hold these training classes, it would make it near impossible to obtain the proper requirements in the proposed time frame; and

Any increases in cost to obtain a new license or training for renewal would be too costly for farmers and ranchers.

### **We support:**

- a. The continuing education and training of pesticide applicators, but not to the detriment of the farmers and ranchers of time and money lost.
- b. A more streamlined recertification system to the betterment of farmers and ranchers.
- c. Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) in helping curb these burdensome rules and regulations.
- d. That TDA research all means to fund the proper training for applicator license renewal.
- e. The Pesticide Waste Disposal program and to fund it sufficiently to work effectively.

## **K. Farm Truck and Drive Regulations**

### **We support:**

- a. The continuation of the farm exemption to the Federal Department of Transportation (DOT) regulations, with the extension of the exemption to include all trips to and from supply sources or markets, and between farms owned or operated by the exempt operator.
- b. An exemption to the DOT's Electronic Logging Device (ELD) rule for farm exempt trucks and commercial livestock and grain haulers moving farm products from the farm to the market.
- c. A proposal that the State of Texas change the farm truck weight from 48,000 lbs. to 80,000 lbs.
- d. The Responsible and Efficient Agriculture Destination (TREAD) Act, that would allow drivers hauling live animals and agricultural commodities to finish their routes if they are within 150 air miles of their destination, exempting drivers from hours-of-service regulations on the back end of hauls.

## **L. Agricultural Technology**

### **We support:**

1. Fair repair and right to repair legislation that would allow farmers and independent mechanics access to diagnostic software, information, and other tools to repair modern equipment; and
2. The development of a universal diagnostic system for agricultural equipment.

## **M. Unmanned Aerial Vehicles, (UAV), (Drones)**

### **We support:**

The use of unmanned aerial vehicles for agricultural purposes, only after landowner or land-operator approval.

### **We oppose:**

The use of drones for covert surveillance of agricultural operations.

## **N. Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970**

1. We oppose any regulation that additional guards or shields be required retroactively on existing farm and ranch machinery.
2. OSHA cotton and grain dust standards in the agriculture industry are totally unrealistic and unattainable, and should be withdrawn.

3. We support the permanent exemption of OSHA regulations for all farms with employees of 15 or less.

## **O. Elections**

### **We support:**

- a. Public financing for all National, State and local elections with a cap on strict spending limits, and equal access to free television time for all political parties.
- b. That the broadcasting of election results and exit polls involving National, State and local campaigns, on election day, be prohibited until all polls are closed on election day.
- c. The issuance of a voting receipt when electronic voting is used. This receipt would verify a citizen's vote and would be available for recounts if necessary.
- d. Legislation that states Congress shall pass no law that applies to a citizen of the U.S. that does not apply to itself as an institution or to individual senators or representatives, or vice versa, except as it relates to National security issues and/or their personal security.
- e. Full disclosure of all tax returns, stock portfolios, and business ownings of all candidates participating in federal and state elections.
- f. That electronic voting software ownership be by the Federal government and not private corporations.
- g. That due to the lack of work and attendance of Congressional members seeking re-election, their pay shall be prorated to reflect their attendance record during Congressional sessions.
- h. That all individual members of TFU register to vote and encourage all eligible voters to register and vote.
- i. A review of the Electoral College process.
- j. Term limits for Congress.
- k. Auditing every elected official every 2 years by an independent agency.
- l. The repeal of Citizen's United
- m. Legislative action to provide for a binding presidential primary at the earliest date permissible and to move primary election dates nearer to general election dates.
- n. The election of the Texas Commissioner of Agriculture and all other statewide administrative and judicial officials be by public vote.
- o. A non-compete clause for all elected officials prohibiting them from becoming lobbyist for 5 years.

### **We oppose:**

- a. The gerrymandering of election districts lines and territories.
- b. The cancellation of elections of any kind, to further any one candidates' career.

## **P. Defense Spending**

Because our national resources are never plentiful enough to satisfy all of the competing demands, we oppose excessive defense spending, and urge that priority be given to programs which enhance and improve the quality of people's lives.

We urge no new nuclear facility be constructed without stringent and public examination of the need for such a facility and its health and environmental impact.

We urge the Nuclear Weapons Laboratories shift from the expensive and dangerous weapons research and development and concentrate on more peaceful pursuits, particularly environmental cleanup.

We urge an end to nuclear testing to diminish the threat of nuclear war.

We oppose the Homeland Security Act and the Patriot Act due to their removing our freedoms as U.S. citizens under the guise of national security.

## **Q. Government Shutdowns**

TFU believes a government shutdown of any kind stemming from political parties and Presidents inability to work with each other should only affect the President and Congressmen/women.

### **We support:**

- a. The President and Congressmen/women not receiving any pay or use of any government vehicle during a shutdown.
- b. All basic aspects of the government should never be shutdown, i.e. safety and food inspections and food production.
- c. All agricultural research at federal laboratories, private labs and universities should remain open due to the viability of their work.
- d. The President and both parties of Congress work together for what is in the best interest of the people of the U.S. and not any party affiliation.

## **X. TEXAS ISSUES**

### **A. Corporate Farms and Foreign Ownership**

1. We believe it is in the best interest of all our people to keep the ownership and operation of farm enterprises solely in the hands of individual and/or family corporation owner operators.

2. To this end, we urge the Texas Legislature to enact legislation to register all foreign farm land ownership, foreign producing operations, and total production by corporations and religious organizations, with a provision exempting family farm corporations.
3. We urge the Legislature to enact a law prohibiting foreign ownership of land in the State of Texas.
4. We urge the State Legislature to enact a law prohibiting foreign ownership of banks, savings and loans and other lending institutions in Texas.

## **B. Insurance**

1. We are in favor of continuation of the law requiring each vehicle owner to furnish proof of liability coverage for the period of vehicle registration before issuance of vehicle registration.
2. We recommend that auto and other insurance companies be required to include their investment income in their profit statements for the purpose of determining rates.
3. We urge the Texas Legislature to enact legislation creating a no fault vehicle insurance policy.
4. We favor a prorated system of insurance for seasonally used farm equipment.
5. The Railroad Commission should not require additional insurance or registration on farm trucks and trailers.
6. We oppose the efforts being orchestrated by large foreign underwriters of insurance companies to unfairly limit the fair recovery for losses to innocent victims, thereby increasing profit margins to those companies. We urge the Texas Legislature to protect our citizens and their public entities by rejecting unfair legislation veiled under the guise of "Tort Reform," and to adopt laws which ensure affordable insurance coverage to both public and private concerns.
7. We urge the Texas Legislature to revamp Workers' Compensation to protect all policy holders from foreclosure. We urge implementation of fair rates with protection against fraud and abuse involved in claims.

## **C. Farm Fuel**

1. We recommend that gasoline and diesel tax refunds be continued.
2. We oppose any additional tax on gasoline and diesel at the retail level. We oppose attempts by state comptroller field men to discourage filing claims.
3. We recommend that the users of natural gas in rural areas, for irrigation and agricultural purposes, be encouraged to organize the gas users associations for purposes of bargaining for fair price rates with suppliers of natural gas.

4. We support a diesel fuel exemption for highway use on diesel powered vehicles that are purchased by only farmers and ranchers for their use in production of food and fiber.
5. Non tax diesel must not be charged a premium over road diesel. The price difference should always be the amount of the sales tax.
6. Rates charged for sales of natural gas or synthetic natural gas to be used for fuel for irrigation wells, or to be used directly in any other agricultural activity, shall be based on the BTU content, Sulphur content, and adequate pressure of the gas, and shall be fair, just and reasonable.
7. Fuel for agricultural purposes should have top priority on any fuel allocation programs. Any governmental allocations should be based on annual usage.
8. We urge continued support of the present system of taxing farm trucks operating on LPG.
9. We support the continuation of tax incentive programs for the creation of domestic renewable fuel refineries.

#### **D. Rural Electric, Water, and Telephone Systems**

1. We insist that electric cooperatives have equal rights with private power suppliers. Territorial integrity of electric cooperatives must continue to be assured under Texas laws. An electric cooperative should be permitted to serve any consumer desiring service in those areas served by cooperatives.

When a municipality annexes territories served by electric cooperatives, the rights of cooperatives to continue to serve consumers in such areas should continue to be protected by franchise and be enforced by State laws, which do not grant this right to rural electric cooperatives by the Texas Public Utilities Commission.

2. We urge each Electric Cooperative in Texas to examine its charter and bylaws and, if not already provided, to provide therein that sales of all or part of the property of cooperatives may be effected only upon a vote of at least a two thirds majority of the membership of the cooperatives, and further, that a proxy shall not be counted in the computation of this vote.
3. We further urge that the statute under which the cooperatives are incorporated be amended in order to require a two thirds majority vote of all the membership as a prerequisite to the sales of substantially all of the corporate assets, or to dissolution of the cooperatives.

We commend independent businesses that are striving to give rural people good service and urge all business to work together to give better service to rural and city areas which they serve.

4. Rural Electric Cooperatives

Whereas, Texas Farmers Union supports the growth of Renewable Energy across the United States.

Whereas, rural electric co-ops are exempt from letting customers hook their wind turbines and solar panels to the coop's electric grid.

Whereas, some rural co-ops allow customers to hook their wind turbines and solar panels to their grid and some coop's do not because of this exemption.

Therefore be it resolved, that Texas Farmers Union urges Congress to remove this exemption that allows these electric co-ops from not letting customers to hook up their wind turbines and solar panels to the co-ops electric grid.

5. We oppose the assessment of taxes on rural nonprofit water systems.

## **E. Utility Regulations and Service**

1. We ask that the appointed members of the Public Utility Commission have specific experience and educational requirements in their separate fields to represent equally all segments of utilities so regulated. At least two members should be consumer oriented.
2. We ask that the Public Utility Commission permit a fair return on the fair value of the property used in the rendering of service by the affected areas.
3. We ask that the Public Utility Commission permit modern, adequate service to all users of the utilities so regulated, at a reasonable rate.

Users of natural gas should be assured of the quantity and quality of the natural gas they purchase. The Weights and Measures Division of the Texas Department of Agriculture should be authorized to monitor the BTU level and the accuracy of gas meters in the State of Texas.

4. We oppose all construction of high voltage DC power lines until such time as their safety can be improved.

## **F. Land and Water**

1. Texas Farmer's Union supports the education of the cities and the people on water conservation and future ramifications of not conserving water.
2. Texas Farmer's Union supports the promotion and the future development of desalination of the Gulf of Mexico water for the purpose of future water needs.
3. The agricultural use of ground and surface water should be placed on the list of priorities, second only to domestic usage. The agricultural use of water should have a higher priority than industrial use.

4. We are strongly in favor of water laws that favor retention of ownership of our ground and surface waters by the current landowners; however, we oppose when water is harvested for export out of aquifer zone and/or water district.

The landowner is the legal owner of the water beneath the land, unless the water beneath the land has been sold, granted or bequeathed to another prior to the acquisition of the land by the current landowner on record; be it resolved that local control and management of the ground waters of the State of Texas be continued at the local level. Equal and fair treatment should be awarded to each landowner guaranteed by the local water district.

5. WHEREAS, the people of the State of Texas need to be educated on the negative effects of current state law, which takes control away from the local groundwater districts and would allow water to be exported out of the local groundwater districts.
6. The state law should be amended to permit each farm to store within its boundaries at least 200 acre feet of water for irrigation purposes, as well as other farm uses, without prior approval from any board, body or commission.
7. We support the theory that all of the people of Texas are entitled to share equally in all water studies and programs on a state, national and international basis.
8. We urge the Railroad Commission of Texas to assure that all abandoned oil wells are properly plugged, including seismograph holes.
9. Exploration companies, such as oil companies, mining companies, and nuclear companies, shall conduct water tests of every ground water well in the area as well as streams and lakes prior to any exploration activity. These tests shall be conducted every three months for eternity for contamination at their expense. Said companies shall be liable for any damages whether physically to the land or financially to the landowner, and also be prosecuted for any contamination.
10. The statewide water conservation plan should include additional financial incentives for agricultural producers.
11. We Support local Groundwater Districts using Chapter 52 powers of the Texas Water Code.
12. TFU opposes inner basin transfers of water unless all needs from originating basin are met. Water needs from originating basin shall be senior to all others.
13. Water should not be classified or covered as a mineral, but as a separate line item on all leases, deeds, transfers, etc.
14. Texas Farmers Union strongly opposes the taking of water rights by eminent domain.
15. That in the event that farmers', ranchers', and or landowners' water is confiscated by the State, Federal, or any other entity, they should be duly compensated for that year, future loss of production, decrease in property values and any other financial hardship that arises from this action.

## **G. Seeds, Insecticides, and Herbicides**

1. We advocate for and promote the responsible use of safe, innovative and environmentally sound crop protection products, including insecticides, herbicides and fungicides that are essential to the production of food, fiber and renewable fuels.
2. We urge that the State Department of Agriculture be financed to the extent that it can more effectively enforce the Certified Seed Law to include seed vigor; and that laws governing purity, safety, bagging and labeling of production seed, insecticides and herbicides be better enforced.
3. We call upon the State Legislature to retain the Fair Trade Practices Act for violations of the Certified Seed Law, with the burden of proof placed on the seller
4. The Texas Department of Agriculture, and not the Environmental Protection Agency, should administer equitable pesticide regulations regarding compliance with pesticides label requirements. We support the efforts of the Texas Department of Agriculture to develop fair and workable pesticide regulations. We recommend that TDA take appropriate action to discourage the filing of frivolous complaints against pesticide applicators.
5. The Texas Hazardous Material Act is redundant with the Federal Law and the Worker Protection Safety Act; therefore, we support the repeal of the Right to Know section of the Texas Agriculture Hazardous Material Act.

## **H. Noxious Weed and Brush Control**

1. We urge each Texas Farmers Union local to pursue noxious weed control methods in their respective counties, with attention directed to the present State laws which allow noxious weed control districts supported by a small tax on land for the district or county.

The State Highway Department, railroads and county precincts should be required to eradicate noxious weeds along their right of way adjacent to cultivated land where the landowner is trying to control these weeds.

2. We endorse the efforts of those organizations that promote and research brush control in Texas and urge the support of their privately financed programs.
3. We urge TDA to classify cockleburs as a noxious weed.
4. We urge TDA and USDA to work toward the elimination of interstate movement of noxious weeds and insects or anything that might damage Texas crops.

## **I. Insect Control**

1. We urge each Texas farmer to take advantage of present legislation which gives farmers the right to organize insect control districts and enforce satisfactory controls with adoption of uniform planting dates. These organized boards need to enforce

beginning planting dates as well as final planting dates and also stalk destruction dates.

## 2. FIRE ANT QUARANTINES

WHEREAS, the infestation of fire ants can have a devastating impact on production agriculture throughout the United States; and

WHEREAS, fire ants are transported through a variety of means, yet agricultural products are targeted for inspection, the state of Texas has implemented a quarantine policy to prevent the artificial migration of fire ants to other regions and states, but does not account for the spreading of fire ants via non-agricultural products.

WHEREAS, a quarantine policy cannot prevent the infestation of fire ants unless all means of artificial migration are addressed.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, if the state of Texas continues to pursue a policy on fire ant migration, Texas Farmers Union urges the quarantine program to include all means of transporting fire ants, not solely focus on agriculture. If the quarantine program is not expanded to account for other means of artificial fire ant migration, the program should be eliminated.

3. The imported fire ant is a deadly menace to humans, livestock, wildlife and machinery. We feel that Federal and State programs must be continued to research and eradicate this pest.
4. We support the Texas A&M Statewide Pest Management Plan Program and oppose the takeover of State pest management programs by private commodity groups.
5. We propose a ban on the use of nonspecific insecticides during certain periods of the growing seasons to aid in the spread of beneficial insects which enhances an IPM (integrated pest management) program.

## J. Minerals

1. Texas Farmers Union supports legislation to require that all appeals from Texas Railroad Commission rulings on well spacing and allowables be tried in the District Court where the land is located, and by jury if requested by the landowner and/or mineral owner, and that the Texas Railroad Commission hearing to set well spacing and allowables be held in a location most convenient to the landowners and/or mineral owners.
2. We oppose any and all legislation or rulings of the Texas Railroad Commission that would deny the landowner and/or mineral owner the traditional American freedom of choice in the development of their oil and gas minerals as long as this can be done without physical waste. This would include any and all forms of force pooling and force unitization.

3. We ask that legislation be passed ensuring that a royalty landowner be informed of the price to be received from natural gas when and if produced as well as the quality of the gas produced.
4. Texas Farmers Union urges the Legislature to provide for the reversion of mineral rights for which no owner of record can be established and which now escheat to the state. Such mineral rights should revert to the current landowner of record.
5. We urge that a lessee, royalty owner or their agents have the right to place gauges to monitor oil or gas at the wellhead on the wells in which they have an interest.
6. We call for gas companies to allow the use of natural gas, at wellhead prices, on the section on which the gas is produced for irrigation and household use.
7. Texas law should be amended to provide adequate safeguards and compensation for tenant and surface owners against damages by oil and gas drilling, seismograph and pipeline companies.
8. Gerrymandering type lines should not be allowed when including land into any given well.

## **K. Taxes**

1. Texas Farmers Union supports a graduated state income tax with the elimination of ad valorem taxes and sales taxes and fees.
2. The state sales tax exemption of all products purchased for the purpose of producing food and fiber shall be maintained as is with all raw inputs for other industries in Texas.
3. No tax shall be levied upon irrigation wells or water produced from them for agricultural purposes.
4. The state should reimburse local governments for losses due to state mandated exemptions.
5. To ensure that all taxing entities in the state utilize the same methods in assessing the valuation of property, we recommend that there be one tax appraiser for all taxing entities within the county. Each taxing entity within the district should appoint one member to the Central Appraisal District (CAD) board. The grievance committee should be appointed by the CAD Board (one member from each commissioner's precinct and one at large). This committee will function independently of the CAD board.
6. All land and home appraisal rates should be of fair market value in that district, rather than on state-wide appraisal.
7. TFU supports and urges legislation to divide the ad valorem tax into two parts: 1) surface value tax and 2) mineral rights tax. The two separate taxes shall not be more than the amount of the current singular tax. Provisions should be included for the

mineral rights to automatically revert to the land surface owner if the mineral rights owner does not pay their taxes for three years.

8. We support the continued ag use valuation of ad valorem taxes as now in HB1060.

## **L. State Income Tax**

Texas Farmers Union should begin an education program, directed to farmers, concentrated on the danger to agriculture of higher property and sales taxes and the advantages of an income tax.

## **M. Texas Homestead Law**

Texas Farmers Union supports the law which has provided protection for both urban and rural homeowners for over 100 years. We support the reinstatement of this law.

## **N. Texas Education**

We believe that the Governor and Legislature of the State of Texas should adequately fund Texas public education and funding for public education should be a top priority of every Texas Legislative session. The State of Texas should be investing in a quality education for all Texas children and not just a privileged few.

### **We support:**

- a. The continuation of full funding for the Career Technology Education in Texas public schools with regard to college/career and workforce readiness.
- b. Full funding for sufficient staffing of Career and Technology teachers, vocational counselors, and transition facilitators for the purpose of providing students guidance in selecting targeted career pathways.
- c. Collaboration between public schools and higher education be established to encourage the growth of students entering into the related fields of agriculture.
- d. Vocational education teachers be maintained as bonus units to local schools in the Minimum Foundation Program.
- e. The consolidation of small independent school districts with other school districts only when the small district votes to consolidate and has the approval of the recipient school district. We favor the continuing of small rural schools of less than twelve grades.
- f. That local control over our schools districts should be maintained.
- g. A no voucher school system.
- h. The immediate repeal of the A-F grading system for individual school districts in regards to the STAAR test.

- i. Salary levels for public school teachers commensurate with salaries of professional persons of similar education and skills in other sectors of the economy.
- j. Putting more emphasis on Texas history and Texas geography in grade school and high school.
- k. TFU work with other interested groups of citizens to achieve an equitable system of financing for public schools of this state. The state should not discriminate against those school districts which are property poor and have little tax base to support public schools.
- l. The Texas Library Association's request for direct public aid for our libraries.
- m. The educational reform measures passed by the Texas Legislature in 1985.
- n. Extension service programs relating to production technology, farm equipment and increased farm income. We urge that greater emphasis be given to marketing problems, with the objective of helping farmers strengthen their market bargaining power.

**We Oppose:**

Any funding cuts by the Federal Government in extension service programs.

**O. Texas Transportation**

**We support:**

- a. A strong state farm to market program.
- b. More rigid enforcement of laws in keeping highways, lateral roads, parks and right of ways free of litter.
- c. Legislative action to require the State and railroad companies to keep road and railroad right of ways free of noxious weeds and litter.
- d. A law prohibiting the bottling and selling of throw away beverage containers that do not deteriorate rapidly.
- e. The placement of signs not to interfere with the movement of farm equipment.
- f. Continuation of the lateral road funds.
- g. The Texas Legislature enact a law to allow special permits to agricultural producers so they can legally pull three farm trailers up to and including trailers 32feet in length while in day light hours, and in the process of harvesting and hauling agricultural commodities in the area where they are grown.
- h. The suspension of all permit requirements for hauling hay.
- i. TDOT take agriculture in consideration during the design and construction of new projects.

## **P. Health Services**

1. We urge expanded health care in rural areas. Rural residents are entitled to adequate ambulance service, mobile health care units, a resident physician, dentist and optometrist. In areas without competent physician services, we recommend the services of a qualified paramedic to render emergency medical services.
2. Hospital districts should be allowed to operate ambulance services.
3. We are in favor of regular inspection of all convalescent, rest homes and homes for the aged by State authorized inspectors.
4. We support expanding and developing ways to help rural communities combat mental health problems.
5. We support the expansion and fully funding of rural mental health facilities, such as hospitals, hotlines, and education.

## **Q. Eminent Domain**

We believe the rights of private property owners need to be protected against those parties with condemnation rights and due process should be applied to all proceedings involving eminent domain.

### **Therefore, we favor:**

1. That notification to property owners and tenants be at least 120 days prior to project implementation and public hearings at least 30 days prior to project implementation. Hearings shall be held in the county that the project is proposed.
2. Minimum state standards for payment of damages to protect all property owners and tenants.
3. Condemners, at their own expense, shall obtain independent appraisal of the property, and make it available to all interested parties prior to condemnation hearings.
4. We are opposed to granting power of eminent domain to coal slurry pipelines through either state or federal legislation.
5. We are opposed to granting power of eminent domain for condemnation of land for recreational purposes or for protection of endangered species and private commercial enterprise.
6. The Texas Farmers Union should oppose taxpayer funding of the bullet train in the state. Neither the bullet train nor the High Speed Rail Authority should have the authority of eminent domain to secure right of way; we also oppose the Trans Texas Corridor in like manner.

7. In the exercising of eminent domain the property owners shall retain all rights to water and minerals.

## **R. Beginner and Young Farmer Programs**

We believe that agriculture is the essential part of maintaining enough food and fiber to feed the world. We recognize that the average age of the U.S. farmer and rancher continues to increase, causing the majority of farmland to change hands in the coming years. We feel it is imperative that the next generation of farmers and ranchers have the necessary programs in place to ensure that they can establish and sustain a viable livelihood.

### **We support:**

1. Adequate funding for the Young Farmer Endowment Program and the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program;
2. The Governor, to continue appointing bona fide farmers and ranchers to oversee the program;
3. Education and training for beginning farmers and ranchers, including agriculture and vocational training programs for military veterans;
4. Specific training and education for state and county FSA and NRCS staff on helping beginning farmers and ranchers to access programs;
5. Incentives to landowners to lease or sell farmland to beginning farmers and ranchers, and
6. The U.S. Congress writing and fully funding a comprehensive supply management farm bill that will make agriculture an easier profession to access for beginning farmers and ranchers.

## **S. Texas Department of Agriculture**

1. The Texas Agriculture Commissioner should remain a statewide elected official and the Texas Constitution should be amended to include this office as a constitutionally mandated elected office.
2. We urge the state of Texas, through its agencies, with the aid of TDA, to purchase US produced meat and food products for use in any Texas programs such as the Texas Prison System.
3. TDA should set Texas interstate commerce and trade quality controls on a reciprocal basis.

## **T. Physically Handicapped Farmers and Ranchers**

We resolve that the membership of the Texas Farmers Union urge the Texas Department of Agriculture and agriculture role agencies of other states to support efforts to help physically handicapped farmers and ranchers and other physically handicapped Texans who wish to engage in agriculture.

Texas has 10,000 physically handicapped farmers and ranchers, and countless other citizens who wish to engage in agriculture. These men and women represent an enormous untapped resource for Texas agriculture, and we support efforts to help these Texans realize their dreams.

## **XI. FARMERS UNION**

### **A. Cooperation among Producer Groups**

We commend the efforts and urge the continuation of the Texas and National Farmers Union to bring about a greater unity of legislative activities by those general farm and farm commodity producers' organizations to enact laws that will strengthen the farmers' market bargaining power. We feel that this spirit of cooperation has spread far and has reaped many benefits. We stand ready to cooperate with all groups who are trying to raise farm income.

### **B. Farm Organization Coalition**

We commend the State and National Farmers Union leadership and staff for their efforts in creating a state and national coalition of farm organizations.

We urge our local and state leadership to promote a coalition of all farm organizations and commodity groups whose members believe in the welfare of the family farm and rural America.

We strongly recommend that all farm organizations accurately report membership numbers which account for members who are actual farmers, whose livelihoods are dependent on agriculture. We also encourage policymakers to recognize only those farm organizations which report these farmer memberships.

### **C. Legislative Activity**

1. We urge that candidates for public office be judged and elected or defeated on the basis of their records and campaign pledges, as measured against the Farmers Union programs. Effective action includes not only exercise of the ballot, which we urge all citizens to do, but also promoting and taking part as individuals in the discussion of campaign issues and the stands of different candidates on the issues.
2. We urge the exertion of personal influence and the extension of personal financial aid in behalf of candidates who support The Farmers Union program. Study of issues and their discussion should be continued between elections. National Farmers Union organizations, officials and member families at the local, county, district and

state levels should maintain continuous contact with public officials by personal and group visits, including the Washington trips, letters, telegrams and phone calls. Public officials should be kept informed on the Farmers Union program.

We urge the state and national organizations to continue to publish and distribute accurate and unbiased political and legislative information, including voting records.

#### **D. Commodity Councils**

We urge the continuation of Farmers Union commodity councils on all commodities and related farm issues made up of members of the Texas Farmers Union to provide counsel and advice on legislation and to assist in the promotion of orderly marketing at state and local levels.

#### **E. Texas Farmers Union Insurance**

1. Through the Farmers Union Insurance Program, members have life and health insurance available to them. We endorse and approve the condition that all farmers shall be required to be Farmers Union members to obtain the benefits of its insurance program, with the exception of life insurance, other than group life. We call upon each and every member to give their full support to the Farmers Union Insurance Program to the end that the Texas Farmers Union shall have increased membership and stability.
2. We recommend that in order to gain membership, we must keep our insurance highly competitive.
3. We urge close cooperation between Farmers Union insurances and local county boards in the establishment and operation of local agencies.

#### **F. Organization and Education**

There are many important jobs that must be done in building Farmers Union in Texas. The first is building membership. We have a responsibility in the Farmers Union to acquaint farm people with our program and invite them to become members. This year, every local should maintain a continuous and intensive membership drive. Another job to be done is that of education. Education in the Farmers Union is the process of people thinking together in order to arrive at some constructive action. To achieve this, there must be active locals so that people can meet together. Education starts among young people. Each county organization should encourage more family involvement.

1. We urge that every Farmers Union local have an active action group consisting of County Coordinator, Legislative Director, Program Chairman, Financial Director, Membership Director, Publicity Director, Communications Director and Youth Education Director, who will study and carry it to the members, especially youth members, and as far as possible to nonmembers in their respective counties.

2. We suggest more visual aids such as movies, charts, pictures and tests are developed to promote clearer understanding of our problems, and that the state education program is coordinated to include the use of these aids.
3. Youth camps held at strategic locations are an effective method to provide leadership training to selected groups of prospective young leaders. We urge all Farmers Union officials, our membership representatives, and our agents to give priorities to our members in the state. We endorse the efforts of the Board of Directors to continue a Youth Program.
4. Every effort should be made to increase our membership.
5. We feel any increases in NFU membership dues would cause membership loss. Therefore, we oppose any NFU membership dues increase.

### **G. Church and Rural Life**

1. The increased interest of various church groups in the family type farm and in the improvement of rural life is most encouraging to us. Religious influence has a major role in the improvement of family farm living.
2. The unique spiritual values of living on the land must be preserved. We believe that our nation can survive only by perpetuating the Christian principles upon which it was founded.

### **H. Farm Protest Action**

1. We recognize that protest is a traditional and legitimate means of accomplishing or redress of grievances. We shall continue to participate in protest demonstrations as individual farmers and ranchers in order to make visible our dissatisfaction with the insensitivity of government toward the plight of agricultural producers.

As an organization, Farmers Union supports the objectives of 100 percent of parity farm prices.

We urge every individual to work their hardest to achieve this goal through whatever lawful means they believe to be useful and effective.

2. We urge all farmers to carefully consider the results and implications of selling any commodity at prices below parity.

# SPECIAL ORDERS OF BUSINESS

## **Right to Repair Equipment**

The manufactures of agricultural equipment are holding farmers and ranchers hostage with their continued consolidation of the Ag equipment industry. They continue to promote mega regionally owned dealerships, instead of the family owned dealerships that made this country thrive. This method of business has continued to erase nearly all competition among dealerships. Farmers and ranchers continue to feel that the “Right to Repair” their own equipment is essential in keeping costs down and possibly balancing their farm budgets.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) recently signed between John Deere and the American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) far from fixes the Right to Repair issue. It falls short of the protections to farmers that would be achieved with legislation or regulations that would apply to all equipment manufacturers, because it is a MOU signed between one equipment manufacturer and one farm group. While the MOU that was signed states that farmers will be able to access the same repair materials as dealership technicians, it is riddled with potential loopholes that the manufacturer could use to deny farmers repair access. It still causes independent mechanics to have too many obstacles to obtain these materials. John Deere can also walk away from the MOU with 30 days’ notice, which doesn’t provide any assurance that the deal will be honored. It also ask the AFBF to object to or discourage its State and county organizations from advocating for any Right to Repair for farmers legislation.

TFU believes that Ag manufactures wanting to charge exorbitant amounts of money to repair and for the rights to repair any engine, electrical, and software technology is detrimental to the financial well-being of farmers by placing undue financial burdens on family farmers and ranchers.

### **We support:**

- Senate Bill (S.3549) “The Agriculture Right to Repair Act” and House Bill HR 4006 “Fair Repair Act” and ask for their immediate passage. These Bills would force Ag equipment manufactures to provide parts, documentation, software and tools to farmers and third parties at reasonable terms;
- The development of a universal diagnostic system for agriculture equipment; and
- family farmers and ranchers having full control over fixing their equipment until the issue is resolved.

## **Social Security and Medicare/Medicaid**

Texas Farmers Union strongly urges the U.S. government to not make any cuts to Social Security and Medicare/Medicaid for the purpose of trying to balance the Federal Budget. The Social Security program shouldn't be used as a tool for the U.S. government to try and make amends for their past financial failures in the budgeting of the Federal government.

## Texas Infrastructure

The Texas highway infrastructure has been in a state of decline for many years now. All roads and bridges from the interstates to the county road in Texas are falling apart due to the increases in traffic from thousands of people moving to Texas from other states or abroad and the lack of actual preventive maintenance on the roads and bridges. The roads have become increasingly more dangerous over the years.

Agriculture, along with other industries have been impacted by the decline in road and bridge conditions. The States Farm-to-Market and county road and bridge system has become in disarray and too small for today's farm equipment, and with so many more cars on the road today it has become a nightmare for the movement of ag equipment from farm to farm.

In November 2021, President Biden signed into law a Federal Infrastructure Bill that is projected to send Texas over \$35 billion dollars over a 5 year period for roads, bridges and other things. It is projected to be \$26.9 billion for federal highway programs and \$537 million for bridge replacement and repair, couple that with the State of Texas announcing a record \$33 billion budget surplus for 2024-2025, now is the time to re-invest in the failing infrastructure and get the great State of Texas moving freely and safely again.

### **We support:**

- Putting a priority on the building of new and the rebuilding of our States farm-to-market and county road and bridge system;
- Streamlining the process for permits, environmental studies, and impact studies to get jobs started faster and built in a timely manner;
- Auditing TxDOT to ensure that all monies are being used to the full extent of the purposes they were intended for;
- Streamlining and re-organizing TxDOT's employee system, ie: where there is more employees working and less employees watching other people work;
- Streamlining and auditing the county road and bridge system for the same reasons;
- Building wider roads and bridges to ensure safety, but limiting the amount of land to be taken for the purpose of building roads and bridges;
- All roadways need to be cleared of trees, debris and other obstacles from the road right of ways; and Being proactive in any future infrastructure builds, build the roads before you build the houses or businesses.

## Supply Chains

The past several years, unexpected shifts in supply and demand, natural disasters, the pandemic, and market concentration have caused significant supply chain disruptions for family farmers, ranchers and rural communities. These supply chain issues have led to reduced access to markets, higher prices for farm inputs and other goods and services, inadequate access to labor and other social economic problems. Market concentration and consolidation and relying on foreign companies that produce the parts and goods that our farmers and ranchers need to produce our Nations' food supply are causing most of the issues.

Texas Farmers Union supports the following principles or policies to help address these issues:

- Increased enforcement of antitrust laws to spur competition throughout the agricultural supply chain, including for crop inputs such as seed, fertilizer, crop protection products, and parts for farm equipment;
- Incentives to build resilience and foster competition in the farm and food system through expansion of local and regional production, processing, and distribution, by promoting the building of home grown factories to produce our goods;
- Adequate funding for the United States Postal Service (USPS);
- Prompt delivery and affordable rates through USPS in all parts of the country;
- Incentives and programs to alleviate the labor shortage in the transportation industry;
- A permanent hours-of-service waiver for truckers who need to make timely delivers for transporting livestock and inputs such as fertilizer;
- Measures that resolve bottlenecks occurring at, to, and from shipping ports;
- Improvements to the efficiency and reliability of our transportation systems for shipping, including infrastructure projects, new technologies, and increased coordination between the maritime, rail, and trucking industries; and
- Streamlining of burdensome regulations needed to get products and inputs through the supply chain.

## Farm Bill Proposal

Texas Farmers Union (TFU) has advocated for Farm Bills to help set guidelines to keep family farmers on their farms. Farm Bills should provide much needed certainty, support and predictability for all producers-of all crops- across all regions of the U.S.

Texas Farmers Union and the Agricultural Policy Analysis Center (APAC) partnered together to develop and analyze a supply management program, that we feel should be the basis of the basis of all future Farm Bills. We believe that farm policies ought to treat the cause of farm problems, not the symptoms. Current crop programs are designed to treat the symptoms, instead of fixing the most important problem facing crop farmers, “price”. If you get the price near or above the full cost of production, then the other farm challenges become manageable.

The current Farm Bill (Agricultural Improvement Act of 2018) and past Farm Bills have focused on trying to address revenue support for farmers. These policies have resulted in: overproduction of commodities causing below cost of production prices for commodities and higher costs to the federal government. These policies have been heavily influenced by the crop insurance industry.

Texas Farmers Union believes that a supply management program will address the problems of cheap prices and cost. A supply management program supports net farm income by providing price support for the major crops that farmers produce. Supply management programs would take onto account the cause of low prices (supply that exceeds demand) by taking a marginal amount of supply off the market so that crop prices rise to a profitable level and if necessary inducing farmers to reduce their production through paid acreage reduction programs. With crop prices well below the cost of production for the foreseeable future, revenue programs will be too expensive and still provide inadequate support to farmers.

Texas Farmers Union supports a few good concepts of the 2018 Agricultural Improvement Act. They are: including cotton back as covered commodity in Title I of the farm bill, expansion of the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) from 24 million to 27 million acres, the elimination of the prohibition of growing industrial hemp on U.S. farms, but fell short in not including industrial hemp as a covered commodity for Title I programs. The Agricultural Improvement Act fails in aspects by maintaining the status quo of past failed Farm Bills that have driven family farmers out of business.

### **Texas Farmers Union supports the next and future Farm Bills with the following:**

- Non-Recourse Loan Rate at 95% of the full cost of production for corn, all other crops set at their historic ratio to corn;
- Release price set at 130% of the loan rate;
- Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) held reserves will be implemented to control commodity prices;
- Voluntary acreage reduction program in which farmers bid acres into a 3-year set a side based on environmental considerations;
- Acres need not be contiguous;
- Planting flexibility;
- Yield-only insurance subsidized by the government,(farmers who want revenue insurance products can obtain those in the commercial marketplace);
- To qualify for crop insurance subsidies, you must be enrolled in the acreage reduction program;
- A revised dairy program to meet the needs of family dairies;

- Provisions that enable family farmers to market their products locally and regionally;
- Value the environment by fully funding and expanding authorized conservation programs, and
- Value the less fortunate by fully funding and expanding food and nutrition programs.

## Country-of-Origin Labeling (COOL)

Mandatory Country-of-Origin Labeling (COOL) requires that muscle cuts of meats and fresh and frozen fruits and vegetables be labeled with their country of origin, informing the U.S. consumers where their food originates.

Despite its widespread popularity among consumers and producers, the U.S. Congress repealed the law succumbing to the pressure from the WTO, foreign countries and multi-national corporations claiming it was unfair to their beef exports.

Under current labeling standards, meat that is born, raised and slaughtered in foreign countries can still carry a “product of U.S.A.” label, so long as it passes through a facility inspected by the USDA. This practice misleads consumers and allows foreign interests and multi-national corporations to take advantage of market opportunities that should be reserved for U.S. family farmers and ranchers. Four companies, Cargill, Tyson, JBS and National Beef control 80% of the beef market. All four of these multi-national corporations import cheap meat and meat products and mix with U.S. meat calling it a “product of USA”. This financially harms U.S. beef producers who currently find themselves in a highly consolidated marketplace.

Texas Farmers Union has supported and lobbied for mandatory COOL since its inception and still believes that the intent of the law is in the best interest of the U.S. consumer and producer.

### **Texas Farmers Union believes:**

- That the U.S. consumer has the right to know where their food originates from;
- That the majority of U.S. consumers support mandatory COOL;
- That COOL is just another safeguard against foreign-born diseases being introduced into the U.S. food supply;
- That the recent scandals (the paying off of meat inspectors and government officials to pass rotten beef through the inspection process) only strengthens the argument for COOL;
- That this decision allows the continuation of the meat packer industry to commingle beef and other meats from different countries and mislead consumers into believing that it is a product of the U.S.;
- That if the label “product of USA” is used, USDA has the responsibility to correct “product of USA” labeling standards. Current labeling practices do not satisfy the requirements of the Federal Meat Inspection Act (FMIA) that clearly prohibit meat and meat product labels that are misleading to consumers;
- That the U.S should not allow its consumer protection laws to be overturned by foreign nations or by the WTO;
- That the WTO has again proven to be influenced in their decision making by the big corporations that control most trade policies;
- That the WTO decision has undermined the sovereign rights of the U.S. consumer to know the origin of their food, and
- That the U.S. Congress has been short sighted in their decision to repeal COOL and caved into pressure and greed from multi-national corporations, instead of what is in the best interest of the U.S. consumer.

### **Texas Farmers Union supports:**

- Mandatory Country-of Origin Labeling;

- The passing of and swift enactment of the American Beef Labeling Act that restores COOL for beef;
- All imports of any kind brought into the U.S. should have a Country-of-Origin Label;
- A U.S. Congress that is willing to stand up for the best interest of its farmers, ranchers, and consumers, and
- That any WTO ruling on trade disputes have the producer and consumers needs and rights at the forefront and not what's in the best interest of any of the corporate controlled trade policies.

**Texas Farmers Union urges:**

- The USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) that if the label “product of USA” is used, to strengthen and clarify standards so that “product of USA” labeling only appears on products born, raised, and slaughtered within the U.S.

## Texas Education

Education has been and always will be a cornerstone in a well productive life, community and government. The public school system in Texas has produced countless success stories, including The President of The United States, inventors, scientists, farmers and many others. A system that has flaws but has worked.

The current 88<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislature needs to produce an even bigger public school finance bill that will ensure school districts across the State can provide the proper education needed to ensure the next generation is prepared for success.

The leaders of the Texas State Government have a plan for our education system. The plan is to divert State funded money for public schools into a voucher system, allowing children to use the vouchers to get an education at any private school system. The foundation to this plan was laid several years ago. This plan included the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STARR). This test has been flawed from its inception. Putting undo pressure on young children and eventually having schools teach to pass the test, instead of their proper teaching techniques. Recently another step in the plan was added, the way schools were graded for performance. The A-F system, that the first set of grades that come out were completely different than what the schools had been told they graded.

### **Texas Farmers Union believes:**

- These steps have been put into place to further discredit public schools, in an effort to gain support for their voucher plan;
- Public school would eventually close their doors in rural communities if a voucher system were put into place;
- Vouchers of any kind, and every kind don't serve students with special needs;
- Vouchers promote discrimination, hurt rural schools, and subsidize wealthy families;
- That the already rapid decline of rural Texas would come even faster if public schools closed;
- That the Texas State Legislature has purposely harmed the public school system with their actions;
- The Texas public school system could perform better if there were less emphasis on the STARR test and just let teachers teach;
- The voucher system is a way to funnel state money into the hands of private entities; and
- The 88<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislature should increase funding for the public school system until it is adequately funded to provide the children of Texas with the education they deserve.

### **Texas Farmers Union supports:**

- A NO VOUCHER SCHOOL SYSTEM;
- A public education system that has the adequate funding, support and resources it needs from the State of Texas;
- Funding for public education should be a top priority for every Texas Legislative Session and taxpayer funds are for all children; and
- The immediate repeal of the A-F grading system.

## Climate Change

The U.S. farmers and ranchers have dealt with many different kinds of weather events, from droughts, floods, tornadoes and any other natural disasters. But, lately the extremes with which the weather has been, makes farming and ranching even more volatile than ever before. The last 3 years were the warmest on record.

Farmers have, for the most part, been able to compensate for previous climate shifts with a combination of technology and innovative management. But at some point in the near future, the agricultural industry will likely not be able to keep up with increasingly erratic and severe climate fluctuations.

Texas Farmers Union believes that climate change is already affecting farmer's livelihoods, rural economies, global food security, and if left unchecked, will devastate all three. The shifting weather patterns and greater and more frequent extreme weather events will continue to have widespread and irrevocable ripple effects on almost every aspect of food production.

### **Texas Farmers Union believes:**

- Climate change is happening and will continue to happen at an accelerated pace, if parameters aren't put into place to curb the fast approaching storm;
- The scientific evidence that indicates that human activities are a contributing factor to climate change and believe human activity has the potential to help mitigate climate change;
- Climate change is not only an agricultural threat, it is a global, national, community and personal threat;
- Policies intended to address climate change should leverage agriculture's potential to be part of the solution;
- Floods, droughts and natural disasters are a fact of life, but the ever increasing volatility and magnitude of these events are a threat and alarming to the future;
- Climate change impacts on water scarcity, droughts and resource struggles will lead to more war and terrorism;
- As global temperatures rise the Arctic polar ice caps will continue to melt at accelerated speeds, thus leading to elevated sea levels flooding the U.S. ports and coastline;
- Climate change posed risks to farmers and ranchers are enhanced by secondary carbon factors including wildfires, desertification, and the release of carbon dioxide from oceans and permafrost among others;
- While the effects of climate change will become catastrophic down the road, the only opportunity to fix the problem rests in the present to preserve a livable climate for our children, and
- If the U.S. isn't a global leader, we will be shut out of any decision making and leave the U.S. at a competitive disadvantage in agriculture.

### **Texas Farmers Union supports:**

- Reducing more carbon emissions;
- Policies to provide incentives to support farmers and ranchers as they tackle climate challenges;

- USDA should regulate carbon and other environmental credit markets to ensure they use consistent protocols and adhere to strict levels of fairness and transparency to ensure producers are adequately compensated;
- Early adopters of conservation practices should be rewarded for contributing to carbon sequestration;
- Research funding for soil health and climate-smart production;
- The promotion of conservation practices that focus on water quality concerns and the ability to capture carbon and store it;
- Investing in and continuing to grow renewable fuels and alternatives;
- Searching and funding for new technologies to combat and reverse damage that has already occurred;
- The U.S. becoming a global leader in the efforts to adapt and mitigate climate change, and continuing to educate farmers, ranchers and rural communities on climate change, and
- Acknowledging that climate change is real and that any and all efforts should be made to combat the problem immediately.

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## GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS

APH – Actual Production History  
BCA – Budget Control Act of 2011  
BFP – Butter Fat Protein  
CAD – Central Appraisal District  
CCC – Commodity Credit Corporation  
CRP – Conservation Reserve Program  
DFA – Dairy Farmers of America  
DMS – Dairy Marketing Services  
DOJ – Department of Justice  
EPA – Environmental Protection Agency  
ETBT – Ethyl Tertiary Butyl Ether  
FDA – Food and Drug Administration  
FMD – Foot and Mouth Disease  
FSA – Farm Service Agency  
FTAA – Free Trade Agreement of America  
GMO – Genetically Modified Organism  
GRAS – Generally Recognized As Safe  
LAP – Livestock Assistant Program  
LPDP – Livestock Preservation and Donation Program  
LDP – Loan Deficiency Payment  
MPC – Milk Protein Concentrate  
NASS – National Agricultural Statistics Service  
NDPRB – National Dairy Promotion Research Board  
OIG – Office of the Inspector General  
OSHA – Occupational Safety and Hazard Agency  
REA – Rural Electric Association  
SNM – Special Nuclear Materials  
TCEQ – Texas Commission on Environmental Quality  
TDA – Texas Department of Agriculture  
USDA – United States Department of Agriculture  
WTO – World Trade Organization