

SECURING AMERICA'S FOOD AND FARM SYSTEM

**A Roadmap for
the Trump-Vance
Administration**



INTRODUCTION

The current state of America's food and farm system is unrecognizable from just a few short decades ago. Families with rich farming histories have been driven off the land, and many once-thriving rural areas are now shells of the communities they used to be.

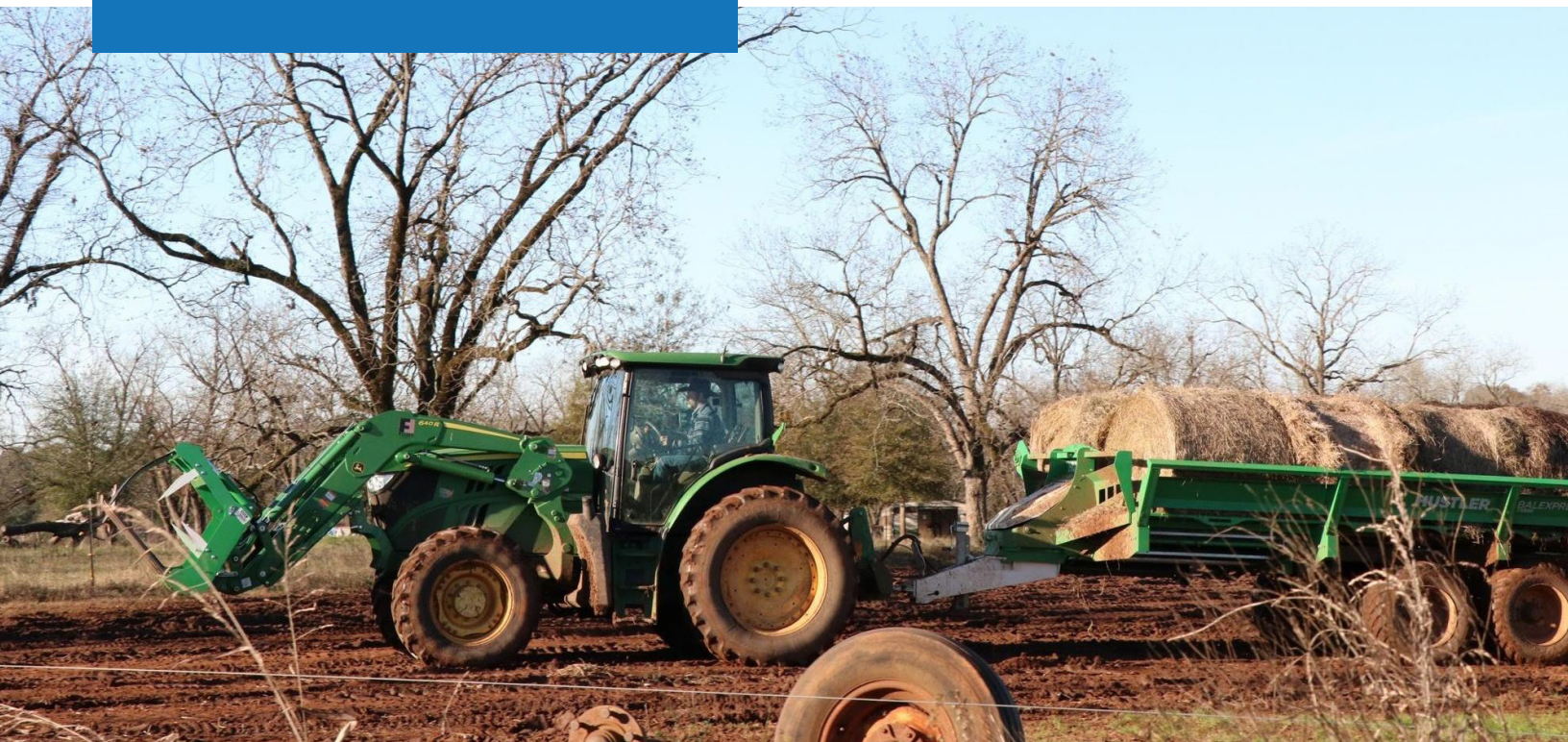
IN THE MOST RECENT FIVE-YEAR PERIOD BETWEEN THE 2017 AND 2022 CENSUS, MORE THAN 140,000 FARMERS LOST THEIR OPERATIONS.

These decades have given rise to powerful multinational and foreign corporations that have stolen control of American agriculture and extracted the economic vitality of rural communities. Three dozen corporations now dictate the lines of development and terms of trade for almost every industry involved in the growing, processing, and distribution of food in America. Farmers and their rural communities have felt the squeeze as these corporations pursue and rake in record profits.

The most recent census on the number of U.S. farms continues to paint a desperate picture: Year after year, more and more farmers lose their livelihoods. In the most recent five-year period between the 2017 and 2022 census, more than 140,000 farmers lost their operations.

The current system has failed. Along with declining farming and rural communities, America faces a corresponding health and nutrition crisis and is becoming ever more reliant on foreign nations to feed its people. The country has now reached a critical point.

Previously, when America faced this level of runaway corporate control, presidents found the courage to stand up to power and take action. Action is now required again. Winning the fight to secure America's food and farm system will benefit every American farmer, family, and community.



ABOUT FARM ACTION FUND

Farm Action Fund is a nonpartisan farm organization that develops recommended policy solutions focused on securing America’s food supply and providing economic opportunity to farmers and rural communities through a fair, sustainable, healthy food system.

Since its founding in 2017, Farm Action Fund has been a leader in calling out the threat of multinational corporations and foreign countries’ takeover of America’s farmland and food system.

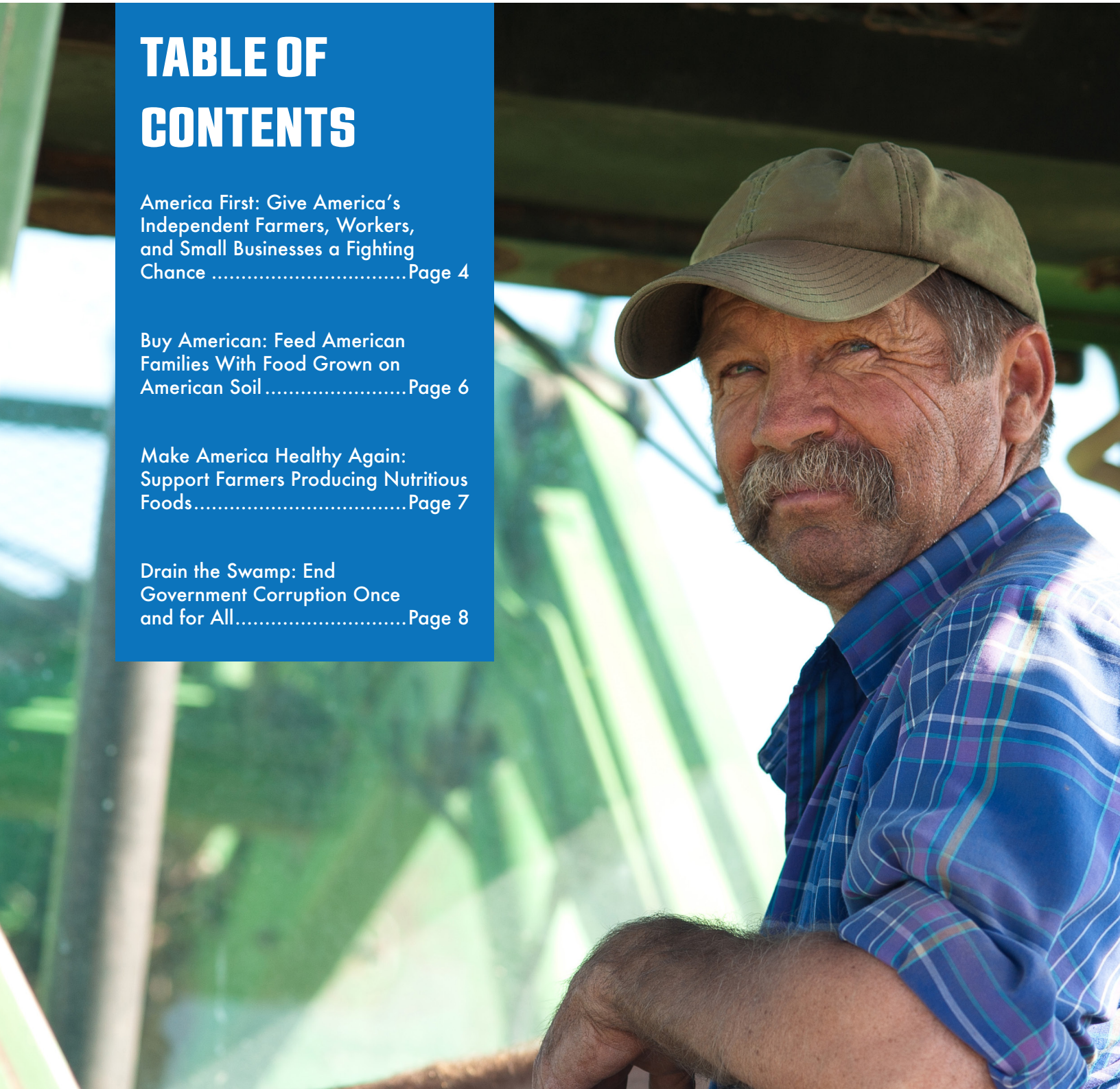
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AMERICA FIRST: GIVE AMERICA'S INDEPENDENT FARMERS, WORKERS, AND SMALL BUSINESSES A FIGHTING CHANCE

America's independent farmers and small businesses are the backbone of the nation's food system. Yet, that food system is currently in a crisis. Over the last several decades, unprecedented consolidation across the food and agriculture system has driven farmers from their land, stolen valuable market opportunities, and eroded once vibrant rural economies. The multinational and foreign corporations that dominate today's markets continue amassing more power and profit off the backs of everyone else.

But, the trends of market consolidation can be reversed. Through the following actions, President Trump and his incoming administration can finally give America's independent farmers and small businesses the fighting chance they deserve.

Stop Foreign Farmland Ownership

Farmland ownership has long been a source of wealth and power in rural America. However, as large foreign countries and corporations continue to gobble up agricultural land as part of their investment and food strategies, family farmers are forced out of business, and rural communities are hollowed out. This is both a food and national security issue. We urge the Trump administration to increase funding to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to fully implement the provisions of the Agriculture Foreign Investment Disclosure Act and push the USDA to aggressively monitor foreign investment in U.S. farmland.



End Corruption in Commodity Checkoff Programs

Reform to the checkoff tax is long overdue. The USDA requires farmers at operations of all sizes to participate in and pay into checkoff programs, funds from which are designed to promote certain commodities over others. Due to decades of lax oversight by the USDA, checkoff programs are shrouded in secrecy while funneling farmers' tax dollars to trade and lobbying organizations — representing the world's largest meatpackers and grain traders — which promote policies that benefit large monopolies and harm family farmers and ranchers.

We urge the Trump administration to help family farmers by reforming the checkoff programs to prohibit anti-competitive behavior, increase compliance audits, and increase transparency and oversight of the programs — including releasing compliance audits to the public. Further, the USDA should oversee compliance audits, budgets, and message approvals of all Qualified State Soybean Boards and Qualified State Beef Councils. Finally, we urge the Trump administration to support the bipartisan Opportunities for Fairness in Farming Act.

Restore Farmers' Right to Repair

Multinational farm equipment manufacturers like John Deere are imposing severe restrictions on who can repair the products they sell. Prevented from fixing their own tractors, farmers are often forced into long equipment transports and wait times for repairs. This can result in losses of tens or even hundreds of thousands of dollars in potential yields. Equipment manufacturers are also crushing independent repair shops and critically harming once-vibrant rural economies by forbidding everyone except a few authorized dealers from accessing necessary diagnostic tools.

We urge the Trump administration to support the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) in completing its investigation of John Deere for violating the Federal Trade Commission Act and to enforce the law to the fullest extent. If the FTC determines that Deere has violated antitrust laws, it should order the manufacturer to cease withholding information, obtain a federal injunction declaring their practices unlawful and prohibiting them from continuing to restrict repairs, and obtain monetary penalties.

Strengthen the Packers and Stockyards Act to Protect Livestock Producers

More than 100 years ago, the U.S. passed the Packers & Stockyards Act (P&S Act) to protect farmers and ranchers from concentrated, abusive monopoly power in the livestock industry. The P&S Act successfully leveled the economic playing field for decades, but the erosion of its power by courts in the 1980s has allowed a handful of corporations to gain unprecedented control over meat and poultry markets. We urge the Trump administration to finalize, implement, and enforce the USDA's P&S Act rulemakings that are in various stages of finalization and implementation. Further, reinstating the Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration (GIPSA) as a stand-alone agency with full funding and enforcement authority of the P&S Act should be a top priority.

Block the USDA's Oppressive Rule Mandating Electronic I.D. for Livestock

The USDA's rule requiring mandatory electronic ID for cattle and bison moving across state lines is a solution in search of a problem, and one that will

harm thousands of small farms and ranches across the country. The largest multinational meatpackers support this rule because it helps them sell their products outside of the U.S., and they are the ones who need help with traceability. Meanwhile, independent farmers and ranchers keep their own traceability records – they can tell you where their cattle came from. Additionally, electronic IDs provide the largest meatpackers with independent cattle producers' production data, allowing the meatpackers to further manipulate the cattle market. We urge the Trump administration to keep the 2013 Animal Disease Traceability Rule unchanged, allowing farmers and ranchers to identify their animals with traditional, low-tech forms of ID or electronic ID, depending on which works best for their operations.

Protect Food Workers

Food workers are far too often the lowest-paid and most powerless workers in the U.S. and, therefore, are at the mercy of their employers. In recent years, large meatpackers and poultry processors have lobbied the USDA to allow them to increase their production line speeds and to allow them to self-inspect their processing, putting workers and consumers at risk. The Trump administration should stop the USDA from acting on these unreasonable requests.

Conventional farm production practices depend upon the use of agrichemicals, and fruit and vegetable production is especially dependent on manual labor. Given the lack of federal protections in this area, many farmworkers routinely risk exposure to dangerous levels of poison in the workplace. The Trump administration should bolster the regulations around agrichemical applications and enforce them more vigorously.



BUY AMERICAN: FEED AMERICAN FAMILIES WITH FOOD GROWN ON AMERICAN SOIL

In their pursuit of feeding their neighbors and communities, American farmers and ranchers face never-before-seen challenges created by cheap imports and multinational and foreign monopoly corporations. These corporations have rigged America's agricultural trade flows and increased our reliance on imported fruits, vegetables, and meat. American families deserve a safe and abundant food supply, and our nation's farmers and ranchers stand ready to provide just that. By removing the barriers that currently exist and leveraging a new procurement strategy, President Trump can feed American families with food grown on American soil and bring food sovereignty back to our nation.



Balance the Agricultural Trade Deficit

The U.S. has historically been a proud agricultural powerhouse, consistently running an agricultural trade surplus. But for five of the last seven years, the mighty U.S. agriculture system ran an agricultural trade deficit, importing more than it exported. The projection for 2025 is worse than ever, with a deficit of \$42.5 billion. This growing deficit is driven by our dependence on fruit and vegetable imports from other countries while we over-subsidize the production of lower-value corn and soybeans on U.S. soil. Corn and soybeans are not the staples of healthy food for people – their primary uses are for industrial livestock feed, ethanol, and to make cheap sugars, starches, and oils that end up in highly processed foods.

We urge the Trump administration to shift government support from low-value feed grains like corn and soybeans toward vegetables, fruits, nuts, legumes, mushrooms, and cereal grains, allowing farmers more choices to profitably grow food for their communities. In the President's first budget request, increase funding for the Local Agricultural Marketing Program, the Specialty Crop Research Initiative, Specialty Crop Block Grants, and the GusNIP program, to provide market opportunities for local and regional farmers.

Shift Government Food Procurement to Local and Regional American Producers

The U.S. government is a major purchaser of food. Today, the bulk of those taxpayer funds are directed to the world's largest and most abusive food corporations. The USDA and Department of Defense must change their procurement policies to prioritize purchases from local and regional producers that bolster a stronger, more resilient food system. Within the President's first budget request, establish a carve-out for targeted purchasing from local and regional producers and processors, including additional staff to manage the new carve-out. The Trump administration should also seek to ensure there is funding dedicated to expanding Local Food Purchase Assistance Cooperative Agreement Program (LFPA) and Local Foods for Schools Cooperative Agreement Program (LFS), which have proven to be successful mechanisms for leveraging government procurement to support local farms and food systems.



Restore Mandatory Country of Origin Labeling for Beef and Pork

Since 2015, beef and pork products have been exempt from the country of origin labeling requirements that all other products in the marketplace must adhere to. This exemption, made at the behest of the largest multinational meatpacking corporations and the World Trade Organization, removes transparency for America's consumers and puts America's cattle and hog producers at a competitive disadvantage with foreign imports that no longer must identify their origin.

We urge the Trump administration to renegotiate the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement to reinstate Mandatory Country of Origin Labeling for all beef, pork, and meat products between the countries. The Trump administration should support Congress passing Senator Rounds' bipartisan American Beef Labeling Act.

MAKE AMERICA HEALTHY AGAIN: SUPPORT FARMERS PRODUCING NUTRITIOUS FOODS

Ensuring all Americans have access to nutritious, high-quality food starts with supporting the farmers who grow it. However, many farmers face economic challenges in shifting towards crops that support a healthier food system. The incoming Trump administration has the opportunity to reshape agricultural policy to prioritize and incentivize the production of fruits, vegetables, legumes, and other nutritious crops. In doing so, we can strengthen public

health, reduce healthcare costs, and foster a system that aligns with the country's long-term wellness and economic goals. Empowering farmers in this way is critical in the fight to Make America Healthy Again.

Shift Government Support Towards Nutrient-Dense Food Crops

There is a glaring contradiction between the kind of food our government recommends and the kinds of food it supports. While the government dietary guidelines recommend filling 50% of our plates with fruits and vegetables, only 4% of federal farm subsidies support their production. Subsidies help keep prices low, so they eventually determine what kind of food will be accessible and affordable to citizens. Yet the government currently directs the bulk of its subsidies toward commodity crops like corn and soybeans. These are used to feed livestock and make cheap sugars, starches, and oils that end up in highly processed junk foods.

We urge the Trump administration to shift government support from low-value feed grains like corn and soybeans toward vegetables, fruits, nuts, legumes, mushrooms, and cereal grains, allowing farmers more choices to profitably grow food for their communities. To start, in the President's first budget request, increase funding for the Local Agricultural Marketing Program and the GusNIP program, to provide market opportunities for local and regional farmers to feed their communities healthy foods.

Improve Risk Management Options for Diversified and Regenerative Farms

Farmers growing livestock feed crops, such as corn and soybeans, currently have far better access to risk-management tools than those growing food crops like fruits, vegetables, legumes, and whole grains. Such imbalances drive farmers toward certain crops and production models, resulting in the growing agricultural trade deficit and dependence on foreign countries to feed our population.

We urge the Trump administration to expand crop insurance options to support more diversified and regenerative operations that feed their communities, not just those that grow commodity crops used for corporate livestock feed and highly processed food. We also must set common-sense payment limits on farm support programs so that the largest, wealthiest farms are no longer receiving the bulk of taxpayer support.

Increase Credit Access for All Farmers

With increased consolidation in the financial sector, independent farmers and ranchers struggle to access the necessary capital to keep their farms and ranches operating. We urge the Trump administration to support expanding the Farm Service Agency's (FSA) Increasing Land, Capital, and Market Access Program for historically underserved farmers, ranchers, and forest owners, those operating in high-poverty areas, and young and beginning farmers. The Trump administration should encourage the FSA to set aside 10% of annual profits for regional lending programs that support sustainable and regenerative agriculture.

DRAIN THE SWAMP: END GOVERNMENT CORRUPTION ONCE AND FOR ALL

The American people deserve a government that works for them — not one influenced by corporate interests and backdoor deals. At the USDA, as with many government agencies, the revolving door between high-ranking officials and powerful corporations has compromised the agency's integrity and weakened its ability to uphold the trust of farmers, ranchers, and the broader public. Furthermore, we can support the next generation of committed public servants by recruiting young leaders and professionals from rural areas



who are passionate about serving their country. By shutting the revolving door and building a government that is genuinely accountable to the American people, President Trump can end government corruption once and for all and foster a government that puts America first.

Shut the Revolving Door at the USDA

In the executive branch of government, there is a revolving door between major corporations and the regulatory agencies that are supposed to police them. Nowhere is this more prevalent than at the USDA, which has been captured by global seed, pesticide, and livestock processing corporations. We urge the Trump administration to protect the public interest by moving out the bad actors and appointing honest officials who do not have conflicts of interest. We urge the administration to implement a five-year "cooling-off period" to slow down the rapid and seamless transition of government officials into lobbying positions.

Build a Bench in Rural America

Every bit as important as the policy path the Trump administration chooses is the personnel selected to carry out the work of the USDA. Historically, Schedule C political appointee positions have been stuffed with the well-connected in Washington D.C. with ties to the very corporations the USDA is supposed to regulate. We encourage a new approach that pulls appointees from the vast talent pool across the country who represent the interests of everyday people — not monopoly corporations.

Furthermore, in an effort to give invaluable experience to the next generation of elected officials, it should be made a priority to employ the young and ambitious folks already steeped in rural policy and politics. This is, perhaps, the greatest legacy President Trump can leave for a brighter future in rural America.

