

ENDING THE MONOPOLY TAKEOVER OF AMERICAN AGRICULTURE

**Policy Recommendations
for the 119th Congress**



INTRODUCTION

The current state of America's food and farm system presents pressing issues for farmers, rural communities, and consumers.

Today, three dozen corporations dictate the lines of development and terms of trade for almost every industry involved in the growing, processing, and distribution of food in America. These powerful multinational and foreign corporations have stolen control of American agriculture and extracted the economic life of rural communities.

The results have been catastrophic. In the most recent five-year period between the 2017 and 2022 Agriculture Census, more than 140,000 farmers lost their operations. 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.

For too long, Congress has turned a blind eye to the monopoly takeover of American agriculture. But, with the American people overwhelmingly supporting reform, now is the time for action.

As the 119th Congress begins and the long-term future of the farm bill still yet to be decided, Farm Action Fund has prepared these policy recommendations to reverse the tide of monopoly power. Implementing these recommendations and winning the fight for 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 policy solutions focused on securing America's food supply and providing economic opportunity to farmers and rural communities through a fair, sustainable, and 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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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 and America's independent farmers and small businesses can finally be given the fighting chance they deserve.

Stop Foreign and Corporate 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.

Key Policy Actions:

- Increase appropriations to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to fully implement the provisions of the Agriculture Foreign Investment Disclosure Act
- Direct USDA to aggressively monitor foreign investment in U.S. farmland and report annually to Congress
- Restrict future farmland ownership and leasing by corporate investors, see the Farmland for Farmers Act
- Add more stringent requirements for oversight and review of foreign land ownership and acquisition, see the Foreign Agricultural Restrictions to Maintain Local Agriculture and National Defense (FARMLAND) Act
- Establish and expand requirements for reviewing and disclosing transactions regarding foreign investments in agricultural land, see the Security and Oversight for International Landholdings (SOIL) Act
- Make foreign individuals ineligible for any credit or financial services provided by a Farm Credit institution, see the Farm Credit for Americans Act

Level the Playing Field for Farmers and Ranchers

Rampant consolidation across food and farm sectors has enabled dominant corporations to amass power and, in too many cases, violate antitrust legislation. This has created an unfair playing field where farmers and other small businesses cannot compete against multinational corporations.

Key Policy Actions:

- **Require the USDA to conduct a study on the fertilizer market to examine factors affecting prices, including competition, trends, and transparency, to help farmers better understand and manage rising input costs, see the Fertilizer Research Act**
- **Strengthen U.S. antitrust laws by providing federal enforcers with more resources, enhancing prohibitions on anticompetitive mergers and conduct, and implementing reforms to improve enforcement, particularly against dominant digital platforms and large corporations, see the Competition and Antitrust Law Enforcement Reform Act**
- **Ban the largest and most anticompetitive mergers, strengthen the DOJ and FTC's ability to block harmful deals, and require consideration of worker impacts, with the goal of restoring competition, reducing prices, and protecting labor and small businesses, see the Prohibiting Anticompetitive Mergers Act**
- **Impose an indefinite moratorium on mergers and acquisitions in the food and agriculture sector, while establishing a commission to recommend improvements to antitrust laws and oversight in response to growing market concentration and its harmful effects on farmers, consumers, and communities, see the Food and Agribusiness Merger Moratorium and Antitrust Review Act**
- **Direct the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) to investigate potential anticompetitive practices and violations of antitrust laws within the beef packing industry, including price-fixing and monopolization, and to report findings and recommendations for legislative action within one year, see the Bipartisan Beef-Packing Investigation Resolution**



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.

Key Policy Actions:

- **Direct and provide an appropriation for the USDA Office of Inspector General to review whether USDA, the Qualified State Soybean Boards, and the Qualified State Beef Councils are administering the soybean and beef checkoff programs in compliance with statutory requirements and the Department's published guidelines**
- **Disallow checkoff programs from contracting with organizations that engage in political advocacy, have conflicts of interest, or employ anticompetitive conduct; require programs to publish all budgets and disbursements to the public and submit to periodic audits by the USDA Inspector General; and require programs to undergo periodic audits by the Comptroller General of the United States, see the Opportunities for Fairness in Farming Act**

Restore Farmers' Right to Repair

Multinational farm equipment manufacturers like John Deere have imposed 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.

Key Policy Actions:

- Direct the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) to complete its investigation of John Deere for violating the Federal Trade Commission Act and to enforce the law to the fullest extent
- Require original equipment manufacturers to provide owners and independent repair shops with access to the tools they need to diagnose, maintain, and repair their equipment, see the Agricultural Right to Repair Act

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 the meat and poultry markets.

Key Policy Actions:

- Direct USDA to finalize, implement, and enforce the P&S Act rulemakings that are in various stages of finalization and implementation:
 - Enforce the Transparency in Poultry Grower Contracting and Tournaments final rule, which adds needed transparency to contract poultry growing systems
 - Defend, implement, and enforce the Inclusive Competition and Market Integrity under the Packers and Stockyards Act for clarity on what conduct is considered discriminatory, retaliatory, or deceptive under the P&S Act
 - Finalize, implement, and enforce the Poultry Grower Payment Systems and Capital Improvement Systems proposed rule to strengthen protections for U.S. contract poultry growers by banning the predatory poultry tournament system
 - Finalize, implement, and enforce the Fair and Competitive Livestock and Poultry Markets proposed rule, which clarifies USDA's longheld position that farmers who have been harmed by unfair practices only need to demonstrate harm to an individual — not the entire industry — to bring a P&S Act claim
 - Continue the work USDA began with the Price Discovery and Competition in Markets for Fed Cattle Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking by proposing a strong rule that will bring greater transparency and fairness to cattle markets
- Reinstate the Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration (GIPSA) as a stand-alone agency with full funding and enforcement authority of the P&S Act
- Forbid the use of a contract that does not contain a firm and fair base price, forbid packers from owning/feeding livestock, and forbid packers from engaging in an array of unfair, discriminatory, and retaliatory practices, see the Fairness for Small-Scale Farmers and Ranchers Act and the Farm System Reform Act
- Establish thresholds for market concentration, allowing federal antitrust authorities to more effectively prohibit or unwind acquisitions that concentrate the meatpacking sector, see the Strengthening Antitrust Enforcement for Meatpacking Act
- Create the USDA Office of the Special Investigator for Competition Matters to investigate and prosecute violations of the P&S Act, see the Meat and Poultry Special Investigator Act

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. 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.

Key Policy Actions:

- ❑ Prevent USDA from granting line speed waivers unless meat and poultry plants agree to a USDA inspection and prove that increased line speeds will not adversely impact worker safety, see the [Protecting America's Meatpacking Workers Act](#)
- ❑ Prohibit USDA from procuring food produced by workers paid less than the prevailing wage for their locality, see the [Agricultural Worker Justice Act](#)
- ❑ Prevent an employer from terminating an employee's health insurance coverage during labor disputes, see the [Striking and Locked Out Workers Healthcare Protection Act](#)

Support the Independence of Small and Midsize Farms

Independent farmers are vital to America's food system, yet they face immense challenges, including the consequences of misguided government regulation, corporate consolidation, and limited access to markets and resources. These barriers not only threaten their livelihoods but also the economic vitality of rural communities and the security of our food supply. Supporting policies that empower independent farmers is essential to maintaining local economies and ensuring a resilient and diverse future for the next generation of farmers.

Key Policy Actions:

- ❑ Prohibit the USDA from finalizing a rule requiring mandatory electronic ID for cattle and bison moving across state lines
- ❑ Provide statutory authority for Farm Service Agency's (FSA) Increasing Land, Capital, and Market Access Program, see the [Increasing Land Access, Security, and Opportunities Act](#)
- ❑ Enable small-scale processors to grow and expand, see the [Strengthening Local Processing Act](#)
- ❑ Improve livestock risk protection insurance for small and mid-sized operations and provide new grant opportunities to help producers aggregate, add value, and market their products in local and regional markets, see the [Small Family Farmer and Rancher Relief Act](#)
- ❑ Create an Office of Small Farms within USDA, see the [Office of Small Farms Establishment Act](#)



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, legumes, 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, we 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 \$45.5 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 used to create 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.

Key Policy Actions:

- Shift government support in the next farm bill from lower-value commodity crops like corn and soybeans toward vegetables, fruits, nuts, legumes, mushrooms, and cereal grains, allowing farmers more choices to profitably grow food for their communities
- Increase appropriations for the Local Agricultural Marketing Program (LAMP), the Specialty Crop Research Initiative (SCRI), the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP), the Local Food Purchase Assistance Cooperative Agreement Program (LFPA), the Local Foods for Schools Cooperative Agreement Program (LFS), and the Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program (GusNIP), to provide market opportunities for local and regional farmers
- Increase funding for LAMP, restore mandatory country of origin labeling for beef and pork, and extend country of origin labeling to include dairy, see the Fairness for Small-Scale Farmers and Ranchers Act
- Reauthorize LAMP through fiscal year 2028, provide additional funding for the program, and increase the GusNIP maximum federal cost share, see the Local Farms and Food Act
- Increase funding for GusNIP and reduce burdensome match requirements, see the GusNIP Improvement Act and the Opt for Health with SNAP, Close the Fruit and Vegetable Gap Act

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.

Key Policy Actions:

- Establish a carve-out for targeted purchasing from local and regional producers and processors, including additional staff to manage the new carve-out
- Increase appropriations dedicated to expanding the Local Food Purchase Assistance Cooperative Agreement Program (LFPA) and the 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
- Direct USDA to establish a pilot procurement program to link USDA's investment in independent processing capacity with the USDA Foods program
- Increase appropriations for the budget and staff within USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service's Commodity Procurement to ensure sufficient resources to support procurement reforms
- Promote fairness in USDA meat procurement, support independent small processors, and reinvest in local meat markets, see the Strengthening Local Meat Economies Act
- Strengthen "Buy American" requirements in school meals, see the American Food for American Schools Act
- Reform USDA food procurement to prioritize beginning, veteran, and small to mid-size producers, see the EFFECTIVE Food Procurement Act
- Direct USDA to establish a streamlined application process for farmers and ranchers who apply to be vendors under federal nutrition programs, see the Enabling Farmers to Benefit from Processing Nutrition Programs Act
- Enhance funding for farmers' market nutrition programs, support farmers' market infrastructure in underserved areas, and foster partnerships between local farmers and food banks, see the Farmers Market and Food Bank Local Revitalization Act

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.

Key Policy Actions:

- 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
- Restore mandatory country of origin labeling through Congressional action, see the American Beef Labeling Act, the Fairness for Small-Scale Farmers and Ranchers Act, the Farm System Reform Act, and the Country of Origin Labeling Enforcement Act



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. Now is the time 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.

Shift Government Support Towards Nutrient-Dense Food Crops

There is a glaring contradiction between the kinds 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.

Key Policy Actions:

- Shift government support in the next farm bill from lower-value commodity crops like corn and soybeans toward vegetables, fruits, nuts, legumes, mushrooms, and cereal grains, allowing farmers more choices to profitably grow food for their communities
- Increase appropriations 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
- Establish robust funding for an array of important programs increasing the availability of nutrient-dense foods for people and creating new markets for local farmers, see the GusNIP Improvement Act, the Opt for Health with SNAP, Close the Fruit and Vegetable Gap Act, and the Local Farms and Food Act



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.

Key Policy Actions:

- 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
- Set common-sense payment limits on farm support programs so that the largest, wealthiest farms are no longer receiving the bulk of taxpayer support
- Reform crop insurance policies to better support small and specialty crop farmers by restructuring agent compensation and incentivizing coverage for historically underserved producers, see the Insuring Fairness for Family Farmers Act
- Enhance crop insurance accessibility for small, mid-sized, and diversified farms by streamlining processes, expanding eligibility, and incentivizing agent participation to provide a more inclusive safety net for diverse agricultural producers, see the Whole Farm Revenue Protection Program Improvement Act
- Reform the Federal Crop Insurance Program by reducing costs, cap subsidies for wealthy farmers, increase transparency, and focus resources on small and mid-sized farms in need, ensuring a more equitable and cost-effective safety net, see the Assisting Family Farmers through Insurance Reform Measures (AFFIRM) Act
- Develop an index-based agricultural insurance program to provide faster, income-aligned payouts for farmers facing extreme weather events, reducing administrative burdens and enhancing resilience to climate-related risks, see the Withstanding Extreme Agricultural Threats by Harvesting Economic Resilience (WEATHER) Act

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. This reality is especially true for underserved farmers who have historically faced problems with credit access.

Key Policy Actions:

- Direct the FSA to set aside 10% of annual profits for regional lending programs that support sustainable and regenerative agriculture
- Strengthen FSA as a lending partner for all farmers by directing FSA to raise Microloan limits to \$100,000, increase direct loan limits to the same level as Guaranteed loans, set the maximum level of collateral at 110% of the loan amount, eliminate the 3-year experience requirement for loans, allow producers to pre-qualify for loans, and increase loan term lengths
- Ensure fair credit service access for all farmers by establishing strict conflict of interest and ethics policies with penalties; authorizing interest rate reductions for each category of underserved producers; and ensuring language and technical assistance access
- Strengthen transparency and accountability with robust data collection and publication by improving data collection requirements to provide data on race, gender, and ethnicity by county and state
- Enhance land access, retention, and transition while improving access to capital and markets for underserved farmers, ranchers, and forest owners through expanded funding, direct assistance, and innovative land access programs, see the Increasing Land Access, Security, and Opportunities Act

Protect Americans from Toxic Food Production Practices

Today's industrial agriculture system relies on practices that harm both the environment and human health. Congress has the authority to redirect resources and prioritize policies that support more resilient, sustainable farming methods – ones that eliminate toxic chemicals from our food supply.

Key Policy Actions:

- Improve the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) by reducing payment caps, reallocating funds towards conservation practices with greater environmental benefits, and empowering states to prioritize funding, ensuring broader access for farmers while eliminating wasteful spending, see the EQIP Improvement Act
- Prioritize climate-smart farming practices within USDA's Conservation Incentive Contracts program, encouraging greenhouse gas reduction, soil carbon buildup, and enhanced resilience to extreme weather, see the CROP for Farming Act
- Advance sustainable farming practices by prioritizing natural climate solutions, see the Natural Climate Solutions Research and Extension Act
- Set a goal of achieving net-zero greenhouse gas emissions in U.S. agriculture by 2040, focusing on science-based, farmer-led solutions to improve soil health, expand conservation programs, increase climate-related research, and support on-farm renewable energy projects, see the Agriculture Resilience Act
- Invest in voluntary farm conservation practices, reforestation, and wetlands restoration to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, enhance agricultural resilience, and create jobs in rural communities, see the Climate Stewardship Act
- Offer farmers who plant cover crops a \$5 per-acre crop insurance discount, aiming to improve soil health, reduce environmental risks, and mitigate climate-related crop failures, see the COVER Act
- Require industrial livestock operations to register with USDA, implement disaster preparedness plans, pay into a disaster mitigation fund, and adopt more humane practices in animal slaughter and transportation, while holding corporations accountable for the externalized costs of their operations, see the Industrial Agriculture Accountability Act



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, we can end government corruption once and for all and foster a government that puts America first.

Shut the Revolving Door and End Corporate Influence

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. Congress must protect the public interest by moving out the bad actors and appointing honest officials who do not have conflicts of interest.

Key Policy Actions:

- Implement a five-year “cooling-off period” to slow down the rapid and seamless transition of government officials into lobbying positions
- Protect whistleblowers who report violations of consumer protection or antitrust laws under the FTC’s jurisdiction, shielding them from retaliation and incentivizing their disclosures, see the FTC Whistleblower Act



Build a Bench in Rural America

Every bit as important as policy is the personnel selected to carry out the work of the federal government. Historically, Schedule C political appointee positions have been stuffed with the well-connected in Washington, D.C., with ties to the very corporations various federal departments are 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.

Key Policy Actions:

- **Revitalize rural communities by improving access to federal funding, supporting infrastructure and economic development, and empowering local leaders with long-term resources for sustainable growth, see the Rebuild Rural America Act**
- **Establish a White House Office of Rural Prosperity to streamline federal efforts, improve coordination among agencies, and develop strategies to support rural economic and community development, see the Rural Prosperity Act**





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