

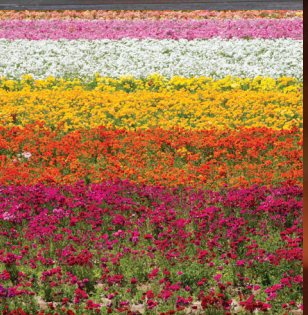













2024 Ag CEO Council

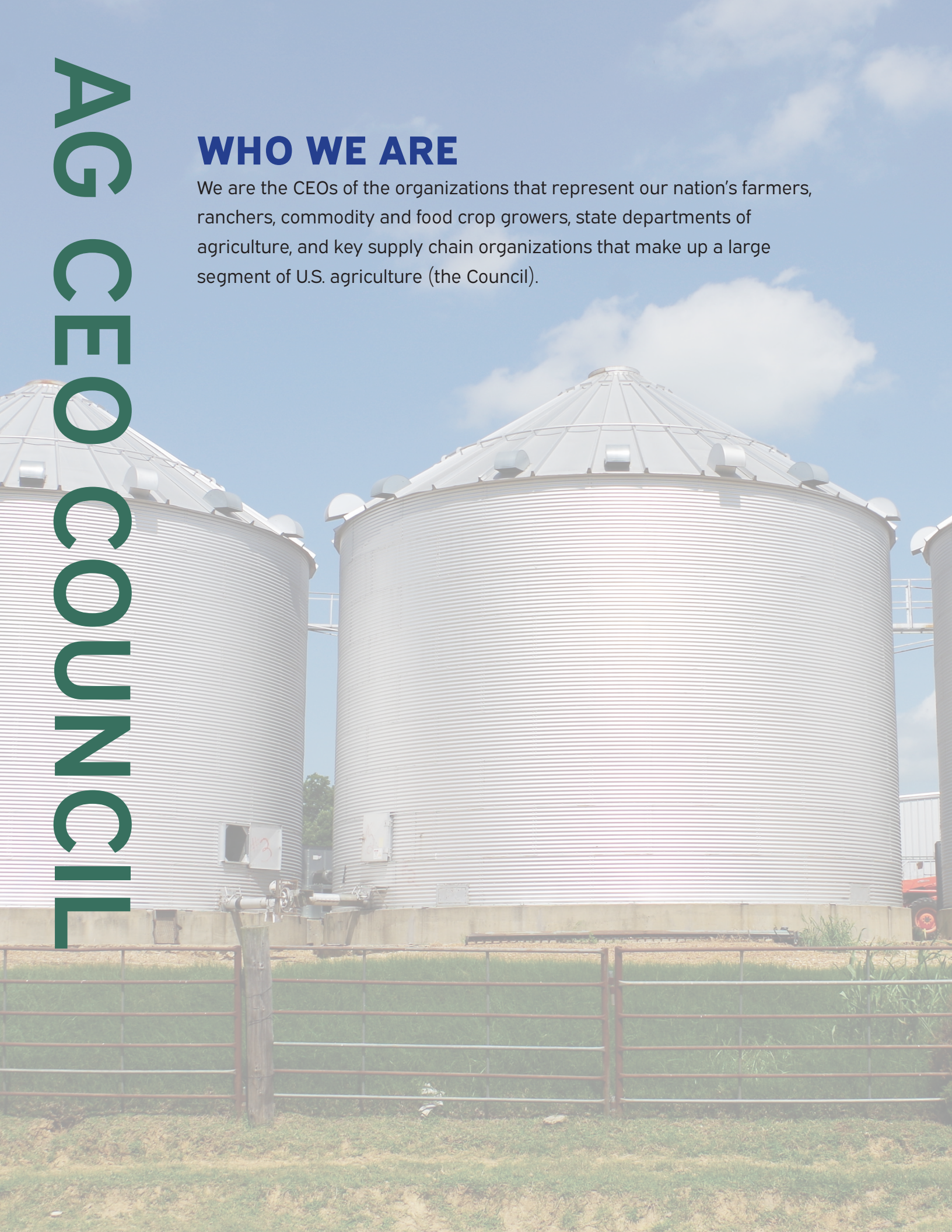
Presidential Campaign

BRIEFING

AG CEO COUNCIL

WHO WE ARE

We are the CEOs of the organizations that represent our nation's farmers, ranchers, commodity and food crop growers, state departments of agriculture, and key supply chain organizations that make up a large segment of U.S. agriculture (the Council).



WHY FARMERS, SUPPLIERS, AND RURAL COMMUNITIES MATTER POLITICALLY

Food security sustains national security. Farmers, growers, ranchers, and their agribusiness partners understand their responsibility to put food on the table, feed livestock and aquaculture, provide fuel for transport and energy, and source fiber for clothing. Recent events such as the COVID-19 pandemic and geopolitical crises emphasize the critical importance of U.S. agriculture as Americans experience the strains, increased costs and disruptions of the food and fuel supply chain. We understand that any nation that cannot feed its citizens is in peril and American – and global – food security is dependent upon the success of U.S. agriculture. We cannot know what the future holds or how the world will respond to critical events, but the next administration can ensure a vibrant agricultural economy at home – one that triumphs in good times and has the resiliency to weather all storms.

"The next administration can ensure a vibrant agricultural economy at home – one that triumphs in good times and has the resiliency to weather all storms."

Farmers, producers and their agribusiness partners are essential critical infrastructure, tremendous drivers of the domestic economy and are the economic backbone of rural communities. America's food and agriculture sectors are responsible for nearly one-fifth of U.S. economic activity, directly supporting 24 million jobs or 15% of U.S. employment and contribute $9.6 trillion (about $29,000 per person in the U.S.) in direct and indirect economic output.[1]

Our nation's producers have faced an onslaught of challenges in the last decade, such as inflation, trade disruptions, labor shortages, regulatory burdens, natural disasters, and economic volatility. Overcoming these challenges requires meaningful, sustained support and attention from the next administration.

The people who drive American agriculture are deeply patriotic, politically active, diverse, and independent in our views. We expect our elected leaders to find and fight for sound policy solutions to the complex issues facing the nation, our rural communities, and the food and farm production systems. The voices of farmers, ranchers, and growers resonate with our neighbors and communities on local, state, and national issues.

WHAT WE OFFER THE CAMPAIGN

The Council represents a diversity of agricultural sectors and views and we rely on bipartisan solutions to address policy challenges. We know our ongoing engagement on food production, security, and sustainability is vital to the interests of the nation and the farmers, producers, and businesses we represent.

Building on our diversity of thought and our influence on policy and politics, we believe that a dialogue with both our Council and individual organizations will help campaigns better inform candidates on agricultural and economic issues which in turn can guide development of positions and messages that better resonate with agricultural communities and rural America.

The organizations represented by the Council are a resource for campaigns, providing background on agriculture and food system issues, and connecting the campaign with the millions of Americans we represent.

Though neither the Council nor any of our member organizations endorse presidential candidates, the campaign will benefit tremendously from the ability to thoughtfully access perspectives and information on key issues that matter to farming, the food system, and rural America.

We look forward to engaging with the campaign on issues important to American agriculture during the 2024 campaign and beyond.

[1] *Source: FeedingTheEconomy.com, 2024*

Current Status of American Agriculture

ECONOMIC HEALTH OF U.S. AGRICULTURE

- **Farmers and ranchers in 2024 are facing the downside of the cycles** that make their income uncertain. Falling commodity and livestock prices as well as dramatic increases in labor and supply costs are expected to drop net farm income this year by $40 billion--the largest drop in history--and net cash income is projected to fall by $21 billion, even factoring in current federal support programs. [2]
- **Higher interest rates** are projected to increase farmer debt by 6% to over $377 billion.
- **Further consolidation and loss of small- and medium- sized farm operations**, i.e., the shrinking middle, continues to impact agricultural and rural economies and has contributed to over-extended healthcare, infrastructure, and educational resources. The 2022 USDA Census of Agriculture reported that the number of farms in the United States has declined by 7% between 2017 and 2022, or 141,733 farms. The number of acres operated by farms has also declined by 2.2%, or 20.1 million acres, during the same period. This loss is equivalent to the size of Maine.
- **Poor economic conditions in agriculture** alongside increased opioid abuse in rural areas and limited healthcare resources has accelerated mental health challenges faced by farmers and others in rural America.
- Despite long overdue federal efforts, **limited reliable internet connectivity** hinders access to online education, telehealth care, off-farm income, and ability to use farm management tools.

THE ROOT CAUSES OF THESE ECONOMIC CONDITIONS MUST BE ADDRESSED

- **Falling behind our competitors** on access to foreign markets, non-tariff trade barriers, foreign currency devaluations, trade-distorting foreign subsidies, and dumping on global markets makes U.S. agricultural products less competitive in global markets and in some cases domestically.
- **Weather-related natural disasters** continue to burden farmers. In 2023, farmers faced over $21 billion in crop losses from hurricanes, tornadoes, wildfires, flooding, freezes, drought, and other severe weather. Current risk management tools and disaster aid are not sufficient to help farmers and producers weather these events.[3]
- **Abrupt and ill-conceived regulatory and court actions** that do not fully reflect an understanding of the realities of today's agriculture operations restrict access to federally approved pesticide tools creating uncertainty, threatening crops and yields, and imposing added costs to farmers and growers.
- **Continued delays in approval of new pesticides and plant-breeding technology** by EPA due to inadequate resources, increased litigation, and court actions further disadvantage farmers.
- **Our farmers, growers, and ranchers face a critical shortage of a reliable legal workforce** threatening U.S. producers' economic competitiveness, their local economies, their livelihoods, and their family's well-being.

A DIVERSE AND INCLUSIVE NEXT GENERATION IS ESSENTIAL

As leaders in the agriculture industry, we welcome the opportunity to partner in building a more diverse and equitable future for American agriculture. Agribusiness and production agriculture are vital parts of the nation's rural economy and are well positioned to lead the positive changes that create a more just and inclusive society.

Ensuring a robust future for American agriculture requires a diverse, skilled, and hardworking next generation of talent. Currently, the average age of the U.S. farmer is 58.1 years.[4] Our ongoing investment in young, beginning, racially and socially diverse, veteran, and women farmers should not be a temporary trend, it is essential to feeding, fueling, and clothing our nation for the long term so it must be a true long-term commitment. This incoming generation of agriculturalists are bright and ready to continue to move agriculture forward. A skilled workforce that is interested in rural entrepreneurship, market development, building agribusinesses and learning new precision technologies is fundamental to ensuring U.S. agriculture thrives for generations to come.

USDA currently leads programs that build partnerships and foster public engagement. We look forward to identifying new ways that we can partner with the federal government to help agriculture become the leading sector for new job opportunities that are critical to supporting our country's national security through providing safe, affordable food.

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[2]*Source: USDA Economic Research Service, Farm Sector Income and Finances: Assets,Debt, and Wealth, 2024 (https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/farm-economy/farm-sector-income-finances/assets-debt-and-wealth/)*
[3]*Source: https://www.fb.org/market-intel/major-disasters-and-severe-weather-caused-over-21-billion-in-crop-losses-in-2023*
[4]*Source: 2022 Census of Agriculture.*

Priorities for the Next 4 Years

FARM AND FOOD POLICY ARE FUNDAMENTAL TO NATIONAL SECURITY

Farming and food production is one of the world's most important, high-risk businesses. To compete and succeed, agriculture requires a strong safety net, on-farm conservation assistance, research investment, risk management tools, and trade promotion resources.

Programs and resources in the farm bill, extended through fiscal year 2024 are due for renewal. These programs provide foundational safety net and risk management tools for farmers and growers, as well as critical assistance to implement resource-conserving practices on farms and operations, create value-added markets through promotion and development of agricultural products including advanced biofuels and biobased technologies, and authorize trade promotion programs that help grow and identify markets abroad for U.S. agricultural goods. America's farmers have enrolled more than 110 million acres in federal conservation programs, equal to the land area of California and New York, and farmers are using conservation practices on at least 200 million more acres.

"It is apparent, now more than ever, that reliable food supplies and stable prices are critical for the United States' long-term prosperity and economic well-being."

The farm bill has a strong bipartisan history, and its reauthorization presents an important opportunity for lawmakers to work together again to pass legislation that protects food security for all Americans and the future success of our farmers, growers, and ranchers. The next farm bill must include sustained, well-funded and effective policies that meaningfully counter the historical perils farmers have faced, as well as new risks that threaten our ability to provide a consistent supply of the food, fiber, and fuel Americans demand and the world needs. This includes strengthening the farm safety net, including updating price- and revenue-related risk, and defending and strengthening crop insurance for risk management that is affordable and flexible for all producers. It is apparent, now more than ever, that reliable food supplies and stable prices are critical for the United States' long-term prosperity and economic well-being.

Many farmers, growers and ranchers borrow more money each year to plant crops and raise livestock than most Americans borrow in a lifetime. Lenders need the assurance of a strong safety net and risk management tools, like crop insurance, to finance these agricultural operations.

Long before a crop is harvested, cows are milked, or livestock are ready for market, producers can only hope that weather, trade relationships, markets, labor availability, transportation, exchange rates and other variables will cooperate. A downturn or unfavorable change in any of these variables can devastate yields or erase profits for the year/season. Those strains and negative impacts end up being felt all along the supply chain. Resiliency, efficiency, and investment will be needed to fine-tune the supply chain and rebalance the economy in light of global labor shortages and the general difficulties at the heart of supply chain issues.

Consumers around the world are increasingly interested in where their food and fiber come from, how it is produced, and the nutritional value of what they eat. These market forces have created millions of jobs and spurred investment by the livestock, commodity and specialty crop sectors to find responsible and renewable production methods and practices that bring greater nutritional value to people around the world. The creation of specialized product streams provides additional sources of revenue for farms, new food processing jobs, and more products to meet consumer demands.

Global political instability and conflicts, dramatic changes in weather patterns, and ongoing supply chain disruptions, have exacerbated the global food security crisis. It is imperative the United States does everything it can to provide timely humanitarian relief, alleviate supply chain challenges, and maximize the ability of U.S. farmers, processors, and input suppliers to ensure global access to food and feed during this critical time.

NUTRITION AND HEALTH

America is a leader in feeding the world while cultivating more nutritious eating habits for consumers.

Domestically, federal nutrition programs – from school meals to Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children, or WIC, and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or SNAP – are integral to supporting agriculture, improving

nutrition, ending hunger, and preventing diet-related chronic disease. Internationally, American agricultural goods provide vital nutrition and life-saving products to malnourished populations through programs like Food for Peace, Food for Progress, and the McGovern-Dole International Food for Education program. Due to political instability and foreign security threats, global food insecurity is at an all-time high and projected to increase. Investments in these programs must be continued to help reach the most vulnerable populations while establishing goodwill globally.

LABOR

Agriculture faces a persistent and worsening shortage of workers, which impacts farmers daily and jeopardizes the future success of U.S. agriculture. With low unemployment rates, an aging domestic workforce and rural population declines, U.S. workers do not and cannot meet the labor needs of modern American agriculture. Agricultural operations from livestock to fruits and vegetables require a consistent, reliable workforce. Access to a stable, legal workforce is imperative for the success of U.S. agriculture.

Each of the 2.2 million employees working on American farms and ranches supports a dozen or more full-time jobs in the rest of the value chain in food processing, transportation, farm equipment, marketing, retail, and other sectors. To continue operating effectively, guest worker visa programs – including the H-2A visa program – remain a critical component for helping to meet agricultural labor needs. Programs like H-2A need reform to expand access for year-round industries like pork or dairy production.

Agriculture and other industries require a strong, reliable workforce. There is a critical shortage of U.S. workers willing and able to perform farm and food production work. This shortage threatens the viability of farmers today and jeopardizes the future success and prosperity of U.S. agriculture as well as domestic food security. Harvesting fruits and vegetables, irrigating and tending to crops, milking cows, and many other farming practices require a tremendous amount of willing, skilled farm workers.

Access to a stable, legal workforce is imperative for the success of U.S. agriculture — but all Americans have a stake in this issue.[5] Without an adequate workforce, it is not just America's farms, ranches, orchards, and nurseries that will suffer, the broader economic impacts of decreased domestic food production will lead to the decline of agriculturally dependent communities and will likely increase the cost of food to consumers.

In addition to preserving our current, experienced workforce, we need additional labor support through the expansion of H-2 visa programs. Statutory reforms are needed to secure a reliable and competent year-round workforce for our nation's farms and ranches.

Finally, agriculture is heavily dependent on commercial drivers for "just in time" delivery of farm supplies and other essential products and services to their farm and ranch customers. Commercial truck traffic is a vital component to the nation's economic prosperity. Our industry, like many others, is experiencing a growing driver shortage and higher shipping prices due to increased regulatory costs and burdens from Hours of Service (HOS) regulations do not work for today's agricultural industry. Statutory and regulatory reforms are needed to provide additional flexibility for agribusinesses under the HOS regulations, the Seasonal Ag CDL program and young driver apprenticeship program.

TRADE

Pursuing new markets and expanding existing markets through trade agreements, including regional free trade agreements, is critical for ensuring U.S. producers have access to more diversified markets, which is key to U.S. national and economic security. Approximately 20% of total U.S. agricultural production is exported. Exports are vital to the U.S. agricultural economy.[6]

For instance, the U.S. and United Kingdom (U.K.) initially began trade agreement negotiations in May 2020. An agreement with the U.K. presents an opportunity to expand the U.K. market for American agricultural products (totaling $1.9 billion in 2023). Negotiations are needed to redefine our trade relationship with the U.K.

China remains the largest export market for U.S. agriculture, with over $34 billion in sales in 2023. The market is especially important for soybean growers, as China accounted for 60% of U.S. soybean exports in marketing year 2022/2023. Continuing trade relations are critical for the future stabilization of agricultural trade with China.

Since the North American Free Trade Agreement or NAFTA, Mexico has grown to be the second largest market for U.S. agriculture exports, with a value of $18.4 billion. Full implementation of the United States-Mexico-Canada-Agreement or USMCA and ensuring our trade partners uphold their commitments is critical to ensuring international trade provisions remain based on sound science, and allow for the development of innovative, sustainable solutions. Lack of adherence

[5] *Source: feedingtheeconomy.com; https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2022/index.php*
[6] *Source: USDA ERS https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/chart-gallery/gallery/chart-detail/?chartId=58396*

to these agreements opens the door to counterfeit products, the precautionary principle, and costly delays for American agriculture.

A functioning World Trade Organization (WTO) is also critical to U.S. agriculture trade. The WTO's rules for trade serve as the basis for our agricultural exports. A functioning, enforceable WTO helps farmers around the world, while helping consumers access affordable food.

Bilateral and multilateral trade agreements establish rules to provide for science- and risk-based decision-making to enable the use of modern agricultural tools such as biotechnology and pesticides. These agreements further codify enforcement mechanisms to ensure an equal playing field amongst trading partners when agreements are not adhered to. It is critical that USTR and USDA Foreign Agriculture Service are supported, and able to fully engage with trading partners and enforce bilateral and multilateral trade agreements.

America's farmers, growers, and ranchers will benefit tremendously from enhanced trade policies and opportunities, for a number of reasons:

Ninety-five percent of the world's population lives outside the United States. American agricultural products can meet the demands of citizens around the world by providing food, feed, fiber and energy if given the fair opportunity.

Improving farm and agricultural income in the marketplace through higher prices and revenues would lead to less government support expenditures.

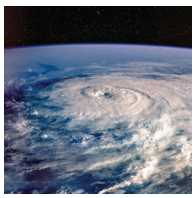
Ensuring trade agreements establish science-based rules and risk-based decision — making to enable the use of modern agricultural tools such as biotechnology and pesticides.

RESEARCH

Continuing agricultural innovation is only possible through robust public and private investments in research. Further innovation is needed if agriculture is to feed 9 billion people or more by 2050. Less than 30 harvests remain to increase our productivity by 50% to 70%--which is what will be needed to feed the world's population, as we continue to face more challenges brought on by a changing climate. We can only meet this goal by producing more crops and raising more livestock on less land, more efficiently using resources in the most sustainable manner and with crops that can survive a changing and more unstable climate. But this cannot be achieved without aggressive investment in research.

Public sector investments in agricultural research have a very high return on investment — 67%, according to a report from Iowa State University's Center for Agriculture and Rural Development.[7] However, federal investments in agriculture research have been declining for decades. Research discoveries from America's land-grant universities, scientific partners at USDA, and the private sector are vital to improving our nation's health and economy. Strong intellectual property protections, both domestically and internationally, incentivize investment in innovations, and promotes public-private collaborations providing alternative sources of research funding. This allows agribusinesses to reinvest in the development of new and improved tools to support farmers' success and domestic health and prosperity.

SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE



Worldwide demand for food is expected to increase by 35% to 56% by 2050.[8] Key to meeting this 2050 challenge will be sustaining the ongoing and continual adoption of efficiency-enhancing production systems that have characterized U.S. agriculture. Those improvements have been made possible by U.S. agriculture's culture of innovation that is grounded in the strong partnership between private sector firms and the research and Extension scientists in our land-grant universities and related institutions. This partnership has resulted in advances in renewable energy, precision agriculture, plant breeding, crop productivity genetics, irrigation water use efficiencies, and information technology. Similar improvements have been made by livestock producers in the storage and application of manure, feed nutrition improvements and the use of feed additives for ruminant livestock that have reduced methane emissions by up to 30%. The use of ethanol in gasoline and biomass-based diesel blends has also led to significant reduction in CO_2 emissions and has contributed to the biofuels industry, which has created thousands of jobs.

Altogether, there are tremendous societal benefits from U.S. agriculture continuously improving production systems. While overall agriculture is responsible for around 10% of total greenhouse gas emissions in the United States, according to EPA data this is considerably less than the transportation, electricity generation, and industrial sectors and provides the nation, the food, fiber and nutrition essential for life. Farmers are continually improving efficiency and producing more with less. To further protect our air, soil, and water, the U.S. should take a leading role in identifying and applying voluntary and science-based sustainable agricultural practices while also investing in rural economies. Agriculture has

[7] *Source: https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/agpolicyreview/vol2016/iss1/3/*
[8] *Source: https://www.nature.com/articles/s43016-021-00322-9*

a critical role to play in achieving the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals related to food security and poverty reduction.

Sustainability practices are already being implemented through public, private, and public-private programs that assist farmers in adopting measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improve water quality, sequester carbon, and increase environmental biodiversity to name only a few. One such program is the 4R Nutrient Stewardship program, which identifies the right fertilizer source, rate, timing, and placement as a framework to help farmers achieve the shared goals of increased production and profitability, environmental protection, and sustainability. Adopting 4R practices along with advanced seeds and no-till farming has helped some farmers reduce costs by up to $24 per acre while also achieving average yields of 256 bushels per acre and a 34.7% reduction in CO_2 equivalent emissions.

The broad utilization of biotech crops has also reduced CO_2 emissions and allowed farmers to produce more crops on less land. The use of highly regulated and effective pesticides is also important in protecting crops against pests, weeds, and disease, allowing for successful adoption of climate-smart agricultural practices that improve soil health and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Pesticides not only enhance productivity but significantly reduce pressure on our water, land, and energy resources. Herbicides, in particular, support conservation tillage practices and the use of cover crops by clearing cropland after cover crop growth to make way for commercial crops.

There is overwhelming demand by producers for on-the-ground technical assistance. The historic partnership between USDA, state and local governments led by conservation districts remains the backbone of conservation delivery in the U.S. Additionally, the Technical Service Providers (TSP) program and cooperative agreements used by USDA have created an opportunity to leverage private sector experts such as agronomists, soil conservationists, and Certified Crop Advisors employed by the agricultural sector who are currently working directly with farmers, growers, and ranchers to further climate and sustainability outcomes. These partnerships, which serve as conduits of information and data for USDA programs, are key to minimizing climate impacts and ensuring the sustainability of our operations. The technical expertise, advancements in inputs, and constant improvements in conservation methods that go into this planning are not just a good story, but a testament to American agriculture's commitment to sustainability and mitigating our impacts on climate.

In the future, new and emerging animal and plant breeding innovations, effective pesticide products, expansion of the biobased economy, and innovative plant nutrition will continue to reduce the environmental footprint of agriculture. These examples illustrate how agricultural innovation can be at the forefront of a climate plan that ensures our future.

ACCESS TO HIGHLY REGULATED, EFFECTIVE PESTICIDES

Many farmers – both conventional and organic growers – rely on pesticides to produce an abundant, sustainable crop. Without access to safe, effective, well-regulated pesticides, crops can suffer significant yield losses from insect, fungal, weed, and other pest pressures. In some cases, these pressures can result in total crop failure. Insects, rodents, and weeds can also directly harm livestock or indirectly destroy animal feed and grazing lands. All these impacts effectively reduce consumer access to an abundant, affordable food, feed, fuel, and fiber supply and place U.S. farmers at a competitive disadvantage to other producers around the world.

Farmers also rely on pesticides to maintain important conservation practices, such as cover crops and reduced soil tillage. These pesticide-reliant conservation practices have well-documented environmental benefits, including reducing soil erosion and runoff, improving water quality, and reducing tractor fuel use, among others.

Ensuring science-based and evidence-based approaches to regulation are critically important for continued, meaningful access to these farmer production tools.

FEDERAL LAND MANAGEMENT

Our nation established "multiple use" options for federal lands through several laws, including the Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act of 1960 and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, to guarantee our longstanding tradition of joining together in our care, enjoyment, use and conservation of the wide-open spaces we all cherish. Farmers and ranchers, especially in western states, are partners in federal land management. Livestock grazing on federal lands is integral to ranches, and timber harvest on national forests is essential for the timber industry to continue fueling our economy. Farmers, landowners, foresters, and grazing permittees should be fully involved as affected partners in processes related to federal land use designations that affect public use and access.

VALUE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF COMMODITY CHECKOFFS

Agricultural research and promotion programs, better known as "checkoffs," leverage farmer resources to develop new markets, strengthen existing channels for specific commodities, and conduct important research and promotional activities. Checkoffs also work to educate consumers on behalf of a particular commodity to expand total demand to the benefit of all producers. Using the pooled resources and stakeholder investments, checkoffs promote the product as a whole to create an industry-wide benefit through increased sales, consumer awareness, and higher overall demand both at home and abroad. For every dollar invested into a commodity checkoff, producers see several more in return.

Checkoffs are farmer-funded, farmer-driven, farmer-led, and receive oversight by USDA. Attempts to repeal or negatively impact checkoff programs should be rejected.

SUSTAINABLE TAX ENVIRONMENT FOR BUSINESS CERTAINTY

Farmers and ranchers depend on a tax policy that recognizes their unique needs, enabling their farm and ranch businesses to efficiently finance growth and manage the cyclical and unpredictable nature of their businesses. More than 98% of farms and ranches operate as pass-through businesses – sole proprietorships, partnerships and Sub S corporations.

Tax legislation such as the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017, is benefiting most farm and ranch businesses. Important provisions for farm and ranch businesses include reduced tax rates, the new small business income deduction (Sec. 199A), provisions to allow the matching of income and expenses, immediate cost recovery and an increase in the estate tax exemption. USDA's Economic Research Service documented the expected impacts of the expiration of certain provisions of the 2017 tax reform package in its publication "An Analysis of the Effects of Sunsetting Tax Provisions for Family Farm Households."

The pass-through business provisions of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act are temporary and should be made permanent.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMPETITIVE MODES OF TRANSPORTATION

Competitive, reliable barge, rail, ocean and truck transportation is essential to supporting the supply chain in the flow of inputs and products to and from the farm. Continued investment in improving and modernizing infrastructure provides an essential underpinning not just to agriculture but to our entire economy. Maintaining and restoring our critical infrastructure, such as rural roads, bridges, and locks and dams, will create American jobs and enable U.S. agriculture to maintain a demonstratable edge over foreign competitors. Regulation in this arena must be thoughtful, efficient and effective – achieving goals for safety and other metrics while seeking ways to remove unnecessary burdens to shippers and reduce anticompetitive behavior.

BIOFUELS

Passage of the Renewable Fuel Standard (RFS) in 2007 put the country on the path toward energy independence while slashing greenhouse gas emissions and saving consumers money at the pump over the years.

Biofuels come from the heartland and are important to rural economies. While these fuels have historically been used in cars and trucks, inroads are now being made into the airline industry through sustainable aviation fuels.

While many investments are being made into the electric vehicle industry, the road to quick emissions reductions depends on biofuels. Therefore, we would encourage continued investments in these technologies.

Off-road transportation offers additional unrealized value to U.S. agriculture through new biofuels uses. Rail, aviation, and maritime sectors are seeking to lower carbon impacts in the near-term through the adoption of biofuels and other technologies. These sectors offer new and growing market opportunities for biofuel feedstocks, which can be enhanced through federal efforts.

For the benefit of consumers and farmers alike, it is important that the U.S. takes advantage of these clean, homegrown and cost-effective fuels before our competitors fill this space in the global market.

MODERN INTERNET CONNECTIVITY ACCESS IN RURAL AMERICA

Access to modern, high-speed internet service is essential for rural economies to access necessities such as health care, education, and precision agriculture technologies. Just like electrification last century, every American must have reliable access to the internet. It is essential that the federal government lead the charge in eliminating the digital divide in every community, large or small. Some 24 million Americans lack access to high-speed internet connectivity, 19 million of whom reside in rural America. This means 40% of the nation's schools and 60% of health care facilities outside metropolitan areas lack modern internet connectivity.

At every scale of operation, today's farmers and producers rely on crop and livestock production technologies that require internet connectivity to run equipment, collect essential data from sensors, and use machine learning and artificial intelligence. In rural communities, a lack of high-speed internet has led to staggering economic, healthcare, and education inequities. While rural internet providers continue to work to connect households and businesses to networks, more must be done to quickly expand and improve digital connectivity to rural areas to support community resiliency, agriculture innovations, and the heartland of our country.

GENERAL POLICY PRINCIPLES

American agriculture needs regulatory predictability, consistency, transparency, and reliability from our federal, state, and local governments.

A consistent, predictable, and science-based regulatory climate that fosters innovation and provides certainty is critical for producers. Science, data, and risk-based regulation, subject to the laws passed by Congress and tempered by cost-benefit analysis and common sense, are essential for ensuring robust, reliable food systems. Any restrictions applied to registered pesticides should be based on an actual risk to people or the environment. The availability of alternatives should be a consideration before restricting or removing the use of any currently registered pesticide.

In 1995, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) laid out principles for good regulation. Key points include regulating only where necessary; ensuring the benefits of regulation justify the costs; using the best scientific and technical data available; crafting rules that are practical, flexible, and transparent; considering a broad range of stakeholder perspectives; periodically reviewing for effectiveness and continued necessity; among others. This science-based regulatory approach must be constantly credible and predictable for technology providers to bring innovation to America's farmers. These are laudable principles that must be included in practice at the local, state and federal levels.

One example of a common-sense regulatory approach to a growing threat involves a sound cybersecurity program to connect producers and agribusinesses with resources to protect critical infrastructure from cyberattacks. Such a program could connect agriculture with resources provided by DHS's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency while also utilizing USDA's understanding of the unique vulnerabilities and needs of the agri-food supply chain to ensure that recommendations are tailored and meaningful for the sector.

CONCLUSION

The core issue areas we have identified are critical to the success and viability of American agriculture and the food security of our nation and the world. Congress and future Administrations must work together in a bipartisan manner to address these issues. America's farmers help elect and will stand by those leaders who understand their challenges, share their vision for solutions and ensure their prosperity for generations to come.

The Agriculture CEO Council, representing U.S. agriculture from the farm gate and throughout the agricultural and food supply chain, looks forward to engaging with you on these and other issues during the 2024 campaign and beyond.

The Council and its members do not endorse candidates; member organizations may endorse candidates for political offices separate and independent of the Council, based on their individual organizations' policies.

American Farm Bureau Federation

NGFA Transforming America's Harvest

NAWG National Association of Wheat Growers

National Farmers Union

Agricultural Retailers Association

CropLife America

National Corn Growers Association

NMPF National Milk Producers Federation

asta american seed trade association

Farm Credit Council

National Cotton Council of America

National Sorghum Producers

ASA American Soybean Association

The Fertilizer Institute

NCFC National Council of Farmer Cooperatives

National Pork Producers Council

American Sugar Alliance

NASDA

AFIA American Feed Industry Association

International Fresh Produce Association

Meat Institute

AEM Association of Equipment Manufacturers

USA Rice

National Association of Conservation Districts

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