

2022-2023 Nebraska Farmers Union Six Special Orders of Business

2022-23 Nebraska Farmers Union Convention Special Order of Business on Ag Market Reforms

Whereas, the agricultural markets that farmers and ranchers buy their inputs from and the grain and meat markets they sell their products into have become increasingly concentrated and non-competitive over the last 100 years; and

Whereas, agricultural markets no longer function to provide true price discovery or appropriately allocate value because the markets themselves are no longer accessible, transparent, competitive, or fair; and

Whereas, the federal regulatory agencies responsible for protecting the public interest including the anti-trust division of the U.S. Justice Department and the Packers and Stockyards Division of the USDA (GIPSA) Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration have failed in their regulatory and oversight responsibilities to insure competition in agricultural markets;

Therefore, be it Resolved Nebraska Farmers Union supports the National Farmers Union’s “Fairness for Farmers” campaign to shine the light on the deplorable and inequitable situation facing American agricultural producers of all sizes and kinds; and

Therefore, be it Further Resolved Nebraska Farmers Union supports and welcomes President Joe Biden’s historic Executive Order on Competition in order to use his additional leverage to bring more competition to our national economy in all areas; and

Therefore, be it Further Resolved Nebraska Farmers Union supports all Congressional efforts that address ag market reform issues including the Senators Grassley, Tester, Fischer, and Wyden’s “Cattle Price Discovery and Transparency Act” because it provides:

- Greater fairness to cattle markets, shedding light on a market that is often opaque.
- Mandatory minimums for cash and negotiated grid trading, based on an 18-month rolling average, in each cattle marketing region.
- More transparency by requiring reporting of cattle weights and slaughter deliveries two weeks in advance.
- A publicly-available cattle contract library.
- Sets severe penalties for violations by packers.
- Requires livestock mandatory reporting data be made consistently available.

Therefore, be it Further Resolved Nebraska Farmers Union supports the return of Mandatory Country of Origin Labeling for all U.S. produced meats and dairy products; and

Therefore, be it Further Resolved Nebraska Farmers Union supports Sen. Bookers’s ‘Protecting America's Meatpacking Workers Act of 2022’ and its ag market reforms; and

Therefore, be it Further Resolved Nebraska Farmers Union supports any and all ag market reforms that are substantial, and asks all members of Congress and the agricultural community to work together to begin the long process of putting competition back into our agricultural markets.

2022-2023 Nebraska Farmers Union Convention Special Order on Shaping Climate Policy Change

Whereas, given the faster than predicted rate at which climate change is occurring, all our public policies including economic, environment, energy, transportation, and agriculture must be appropriately aggressive and reflect the urgency of the situation in order to address climate change; and

Whereas, the best food and fiber production system to address climate change is a properly educated and incented version of our traditional system of independently owned and operated family farm agriculture whose stewardship ethic is strong; and

Whereas, changes in weather patterns and climate are already adversely impacting Nebraska agriculture. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) data, Nebraska has experienced 54 extreme weather events with losses exceeding \$1 billion since 1980 including 11 droughts, 35 severe storms, 5 floods, 1 wildfire, and 2 freezes; and

Whereas, farmers and ranchers are directly impacted by changing weather patterns that are more intense and extreme, they have a vested interest and a critical role to play in solving climate change through transforming farming practices to sequester carbon, improve soil health, protect and improve water quality and the health of the environment; and

Whereas, conservation practices that support sustainable land-use and farming practices such as no-till, cover cropping, and rotational livestock-grazing improve soil and water resources while also improving the bottom line of farmers and ranchers while supporting the rural economy; and

Whereas, wind and solar energy are sustainable forms of value-added agriculture that bring additional value to the land and natural resources farmers and ranchers already own and control, create new sustainable energy generation that does not use water or emit carbon dioxide, and brings badly needed new good paying jobs, new tax base, new property tax revenues, and new farm income to rural communities; and

Whereas, family farmers and ranchers rural Americans must have a seat at the public policy table so they are able realize their potential to reduce the amount of excess carbon in the atmosphere by nearly a fourth by reducing carbon emissions, and sequestering carbon while building healthy soils;

Therefore, be it resolved Nebraska Farmers Union urges the Nebraska State Legislature to utilize University of Nebraska climate experts, a diverse set of stakeholders, and family farmers and ranchers to develop a comprehensive step-by-step state climate plan so our ag dependent state can identify ways to plan for the ever-increasing changing weather patterns that will continue to impact all Nebraskans but especially production agriculture in the future; and

Therefore, be it further resolved Congress continue to support renewable energy incentives to revamp our national energy generation system, USDA conservation programs and Climate Smart programs to partner with production agriculture to adapt to changing weather patterns, pass legislation that would facilitate family farmer participation in carbon credit markets, support Climate Hubs, Farmer to Farmer education programs, REAP programs that support farmer transition to renewable energy, and funding for research that is focused on ways to help family farmers and ranchers adjust to new more carbon reduction friendly crops and ways to produce food, fiber, and energy.

2022-23 Nebraska Farmers Union Convention Special Order of Business on the 2023 Farm Bill

Whereas, a new farm bill is authorized to be passed in 2023, replacing the expiring Agricultural Improvement Act of 2018; and

Whereas, due to a lack of competition in all industries serving farmers, Russia's attack on Ukraine, and failing supply chains made worse by globalization and the Covid Pandemic, farmers' and ranchers' cost of production has skyrocketed since passage of the 2018 Farm Bill; and

Whereas, changes in climate are having adverse impacts on Nebraska agriculture and farmers and ranchers have a vested interest plus a critical role to play in addressing climate change; and

Whereas, most agricultural producers have the land base to harvest renewable energy and also the capability to sequester carbon using conservation practices;

Therefore, be it resolved that the following key priorities be addressed in the 2023 Farm Bill:

1. Increases in all Farm Bill "Safety Net" commodity programs to reflect increased costs of production in all sectors. Sharp increases in PLC Reference Prices and CCC Non-Recourse Commodity Loan Rates are the best and most cost-effective way to increase the "Safety Net."
2. The addition of a "Competition Title" to the Farm Bill. National Farmers Union and Nebraska Farmers Union have long called for such an emphasis within the Farm Bill by creating this new title. Mechanism that should be included in such a title should be:
 - a. Legislated maximum levels of market concentration allowed for all agricultural input supplying and buying sectors. Market concentration levels that exceed maximum levels shall be grounds for anti-trust action, or denial of merger requests.
 - b. Funding policies for increasing the number of businesses and market participants in all agricultural supplying and buying sectors. Such USDA programs should build upon the current successful initiatives by USDA to provide grants and incentives for new meat processing facilities across the country.
 - c. Policies to incent the return of key agricultural inputs production, such as fertilizer, to the United States.
 - d. Strengthen Packers & Stockyards Act rules and increase enforcement of the PSA.
 - e. Reinstate mandatory country-of-origin labeling (COOL).
3. Continuation and enhancement of policies that incent renewable energy production, such as Ethanol, Renewable Diesel, Wind Energy, and Solar Energy in order to reduce energy costs for agriculture, increase farm prices, and mitigate climate change.
4. Continuation and enhancement of voluntary conservation and Climate Smart programs to help farmers and ranchers be part of the solution by mitigating and dealing with the negative impacts of climate change.
5. Continuation and enhancement of a strong nutrition title.
6. Continuation of a strong Federal Crop Insurance program. We oppose any reduction of crop insurance incentives which increase the cost of crop insurance to farmers and ranchers.
7. Develop, fund and implement a permanent disaster program with appropriate eligibility and payment caps that will avoid undermining existing risk management products.
8. Invest in research, outreach and education to improve and accelerate climate mitigation efforts.

2022-2023 Nebraska Farmers Union State Convention Special Order of Business on Net Metering

Whereas, Nebraska Farmers Union worked for over a dozen years to get the Nebraska Legislature to authorize net metering with the passage of LB436 in 2009, and it was widely understood with the passage of LB436 that it would be necessary to monitor and evaluate its implementation and utilization for potential adjustments; and

Whereas, the number of net metering installations in the 13 years since the passage of LB436, according to the data from the Nebraska Power Review Board Net Metering report, is 1,533 systems installed since 2010 as of December 12, 2022 with 735 or 47% of the state totals within the OPPD (328), LES (236), and NPPD (171) systems. 83 utilities have zero net metering which is 52% of power districts despite the high level on interest in both wind and solar energy in rural Nebraska by farm, ranch, and rural businesses; and

Whereas, the majority of the rural power districts have very few installations despite the high level of interest in both wind and solar energy in rural Nebraska by farm, ranch, and rural businesses. There is tremendous economic development interest in solar energy development by Nebraska farmers and rural businesses, there is a growing need to update and modernize LB436 passed in 2009; and

Whereas, many mid to large sized businesses, farms and ranches have electrical power needs in excess of the current 25 kw maximum guaranteed access level for net-metering. Several rural cooperatives have also hit the 1% threshold for locally generated renewable energy that is covered in LB436; and

Whereas, it is in the interests of all Nebraskans to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and increase the use of renewable energy sources including small wind, solar, biomass, hydropower, or geothermal. Renewable energy will be needed to power new energy demand for electric vehicles; and

Whereas, when we power electric vehicles with distributed renewable energy generation, we will be able to decrease our dependence on carbon emitting fossil fuels which improves air quality and helps to decrease emissions that cause harmful changes in our climate; and

Whereas, many farmers have multiple meters on their farms as they serve their farm's irrigation, grain drying, livestock barns, farm house, and shops electrical needs; and

Therefore, be it resolved the members of the Nebraska Farmers Union support an increase of the maximum guaranteed access level for net-metering to 100 kw ensuring a one-to-one offset of energy used for a full 100 kw's; and

Therefore, be it further resolved the members of the Nebraska Farmers Union supports changing and updating current state law to allow single owners the option of aggregating their multiple meters for the purpose of net metering; and

Therefore, be it further resolved the members of the Nebraska Farmers Union supports increasing the 1 percent to 5 percent of the per public power district cap of the capacity necessary to meet the local distribution utility's average aggregate customer monthly peak demand forecast for that calendar year.

2022-23 Nebraska Farmers Union Convention Special Order of Business on Property Tax Relief

Whereas, production agriculture is a capital and property intensive, high risk, low margin business with wild swings in net income that is for the most part incapable of setting the price of the commodities it produces or pass along its incurred costs of production; and

Whereas, the current Farm Bill's income safety net does not adequately support family farmers when commodity prices drop below the cost of production, which makes it difficult to keep farmers and ranchers in business, and even more difficult for beginning farmers to start farming operations; and

Whereas, the Legislature has failed to consistently fully fund the state aid to education formula known as the Nebraska Tax Equity and Educational Opportunities Support Act (TEEOSA) based on what the formula itself called for in funding without adjusting the formula downward, resulting in a corresponding shift from state income and sales taxes to local property taxes; and

Whereas, currently 158 out of 244 of Nebraska's school districts or 64% do not currently receive equalization aid from the state, and are forced to rely on property taxes to fund their mostly rural and mostly smaller schools; and

Whereas, less than 10% of the total TEEOSA support goes to Class B schools of below 2,000 students including Class C, and Class D schools, clearly indicating a funding inequity; and

Whereas, Nebraska is 49th lowest in the nation in the percentage (32.5%) of income and sales taxes used for total educational funding compared to 51% nationally; and

Whereas, the national average for the use of property taxes to fund education is 34.2%, and Nebraska's percentage of property taxes used to fund K-12 schools is 49.3%, putting Nebraska agriculture at a huge competitive disadvantage; and

Whereas, of the three primary sources of state tax revenue which includes income, sales, and property taxes, property taxes are by far the most regressive form of taxation because it least reflects the ability of the taxpayer to pay based on their net earned income; and

Whereas, Nebraska Farmers Union policy supports a balanced state tax policy with equal parts of revenue coming from income, sales, and property taxes; and

Whereas, Nebraska Farmers Union policy supports more use of income taxes as the revenue sources that is the most fair and best reflects the ability of taxpayers to pay, and also supports using more income taxes to fund K-12 education and less reliance on property taxes; and

Whereas, the primary reason property taxes are so disproportionately high in Nebraska is not because K-12 schools are spending excessive amounts of money educating the children in their schools, it is because the state of Nebraska has not adequately funded K-12 schools to lower the burden on property taxes; and

Whereas, Nebraska Farmers Union believes that the future of our state depends on providing all Nebraska children with the best education we can provide them; and

Therefore, Be It Resolved Nebraska Farmers Union is committed to working with the Governor, State Senators, educational organizations, public policy organizations, farm and commodity organizations, and other stakeholders to create a more fair and balanced way to adequately fund Nebraska K-12 schools while significantly lowering our state's reliance on property taxes to fund our schools; and

Therefore, Be It Further Resolved Nebraska Farmers Union strongly urges rural and urban State Senators to work together and move forward with real and immediate structural reforms that uses more income and sales taxes and reduces property taxes; and

Therefore, Be It Further Resolved Nebraska Farmers Union strongly urges Nebraska land and property owners to get and stay engaged in all aspects of the legislative process with our new set of State Senators and new Governor to provide additional property tax relief while adequately funding K-12 schools.

2022-2023 Nebraska Farmers Union State Convention

Special Order of Business on Water Quality and Nutrient/Nitrate Policy

Whereas, Nebraska farmers have been and will continue to be large users of both crop nutrients, livestock manures, and nitrogen to grow their crops; and

Whereas, a growing number of villages, towns, cities, and domestic well users are struggling with high nitrate levels due to the high mobility of nitrates in fertilizers and livestock waste exacerbated by extreme and intense rainfall events; and

Whereas, nitrates levels beyond the public health standard of 10 ppm are known to be harmful to human health; and

Whereas, in those areas of the state where the current water quality data indicates nitrate levels are above the 10 ppm public health standard, it is the interests of all water users to gather and understand additional data to best determine the nature of the problem, and the source or sources of the contamination; and

Therefore, be it resolved Nebraska Farmers Union encourages all stakeholders to work together towards a mutually beneficial system of nutrient management that utilizes best management practices to minimize future additional nitrate loading into the soil profiles and aquifers, and utilizes modern technologies to begin the long and slow process of lowering nitrate levels in our shared and complicated water supply systems; and

Therefore, be it further resolved Nebraska Farmers Union encourages all appropriate public and private institutions and interests to work with their Natural Resource Districts to protect both the quality and quantity of our precious water resources for future generations; and

Therefore, be it further resolved Nebraska Farmers Union encourages farmers, ranchers, rural residents, Natural Resources Districts to resist the temptation to ignore or deny the enormity of the growing water quality challenges being experienced and documented in parts of rural Nebraska; and

Therefore, be it further resolved Nebraska Farmers Union supports the development of methods and procedures to measure, manage, and resolve water quality problems because it is in the common public interest to do so utilizing traditional tools including education and incentives.