



# 2023 Policy Book





## 2022-2023 Priorities

Food Security	Health Care	Competition	Water and Land Use	Climate Resiliency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Access to affordable, quality food is a basic human right</li> <li>- Promote resilient regional food systems and diverse markets</li> <li>- Raise the commodity loan rate to a level that reflects the cost of production, which will encourage a return to commodity reserves</li> <li>- Reinstate mandatory country-of-origin labeling for beef and pork</li> <li>- A label must accurately reflect the contents of the product being sold including country of origin</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- We believe health care is a fundamental right</li> <li>- Continue to support funding, such as Medicaid Expansion, which directly benefits rural hospitals</li> <li>- Increase tele-health access</li> <li>- Incentivize providers to practice in rural areas, improving access to and quality of care</li> <li>- Increase access and funding for mental health services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Demand fair prices throughout the food system supply chain</li> <li>- Urge the Department of Justice (DOJ) to follow through with anti-trust investigations</li> <li>- Encourage USDA to enforce the Packers and Stockyards Act</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Support current water law with prior appropriations doctrine</li> <li>- Oppose the drilling of exempt wells that affect existing water users</li> <li>- Support a farmland and rangeland protection policy to encourage the continuation of farming vs urban development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- We recognize the importance of soil health</li> <li>- Promote developing crops, varieties, and animal breeds that perform under extreme circumstances</li> <li>- Partner with rural communities and utilities to increase their use of renewable energy</li> <li>- Encourage the expansion of biofuels</li> </ul>



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**2022-2023  
MONTANA FARMERS UNION  
POLICY AND PROGRAM**

*(Bolded language is new language adopted at  
Oct. 14-15, 2022 - MFU Annual Convention)*

**PREAMBLE**

- The needs and aspirations of farmers are those of humanity at large. Montana Farmers Union advocates a program that is beneficial for farmers, laborers and consumers alike. We seek a like opportunity in life for our fellow man, both within our own country and in other lands. We emphasize the preservation of rural community life and the traditional independence of farmers living on the family farm. A family farm or structured family agricultural operation is run by a family, assumes the economic risk and makes the management decisions. (2014)

-Our aims can best be attained through individual and cooperative action in our democracy. We are convinced of the truth and rightness of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States, its Bill of Rights and other amendments.

**AGRICULTURAL POLICY**

- Keep farmers on the farm by leading a national campaign to promote a price balance between sales and cost of farm operations.

-Given the continuing loss of farmers and decline in population of rural communities in Montana, support and encourage continuation of all USDA programs that assist in the establishment of beginning farmers and ranchers. Urges full and continued funding of beginning or young farmer and rancher programs. (2012)

-The following are obstacles facing beginning farmers: lack of capital, lack of access to land, the prohibitive cost of health care, access to credit, shortage of business planning and marketing skills help, a necessity for off the

farm income and other obstacles. Therefore, we urge lawmakers to provide legislation to create programs and remedies for reducing obstacles to beginning farmers. We support mentorship and apprenticeship programs on farms and ranches. (2013)

-Montana Farmers Union is committed to all possible unity among agricultural organizations, small businesses, labor, religious and conservation groups in the state of Montana.

-We oppose consolidation of farmland ownership in the hands of a few. Instead, we support a climate, which will permit family-based farms to flourish including; availability of monetary support, adequate credit opportunity, fair **international trade** and equitable profitability for agricultural producers.

-Advocate and urge funding for conservation including soil, water, atmosphere and energy as a responsible economic investment in the future.

-Recognize that active participation in the political process is necessary on both the state, national and international levels to achieve equity for the agricultural industry.

-Support like-minded organizations in their efforts to support the economic viability of agricultural producers. (2013)

**AGRICULTURAL PROGRAM**

-Support a Farm Program that provides adequate support to the producers and that support be provided at the grassroots level.

-Support a farm program that emphasizes the importance of food security to our nation. Refer to the farm program as the "National Food Security Program". (2006)

-Encourage farm policy that incentivizes sustainable and regenerative agriculture to combat issues facing the environment, soil health, drought, flood, financial risk, food security and rural quality of life. (2021)

-Encourage the use of RMA yield data in determining payment eligibility for farm programs. (2016)

1 -Producer safety nets should guarantee a  
2 revenue level that assures producers the ability  
3 to cover all costs of production. (2016)

4  
5 -Call for strict enforcement of realistic payment  
6 limitations. (2000)

7  
8 -Urge full funding and staffing for FSA and  
9 NRCS in county-based offices. Oppose  
10 consolidation of county offices. (1999)

11  
12 -Urge flexibility on conservation compliance  
13 plans within FSA-NRCS programs and allow  
14 local boards more authority.

#### 15 **PARITY**

16  
17 -Urge that the price of raw materials be raised to  
18 historical parity levels at the marketplace.

19  
20 -Urge the historic parity formula (1949) be  
21 retained as the official measure of return to  
22 agriculture and recommend that Congress set up  
23 a program to fairly compensate the farmer on the  
24 land. (1990)

#### 25 **COMMODITY LOAN, RESERVE AND** 26 **PRODUCTION CONTROLS**

27  
28 -A farm program should recognize the market  
29 realities of the fundamentally unique business of  
30 farming. Such a program should include these  
31 basic provisions.

32  
33 -**Price and/or income support mechanisms**  
34 **for agricultural commodities** that establishes a  
35 floor under market prices and enables producers  
36 to obtain their income from the marketplace  
37 **(2022).**

38  
39 -Price supports should primarily be provided by  
40 CCC nonrecourse, commodity loans.

41  
42 -Flexible loan maturity periods should be able to  
43 be extended at the discretion of the producer for  
44 up to 18 months, with the producer able to  
45 forfeit after 9 months.

46  
47 - **Income support**, price support, and CCC loan  
48 rates should be set at levels to ensure producers  
49 receive a fair return on their investment. The

50 loan rate should not be for less than the USDA  
51 national average cost of production. CCC loan  
52 rates should be adjusted annually to reflect  
53 inflation and productivity.

54  
55 - **Income support**, price support, and CCC loan  
56 rates should be annually balanced in an upward  
57 manner, to prevent market and planting  
58 distortions.

59  
60 MFU strongly urges the establishment of a  
61 voluntary, farmer-owned market-driven  
62 inventory system that reduces volatility in  
63 agricultural commodity markets. For such a  
64 system to succeed, we recommend the  
65 following:

66  
67 -USDA will offer per bushel storage rates for  
68 commodities when prices fall below a  
69 designated loan rate, which is set near the  
70 midpoint between the variable and full cost of  
71 production for each commodity. Enrollment in  
72 the storage program will cease when prices  
73 recover.

74  
75 -Farmers may enter any portion of their crop  
76 into storage, which must remain enrolled in the  
77 program until the market price for the  
78 commodity reaches the release price, or  
79 approximately 130 percent of the loan rate.

80  
81 -Economically sound inventory caps should be  
82 set on each commodity. Should the inventory  
83 cap be reached for a commodity, a voluntary set-  
84 aside program may be made available by  
85 USDA.

86  
87 -When the release price is reached, the farmer  
88 may sell the commodity into the market or hold  
89 the commodity, but storage rates will cease.

-Allowing the Secretary of Agriculture the authority to manage price-depressing surpluses by providing producers incentives to plant dedicated energy crops on acres which are now, or may be produced, in surplus.

-Commodity support based on actual production history (APH), where available. For cases without APH, the program yield cannot be lower than county Farm Service Agency yields. Additionally, we urge the establishment of APH floors to protect producers in the event of successive crop failure brought on by natural disasters.

-Low-interest commodity storage facility loans should be made available to producers.

-Each farm operator and crop share landlord should be eligible for maximum loan volume targeted to family farms.

-Farmers should have the right to periodically update acreage bases and proven yields on all crops for each farm.

-Farmers should have the option to store forfeited commodity and receive storage payments until final sale is consummated.

-Marketing Assistance loans and programs like the Loan Deficiency Program should be eliminated because they undermine the benefits of the commodity loan programs. (2020)

## **CROPS AND SEED**

- Support the right of producers to save seed for their own production. (2013)

-Urge development of a seed bank program to preserve genetic diversity of crops. (2007)

-Streamline the importation of seed for domestic production. (2014)

-Increase transparency with producer participation in the varietal release processes. (2019)

## **SPECIALTY CROPS**

-We support the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCB), and encourage continued research, development and marketing of new and existing specialty crops in Montana. (2018)

-Support development of Montana vineyard production and marketing through Montana wineries. (2022)

## **HEMP**

-Support laws to allow production of Hemp, including, but not limited to:

- Ensuring the availability of quality seed
- Assuring that hemp growers will have unmitigated access to the banking system and FDIC and local banks update their policies to current hemp laws
- Allowing producers to sell and ship seed across state lines
- Assuring that hemp growers will have unmitigated access to the banking system
- Create a crop insurance program that covers producers in a manner similar to other commodities (2019)
- Encourage MSU and other research institutions to begin field trials of hemp in a variety of climates around the state and region
- Lobby for hemp to be regulated as a food, feed, and fiber product by the FDA and/or USDA
- A label should accurately reflect the contents of the product (2020)

## **WOOL**

-Urge reinstatement of the Wool and Mohair Act of 1954.

## **LIVESTOCK**

-We support teaching animal welfare, as opposed to animal rights, through educational programs and agricultural organizations. We support domestic animals' access to proper food, shelter and water for survival. (2014)

-Support a fully funded vaccine bank. (2018)



1 -The United States does not have a widespread  
2 occurrence of Bovine Spongiform  
3 Encephalopathy. Therefore, we support no  
4 additional regulation regarding BSE. With the  
5 current ruminant-to-ruminant feed ban in place,  
6 adequate firewalls are in place to assure that the  
7 United States beef supply is safe. (2005)

9 -Yellowstone Bison shall not be relocated to any  
10 other area of Montana without a complete  
11 environmental impact assessment. (2011)

13 -Opposes the expansion of the DSA (Designated  
14 Surveillance Area) in the absence of brucellosis  
15 confirmed in domestic livestock. (2016)

17 -We support compensation for livestock  
18 producers for testing of herds that have been  
19 state or federally quarantined for disease. (2021)

21 -Request equitable import and export policies,  
22 inspection standards and recourse to emergency  
23 assistance. (1990)

25 -Urge any foreign meats or other food stuffs  
26 entering the United States be subject to the same  
27 standards, which applies to United States meats  
28 and other food stuffs.

30 -We oppose the importation of animals and food  
31 stuffs from countries with active Foot and  
32 Mouth Disease. (2015)

34 -Support the ban of meat and/or meat products  
35 from the foreign countries that allow use of  
36 medications or additives not approved for use in  
37 the U.S. (2010)

39 -Raise the beef check-off rate from \$1 to \$2  
40 when the following changes are made to the beef  
41 check off: (2016)

- 42 • Check-off dollars be used to promote  
43 only livestock born, raised and  
44 processed in the United States. (2013)
- 45 • Allow Cattlemen's Beef Board (CBB) to  
46 contract directly with any entity,

47 including any national non-profit cattle  
48 organizations, businesses, university  
49 researchers, advertising and marketing  
50 agencies and other consultants. (2008)

- 51 • Reform the national Beef Board to  
52 reflect proportional representation from  
53 all national agriculture organizations.  
54 (2005)
- 55 • Allow for check off expenditures to  
56 protect USA beef and cattle from unfair  
57 trade practices and to protect the U.S.  
58 herd from import practices, which  
59 threaten cattle herd health and beef  
60 consumers. (2005)
- 61 • Allow for check off expenditures to  
62 promote branded products from small  
63 and large packing entities. (2005)
- 64 • Require all packers to pay into the check  
65 off program when purchasing cattle.  
66 (2005)
- 67 • Provide that 70% of all funds collected  
68 remain in the state where collected and  
69 30% to the National Beef Board. (2005)

71 -Support mandatory price and volume reporting  
72 of livestock, including "captive supply" by all  
73 major packers. (2021)

75 -Recognize the serious threat of West Nile  
76 disease and urge local governments to control  
77 mosquitoes. We recommend education to the  
78 public for protection of humans and livestock  
79 (2003) against the disease.

81 -MFU urges the following: (2013)

- 82 • Exclude feeder cattle from the rules and  
83 include funding for state record  
84 keeping. (2011)
- 85 • We urge the Department of Homeland  
86 Security to provide the full funding  
87 necessary to create and maintain the  
88 database and provide compensation to  
89 producers for their program  
90 implementation costs. (2005)
- 91 • Mitigate producer liability for  
92 contaminated food products. (2005)

- Any National Animal Identification System (NAIS) should address herd health only. This system should not impose any additional costs to the producer. (2020)
- Use of the proprietary information should include clear limits to ensure the information is not used by packers to discount producer prices; be subjected to a Freedom of Information Act request, or passed to telemarketers, etc. (2005)
- Control of the confidential database needs to remain under the control of the federal government. (2005)
- Access to producer information should be provided for animal disease and bio terrorism trace-back only. (2005)
- Ensure uniformity of identification system with tracking technology and database management. (2005)

-We support USDA inspected horse slaughter facilities in the United States and encourage a facility be built in Montana. (2013)

-Support the judicious use of antibiotics. (2015)

-Provide funding to support the Montana livestock diagnostic laboratory in its entirety. (2017)

-We support Montana Department of Livestock adoption of the 1000 Bird Exemption. (2014)

## DAIRY

-Supports a national policy establishing an equitable floor price policy that sets a level that allows producers to earn a fair return on their milk from the marketplace. (2010)

-We urge the passage of a Raw Milk Law that allows the sale and consumption of raw milk in Montana under regulation and licensing that insures the milk is produced under inspection and is a safe food product. (2013)

**-Establish a national mandatory program for managed growth based on market demand and price stability. Such a program should increase farmer profitability by elevating milk prices, preventing overproduction and reducing milk price volatility. (2022)**

## POLLINATORS

-Continue and expand research and education aimed at protecting honeybee health as well as development and enhancement of native pollinator population.

-Support USDA programs that provide financial support to producers willing to plant pollinator-friendly habitat. (2020)

-Continue collaboration of the chemical industry and pollinator industry, to provide education to growers, applicators, and the public, on the harmful effects of pesticides and neonicotinoids on pollinator populations, especially related to colony collapse disorder.

-Continue monitoring of pest populations, pest control methods, as well as pollinator imports and accidental importation of pests and invasive species. (2014)

## MARKETING

-Prohibit any one ag commodity organization from serving as the “prime contractor” for a publicly funded program but allow all organizations to participate in approved projects on a case-by-case basis. (2005)

-Encourage the creation of new check-off programs for emerging commodities. (2014)

-Support check-off funds returning to state of production and oppose double assessments. (2015)

-Support a periodic vote on all check-off programs (every five years) by a petition of 10% of producers signing the petition at county FSA offices. (2005 and 2006)

-Urge MFU and NFU to continue to use the Internet to build a network between family

1 farmers and consumers to enhance direct  
2 marketing and exchange vital information on  
3 products, nutrition, safety and environmental  
4 concerns. (1999)

5  
6 -Support the concept of working together  
7 through a marketing system, which is  
8 cooperative in nature, fair in application and  
9 open to farmer input in operation. (1990)

10  
11 -Encourage the state of Montana to maintain  
12 Generally Recognized as Safe (GRAS). (2014)

13  
14 -Call for development and implementation of  
15 national legislation prohibiting unreasonable  
16 conduct, such as unjustifiable price  
17 discrimination, by a business that is in a  
18 dominating position in contracting, supplying or  
19 buying agricultural goods or services. (1999)

20  
21 -We support state attorney general's filing suit  
22 to enforce current federal anti-trust laws  
23 including the Sherman Anti-Trust Act and the  
24 Packers and Stockyards Act of 1921. The  
25 Federal Trade Commission, Senate Judiciary  
26 Committee and the Department of Justice  
27 should enforce current regulations. If large  
28 concentrations of power still remain, necessary  
29 legislation should be enacted to regulate those  
30 corporations just as we do other monopolistic  
31 entities. (2018)

32  
33 -Support USDA's rulemaking on Packers and  
34 Stockyards Act adding provisions to make it  
35 easier for farmers to legally challenge unfair  
36 practices without a fear of being retaliated  
37 against and address market practices that are  
38 unfair, discriminatory, or deceptive to farmers  
39 and ranchers. Such implementation creates jobs  
40 in rural America, assures competitive markets  
41 and prevents meatpackers from manipulating  
42 the market driving prices lower for farmers.  
43 (2012&2021)

44  
45 -Support adequate funding for the state's  
46 Growth through Agriculture (GTA) program.  
47 (2016)

48 -Support the continued use and adequate  
49 funding for the Montana State Grain Lab (2020).

50  
51 -Support adequate funding for research and  
52 inspections of agricultural exports and therefore  
53 issuance of export certificates. (2013)

54 -Oppose trade deals that unevenly regulate  
55 imports and exports between the US and other  
56 nations. (2015)

57  
58 -Work toward expanding the opportunities in  
59 both the number of crops exported and the value  
60 returned to our member producers from trade  
61 with Cuba and other potential trade countries.  
62 (2003)

63  
64 -Support continuation of the State Meat  
65 Inspection Program. (1993)

66  
67 **-Regulatory change is required, to allow**  
68 **state-inspected meat to be sold across state**  
69 **lines. There must be a commitment to**  
70 **funding more inspectors to aid in the**  
71 **development of more local processing. (2022)**

72  
73 -A label must accurately reflect the contents of  
74 the product being sold. To maintain their  
75 integrity all USDA certifications must clearly  
76 identify product origin and whether inspection  
77 or auditing was done by a third party. (2021)

78  
79 -Urge Country of Origin labeling of all  
80 agricultural commodities and processed food  
81 products sold in the U.S. (2000)

82  
83 -Support increased independent research on  
84 genetically modified organisms (GMO's) and  
85 genetically engineered (GE) to investigate the  
86 safety of these organisms for producer and  
87 consumers alike. Research, promotion, and  
88 identification of the products for consumers; is  
89 the responsibility of the large corporations  
90 marketing those products and not the  
91 responsibility of farmers or their organizations.  
92 Ownership and use of GMO's and GE's by  
93 multinational corporations must not be allowed  
94 to further erode individual producer's

independence, reducing them to tenant or management status. (1999)

-Support and encourage the USDA, APHIS, EPA and FDA to make the process for testing GMO and GE crops significantly more transparent and rigorous to improve public involvement with policy development and decision making, as well as enhance scientific peer review. (2012)

-Support a ban on open-air testing of genetically modified wheat which could seriously jeopardize present wheat markets in the event of contamination. (2013)

-Support the notification of farmers, seed companies and plant breeders in the nearby vicinity of GMO and GE crop field trials of their locations. (2013)

-Urge USDA to require mandated containment protocols for all GMO and GE crop field trials, including written containment protocols, statement of financial responsibility in the event of an unauthorized release of regulated articles, DNA sequences of the gene and transformation event planted in trials, allowing USDA to develop tests for identifying and responding quickly to suspected and confirmed unauthorized releases of GMO and GE crops. (2013)

-Support that the regulatory framework involving USDA, APHIS, EPA and FDA on agricultural biotechnology shall depend on independent research and risk assessments. (2012)

-Will accept GMO and GE crops including all classes of wheat when issues of cross pollination, liability, commodity and seed stock segregation and market acceptance are adequately addressed. MFU members should have the opportunity to grow or not grow GMO and GE crops. (2010)

-Support a national mandatory labeling program for all products containing GMO ingredients. In the absence of a mandatory program, MFU supports a voluntary labeling law, giving consumers a choice to buy or not buy products containing GMO. (2016)

-We declare that all producers receive full indemnity from the agricultural activities occurring on lands not under their ownership or management that they be held harmless from the intrusion of GMO and GE crops upon their lands and the associated costs and burdens of said intrusion; and that they receive full immunity against litigation in cases of GMO and GE drift contamination into their lands. (2013)

-Premiums should be paid for wheat weighing above 60 pounds per bushel, just as wheat is discounted below 60 pounds per bushel. (2003)

-Support wheat pricing of protein based on tenths of percent rather than quarters.

-Urge congressional investigation of commodity futures trading, especially index funds, to determine any adverse effects the trade might have on farm commodity prices.

## **RISK MANAGEMENT**

-Support Risk Management Programs such as the State Hail and Federal Crop Insurance Compensation Programs as a part of a viable farm program.

-Increase bond percent up to 4% per location per company and support option of fines by Department of Agriculture to ensure producers adequate compensation should a commodity dealer fail before paying producer. (2013)

-Support changes to RMA to encourage more diverse and effective cropping systems. (2019)

**-Support RMA to credit cover crops instead of penalizing their uses. (2022)**

**-Support RMA programs to insure all crops grown in the state. (2022)**



**-Support crop insurance incentives for soil health improvements and climate-friendly conservation activities. (2022)**

## **CONSERVATION**

-Support keeping EQIP and CSP as separate programs. (2018)

-Support expansion of the Conservation Stewardship Program to allow more producers the opportunity to enroll. (2016)

-Support broad-based agricultural conservation practice and development programs in the State of Montana.

-Protect agricultural lands through conservation easements or similar contract arrangements to preserve open land. (2007)

-Encourage sufficient funding through appropriation and cost share programs. (2016)

-Develop conservation dams that incorporate flood control and domestic, municipal, agricultural, and recreational uses.

-Provide adequate off-stream storage to reserve water for agricultural uses. (1990)

**-Require management of existing dams to prevent flooding of agricultural land. (2022)**

-Support adequate funding for coordination of statewide weed control and nursery inspections while ensuring on-going weed control on state and federal lands, county roadways, railroad rights-of-way and state and private lands. (2014)

-Support control of invasive species to preserve Montana natural resources. (2010)

-To keep rural communities, farms and ranches viable, we encourage new CRP programs with a 25 percent maximum acreage enrollment per farm rather than 25 percent of a county's farmland. (2003)

-Allow CRP lands to be withdrawn early from their contracts in order to be put into production for bio-crops. There would be no penalties for early withdrawal as long as the land was kept in bio-crop production for the term of the original CRP contract. (2006)

-Encourage the retention and increased funding of the Transition Incentive Program (TIP). (2011)

## **RESEARCH**

-The Montana legislature shall be mandated to provide adequate funding for personnel, facilities and equipment at the Agricultural Research Stations and the Cooperative Extension Service. (2010)

-Support an increase in the Wheat & Barley Committee Check-off Program to provide funding for research with an emphasis on Agriculture Research Stations. (2010)

-Oppose corporate donor generated funds for Ag research, facilities, and capital equipment without adequate care to preserve the integrity of research and accountability to the taxpayer of the land grant university system. (2004)

-Oppose the use of public resources for development of proprietary products. MFU supports increased funding for public research at land grant universities. (2013)

-Support publicly funded research to develop improved crop varieties, as well as new uses, industrial and otherwise, which will create new markets for agricultural products (2021).

-Support development of effective, low-cost alternative inputs and research into opportunities to capture an economic return by switching to inputs derived from crop by-products. (2021)

-Support research that will provide a better understanding of what we produce and its effect on human health, as well as support targeting improved production, management, and marketing characteristics. (2012)

-Urge expansion of Agricultural Experiment Station's development of fertilizing methods, livestock breeding, farming techniques (organic

and biological) and new equipment that will help preserve a farmer's competitive position.

-Encourage the Montana Agricultural Experiment Stations to continue research that is economically feasible for family farms and ranches.

**-Encourage research stations to deliver practical information to farmers and ranchers to assist in adopting practices to mitigate climate change (2022).**

-Favor the establishment of an acreage dedicated to a long-term organic cropping system at each of the state experiment stations, for the purpose of conducting research in areas such as crop rotations and yield trials, soil nutrition, weed and pest management and, plant disease, etc. (2004)

-Support public funding allocations for organic production systems that are commensurate with organic's contribution to the overall agricultural economy. (2021)

-Urge that Agricultural Experiment Stations make effective use of farmer advisory committees.

## **PESTICIDE REGULATIONS AND PESTICIDE APPLICATORS**

-Require safe and proper handling, marketing and disposal of chemicals to ensure the safety of people and the environment.

-Request adequate state and federal funding for the Department of Agriculture and MSU Extension to perform its duties in licensing applicators, and monitoring of pesticides.

-Recognize the use of pesticides as a valuable tool in conventional ag. (2019)

-Support requiring adequate insurance coverage for commercial applicators. (2019)

## **TRANSPORTATION AND RAILROADS**

-Encourage establishing a coordinated national system of water, rail and air transportation that

will serve both rural and urban areas at reasonable rates.

-Urge reinstatement of the Rail Service Competition Council. (2020)

-Support strong farmer and rancher representation on the State Department of Transportation. (1992)

-Farm equipment operators should be exempt from Commercial Driver's License (CDL) requirements. (2011)

-Support an electronic log device waiver for livestock haulers. (2017)

-Support extended hours of service exemption for agricultural commodities. (2019)

-Urge special emphasis in addressing the crumbling infrastructure in the immediate future. Getting crops to market requires special handling, speed and affordability and if not addressed quickly is not only a safety issue but a national security problem. (2012)

-Oppose indiscriminate freight rate increases.

-Support the continuing viability of the less-than-shuttle facility system of elevators in Montana which enhances diversity of rail movements by Montana farmers' production. We oppose any actions by railroads that will not encourage the long-term viability of the less-than-shuttle facilities in Montana. (2013)

-Ask the Montana State Attorney General and the United States Anti-Trust Department to vigorously investigate and enforce laws to prevent price fixing of retail motor fuels. We ask that both state and federal funding be appropriated to enforce anti-trust and predatory pricing laws. (1999)

-Oppose further deregulation of railroads.

-Support Eastern Montana farmers and oppose the Tongue River Railroad, which would disrupt

and interfere in many ranches along the Tongue River, even in their alternate routes. (1999)

-Work to get rail rates reduced so that they are comparable to other states and to encourage rail competition. (2005)

-Support a statewide impact analysis of increased rail traffic with jurisdictional oversight by the Surface Transportation Board. (2015)

-Support a Southern Montana passenger rail service from Missoula to Billings. (2020)

-Support a shipping weight variance for livestock transported within Montana. (2018)

## **COOPERATIVE POLICY**

-Cooperation is a guidepost of the Farmers Union, sharing the organization's triangle with education and legislation.

-Support patron-owned, democratically controlled cooperatives, built on the principle of one person, one vote, with distribution of savings in direct proportion to patronage.

-Cooperative endeavor is a legitimate and logical extension enabling farmers to take their operations into the marketplace and allowing individual producers to realize the benefits generated by their production through the sale, processing, and ultimate purchase by the consumer.

-Because cooperatives are our business, it is imperative that Farmers Union members actively support and participate in their local and regional cooperatives.

-Urge Agricultural co-ops and businesses to have a majority of their board members made up of agricultural producers (2018).

-Support efforts and services keyed to cooperative principles which are provided by CHS, Farmers Union Insurance, Rural Electric Cooperatives, Rural Telephone Associations,

Farm Credit Services, Credit Unions, Bank for Cooperatives, Council of Cooperatives, Montana Cooperative Development Center, Lake County Cooperative Development Center, irrigation districts, grazing districts and other cooperatives in the state.

-Educate the general public as to the important role of cooperatives in economic systems.

-Establish and continue a positive and aggressive approach to cooperative education, and philosophy for Farmers Union members.

-Emphasize the need to select cooperative directors who understand and are loyal to the ideas of cooperative business principles.

-Be ready to work with cooperatives, both local and regional, in educating employees, directors and patrons in cooperative philosophy.

-Stand ready to assume or contribute leadership in the development of cooperatives in new fields, emerging technologies, and underdeveloped industries.

-Maintain an active President's Committee composed of beginning and young farmers and ranchers to suggest ways to involve new and young people in cooperatives. (2012)

-Urge all supply cooperatives to market locally produced biofuels and lubricants. (1990 & 2021)

-Initiate cooperative camps, conferences, and seminars with other cooperative enterprises.

-We respectfully request that all farm local and regional supply and marketing cooperatives continue/resume paying education funds to MFU for further cooperative education.

**-Businesses and associations may not use the word cooperative or its abbreviations in the promotion of their business unless organized legally as a cooperative. (2022)**

## **PUBLIC EDUCATION POLICY**

-Education is the cornerstone of our democracy. It has long been regarded as a national ethic,

preceding the establishment of our country as an independent nation.

-Support full funding for Public Schools. (2020)

-Support equitable, quality, inclusive education for all levels because this benefits not only individuals, but our state as well. An educated citizenry is a social protection and an unparalleled economic advantage. We regard education as a public utility, not a fringe benefit.

-Promote education in cooperative philosophy and practical cooperative business operations in our public schools both locally and with the Office of Public Instruction and our state university system.

-Support Agriculture in Montana Schools program.

-Support a Farm to School program that highlights Montana Agricultural products in the program (2010 & 2021)

-Continue to work for equity in access and quality of educational opportunity for rural areas.

-Urge adequate funding for vocational-technical education.

-Commend and support post-secondary efforts such as WWAMI (a consortium made up of the states of Wyoming, Washington, Alaska, Montana and Idaho) and WICHE (Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education), both of which offer educational opportunities, particularly in professional programs, not available in Montana.

-Urge higher priority and greater financial support for education on the state and national level.

-Reinforce methods to make school personnel aware of quality educational and resource materials on cooperative businesses and philosophy. (1990)

-Compile and keep current a list of local and regional scholarships available at Montana's

schools and colleges for students in agriculture. (1990)

-Recognizing the value of Ag Education and specifically the FFA and 4-H programs, we urge the state legislature to provide the support necessary to strengthen and continue these programs.

-Urge continued support for the 6-mill levy, supporting the University system of Montana.

### **FARM AGRICULTURAL CREDIT**

-Urge strenuous support and adequate funding for the Farm Credit Service incorporating long-range, low interest, cooperative policies as the structure was originally designed. (1990)

-Call for continued protection of borrower stock.

-Urge a guarantee of borrower's rights a method of restructuring of borrower debts and the right of first refusal.

-Support a secondary market for agricultural loans including real estate.

-Support an effort to meet beginning farmer's credit needs and those whose credit needs cannot be met by commercial lenders.

-Urge utilization of applicable Farm Credit guidelines in Rural Economic Community Development (RECD) programs.

### **ENERGY**

-Oppose the privatization of the Federal Power Administration and the government-owned transmission and power generation facilities at federal dams.

-Support federal programs to reduce our dependence on petroleum-based energy through the development of alternative sources such as biofuels, geothermal, solar and wind energy technologies among others to provide affordable energy. (2021)

-Urge the use of biofuels as sources for strategic, transportation and heating fuels. (2005 & 2010 & 2021)



1 -Promote the establishment and construction of  
2 **domestic biofuel plants and associated**  
3 **processing facilities (2021 & 2022).**

4  
5 -Support the retention of RFS, and oppose the  
6 changing of the statute, without information  
7 based on the best possible science, and approval  
8 by public review.

9  
10 -Encourage the EPA to add canola and rapeseed  
11 as approved feedstocks for renewable diesel and  
12 jet fuel, and research other oilseeds as biofuel  
13 feedstock. (2021)

14  
15 -Encourage education on issues involved with  
16 renewable energy, including right of way,  
17 leasing and property rights with takings  
18 affecting landowners. (2009)

19  
20 -Safety precautions and landowner protections  
21 need to be a high priority in impact statement  
22 reviews for pipeline development to ensure  
23 protection of Montana farms, ranches, land, air  
24 and water from adverse impacts. (2012&2021)

25  
26 -Support the requirement to purchase double  
27 current state standards (15%) of renewable  
28 energy credits and the electricity output from  
29 community renewable energy projects. (2010)

30  
31 -Support legislation and initiatives to obtain  
32 25% of energy from renewable resources by  
33 2025. (2016)

34  
35 -The increase in generating capacity created by  
36 new hydro-electric generation projects in  
37 existing facilities that come on-line should be  
38 classified as renewable energy. (2012)

39  
40 -Require new non-utility merchant  
41 transmission lines and pipelines set aside 3%  
42 annual gross revenues to be paid annually to  
43 landowners upon whom the transmission lines  
44 and pipelines are built in place of the current  
45 practice of one-time easement payments.  
46 (2009)

48 -We encourage electric co-ops throughout the  
49 nation, to build and acquire the generating and  
50 transmission resources necessary to ensure the  
51 same balance of cost-based power. (2003)

52 -Support study of the feasibility of purchasing  
53 the hydroelectric dams, related lands and water  
54 rights. This would return control of these  
55 resources to Montana citizens. Electric rates  
56 based on the cost of production will benefit all  
57 Montana consumers. (2003)

## 58 59 **NET METERING**

60 -Montana Farmers Union calls upon the  
61 Montana Legislature to enact legislation to  
62 expand the benefits of net metering by raising  
63 the current cap of 50KW, allow multiple meters  
64 for effective use of wind/solar systems on  
65 farmsteads and for community net metering and  
66 finally to let renewable energy generators to  
67 bank excess energy as credit beyond 12 months  
68 for future credit. (2014)

## 69 70 **AGRITOURISM**

71 -Support the expansion of agritourism  
72 opportunities. (2017)

## 73 74 **LAND USE**

75 -Request that trespassers be held liable for any  
76 damage done to private property along public  
77 access streams.

78  
79 -Support public and private partnerships that  
80 address the loss of access by Montana citizens  
81 to federal and state lands. (2020)

82  
83 -We discourage new mineral extraction until  
84 EIS's are completed. We encourage the  
85 Montana legislature to fund the DEQ  
86 sufficiently to comply with current law. (2014)

87  
88 -Support state-of-the-art reclamation of all lands  
89 involved in extractive industries.

90  
91 -Urge the State of Montana and all other  
92 governmental agencies to adopt measures,  
93 which require the least possible interference

with agricultural production during extraction of minerals.

-Reclamation, including weed control, should be the responsibility of the land developer. (2021)

-The land developer must have a noxious weed control plan approved by the local weed board. (2021)

-Areas of land in Montana that are identified as Wilderness Study Areas should have a date of completion. (2014)

-Oppose any agency or individual entering into a mineral lease or granting a permit for the extraction of minerals without the consent of the land surface owner, with just compensation to the agricultural operation.

-Support mining of Montana coal, with proper regulations.

-Support the ban on cyanide heap leach in mining. (2011)

-Urge a more transparent and thorough permitting process for Class II Oil and Gas Solid Waste Disposal Sites that will include a mandatory Environmental Impact Study (EIS). Support the strengthening of Montana's Class II Solid Waste Disposal Sites laws to match or exceed North Dakota statutes to protect Montanan's land and resources. (2013)

-Mineral estate has dominance over surface owners by law. Surface owners should be compensated for damages to property. Compensation should be paid for well sites, easements and other facilities that are brought in and used by the industry. (2005)

-Support safety precautions and landowner protection in impact statement reviews for oil and gas wells to ensure protection of Montana

farms, ranches, land, air and water from adverse impacts. (2013)

-Oppose any transfer of public land to private entities which would adversely impact agriculture. (2015)

**-Support a farmland protection policy to encourage the continuation of farming vs urban development. (2022)**

## ENVIRONMENT

-Support feasible air, water, and land use standards to prevent degradation of our environment and quality of life for present and future generations.

**-Support establishing numeric standards regarding coal bed methane production to protect our water, soils, and crops. (2022)**

**-When clean water standards for drinking cannot be achieved then water should be treated to standards acceptable for irrigation use. (2022)**

**-Large corporate concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFO) must be required to operate in a manner least damaging to the environment. (2022)**

-Support an adequate review, prior to the start of each coal bed methane development, to identify and propose mitigation measures to ensure that the proposal will not:

- 1) Cause qualitative or quantitative problems to off-site water resources
- 2) Alter vegetative characteristics
- 3) Cause subsidence; or
- 4) Negatively affect the land in other ways. (2000)

-Require any company that wants to conduct hydraulic fracturing in Montana to publicly disclose all chemicals to be used. (2011)

1 -Support legislation that requires coal bed  
2 methane producers to recharge aquifers with the  
3 maximum amount of water practicable. (2010)

5 -Support classification of coal bed methane  
6 water as ground water and ensuring senior water  
7 rights holders, not developing companies, will  
8 hold these water rights. (2009)

11 -Continue climate change monitoring and  
12 research to provide agricultural producers with  
13 the knowledge and ability to adapt to climate  
14 change, and to reduce their environmental  
15 impact. (2014)

17 -Any **climate solution** should address fair and  
18 equitable compensation for all agricultural  
19 producers to sequester carbon and reduce  
20 greenhouse gases **as well as** development of  
21 alternative energy resources. (2022)

23 **-Ensure integrity of private carbon markets  
24 and other efforts to reduce greenhouse gas  
25 emissions and make sure that agriculture  
26 plays a key role in these initiatives. (2022)**

27 -Support immediate development of safe  
28 methods of disposal of nuclear waste in the state  
29 of origin.

31 -Request that educational programs be  
32 conducted and corrective measures taken to  
33 control saline seep.

35 -Support first priority for water used in  
36 domestic, municipal and agricultural  
37 consumption.

39 -Urge feasible legislation and educational  
40 programs, which will assist in protecting ground  
41 water from pollution and depletion beyond  
42 natural recharge.

44 -Support out-of-state garbage bans to give the  
45 state time to properly regulate large-scale  
46 landfills.

47 -Recommend that prior to oil and gas drilling on  
48 any agricultural property, the company should  
49 provide an independent well and surface testing  
50 for water quality and quantity base line. (2012)

52 -Support the expansion of the pesticide  
53 container recycling program through increased  
54 drop-off locations and times. (2016)

56 -Oppose the disposal of hazardous waste by  
57 mixing it with fertilizer, and other farm  
58 products, which is unacceptable and a  
59 dangerous practice that threatens the  
60 environment and human health.

62 -MFU should be instrumental in bringing  
63 together agriculture organizations,  
64 environmental and industry groups to examine  
65 the latest national fertilizer standards and their  
66 relevance to Montana. (1999)

68 -Support statewide recycling. (2015)

70 -Support replacement of non-renewable  
71 materials with renewable materials. (2015)

73 -Support a farmer educational program to assist  
74 in developing renewable packaging, marketing,  
75 and production. (2015)

## 77 NATURAL RESOURCES

78 -Oppose EPA regulation of dust produced by  
79 farmers and ranchers. (2010)

81 -Seek expanded technical assistance for  
82 landowners of small timber tracts.

84 -Call for state license and bonding of all log and  
85 timber scalers.

87 -Urge that timber and log purchases and sales be  
88 based on total cubic content.

89 -Recommend that control of National Forests  
90 should remain with the United States  
91 Department of Agriculture.

93 -Urge that State and Federal Forest Services  
94 expand their small sales program to make timber  
95 available and provide continual employment for  
96 small independent operations.

1 -Urge that state and federal forest policies  
2 include the recognition of the importance of  
3 permitted grazing and biomass production.  
4 Increased funding should be provided for  
5 salvaging dead trees and fuels reduction. (2011  
6 & 2014)

7  
8 -Oppose “let it burn” policies. (2002)

9  
10 -Support practical grazing practices on public  
11 land that supports good stewardship.

12  
13 -Vacant grazing allotments on public land  
14 should be made immediately available to  
15 livestock producers affected by drought or  
16 other natural disaster. (2020).

## 17 **WATER**

18  
19 -Support a broad water- development policy,  
20 which insures multiple uses, recognizing the  
21 primacy of the needs of agriculture.

22  
23 -Support state's right to adjudicate all waters  
24 within its borders.

25  
26 -Support State Water Court adjudication of all  
27 state water disputes, including all federal, state  
28 and private permits and/or reservations.

29  
30 -Oppose the levying of any additional fees on  
31 any water rights that the claimants have already  
32 paid an assessment for water rights adjudication.  
33 (2004)

34  
35 -Include agricultural representatives on river  
36 basin councils. (2017)

37  
38 -Oppose the drilling of exempt wells that affect  
39 existing water users. (2017)

40  
41 -Oppose legislation, administrative rules, and  
42 reservation processes that give control of our  
43 waterways to the Department of Fish, Wildlife  
44 and Parks, Corps of Engineers or the  
45 Environmental Protection Agency.

46  
47 -Oppose broadening the definition of what  
48 waters are covered under the Clean Water Act  
49 that may unduly burden family farmers and  
50 ranchers. (2021)

51  
52 -Oppose the broadening of the federal  
53 government's jurisdiction over a group of

54 waters simply because the bodies of water are  
55 near each other. (2021)

56  
57 -Oppose legislation, which allows federal  
58 reservation of wilderness water rights.

59  
60 -Oppose removal of dams on the Snake and  
61 Columbia River systems. (1999)

62  
63 -Oppose amendments to the Clean Water Act  
64 that pertain to non-point source pollution, which  
65 adversely affects **family farms**. (1992 & 2022)

66  
67 -Recognize that a degradation of water occurs  
68 through natural means and request that such  
69 degradation be taken into consideration when  
70 monitoring for non-point source pollution.

71  
72 -Urge a water development program to include  
73 the construction and rehabilitation of multiple  
74 use water storage facilities and delivery  
75 systems.

76  
77 -Support the Montana Water Rights Compact  
78 Commission, to continue and expedite the  
79 adjudication of all federal water rights and all  
80 water rights held in trust for the Indian tribes by  
81 compact. Encourage public programs to provide  
82 sufficient funding to bring this to a conclusion.

83  
84 -Support a joint effort between the State of  
85 Montana and federal lending agencies to supply  
86 long-term low interest loans for agricultural  
87 development of water that has been reserved for  
88 agricultural purposes and irrigation and  
89 encourage the agricultural interests to take  
90 advantage of this and develop the water that has  
91 been reserved, before losing it to downstream  
92 states.

93  
94 -We urge oil and gas companies to properly treat  
95 and reuse their wastewater. (2013)

## 96 **WILDLIFE**

97  
98  
99 -Urge support of wildlife management to  
100 maintain a brucellosis-free state.



1 -Bison and bison management throughout the  
2 entire state of Montana, especially the Greater  
3 Yellowstone Area, remain a concern to Montana  
4 livestock producers. Effective bison  
5 management is essential to the prevention of the  
6 spread of brucellosis and to the protection of  
7 private property. Prevention of brucellosis is in  
8 the interest of public health and safety. The State  
9 of Montana and the U.S. Department of  
10 Interior have entered into a long-term  
11 Collaborative Memo of Understanding  
12 regarding management of the Yellowstone herd.  
13 (2012).

14  
15 -Private property rights of all landowners must  
16 be protected within any bison management plan.  
17 Free roaming, feral and wild bison should not be  
18 allowed within the state of Montana and all  
19 bison should be regulated as livestock by the  
20 Montana Department of Livestock. (2012)

21  
22 -Support adjustments in Federal and State  
23 grazing fees according to quality of grazing  
24 units.

25  
26 -The National Park Service shall eliminate  
27 brucellosis from its wildlife within Yellowstone  
28 National Park. It shall maintain its bison herd  
29 and range health. (2008)

30  
31 -Support private property and land lessees'  
32 rights in regard to wildlife management (2021).

33  
34 -Urge a portion of big game hunting and fishing  
35 license fees be earmarked for county road  
36 maintenance.

37  
38 -Support a vote by the citizens of the state on  
39 any additional National Monuments. (2010)

40  
41 -Support and protect the US Antiquities Act of  
42 1906. (2011)

43  
44 -Support state management plan for grizzly  
45 bears. (2019)

47 -Urge the Environmental Protection Agency and  
48 other federal agencies to make 1080 available  
49 for coyote control.

50  
51 -Oppose the ban of strychnine use to control  
52 rabid skunk populations and burrowing rodents.

53  
54 -Oppose any legislation banning aerial hunting,  
55 steel traps, M44's and other approved methods  
56 for control of wildlife-incurred damage.

57  
58 -Oppose placing the prairie dog on the  
59 endangered species list.(2002) Urge provisions  
60 for working with the landowner on habitat  
61 restoration, which benefits both the landowner  
62 and the endangered species. (2003)

63  
64 -Oppose taking coyote and fox off the predator  
65 list through reclassification as furbearers.

66  
67 -We support the judicious use of control  
68 practices being continued on federal and state  
69 lands to control coyotes, feral hogs and other  
70 damaging species. (2014)

71  
72 -We recognize concerns of the impacts on  
73 agricultural lands with the potential listing of  
74 endangered species. (2014)

75  
76 -Allow ranchers and the public to protect private  
77 property from predators that fall under the  
78 Endangered Species Act. (2010)

79  
80 -The Department of Interior U.S. Fish and  
81 Wildlife Service is responsible for the  
82 management of wildlife while under the ESA  
83 and is responsible for reimbursement of  
84 livestock losses caused by said wildlife. (2010)

85  
86 -Urge adequate support for wildlife predator  
87 control including protected species. (2013)

88  
89 -We support funding for the livestock loss  
90 program. (2018)

91  
92 -Support state management of wolves. (2010)

## **PUBLIC UTILITIES**

-Urge continued support of policies granting preference to publicly owned power systems and rural electric cooperatives.

-Support wholeheartedly the financing and continuation of our Rural Electric Cooperatives and Rural Telephone Associations.

-Support legislation enacting, upon adequate research, a National Power Grid linking all power planning agencies, including any new sources of power development.

-Urge that authority of any grid system should never supersede or circumvent Montana Laws on facility siting rate structure, pollution or reclamation.

-Favor expanding the universal service fund for both landline and cellular at a reasonable cost. (2013 & 2021)

-Favor universal telephone service at reasonable cost.

-Rural telephone and electric coops should be exempt from paying fees for right of way on state and federal lands. (1999)

-Urge continuation of the present district-based elections for the Montana Public Service Commission.

-We oppose any efforts to regulate our rural electric cooperatives and rural telephone cooperatives by the Public Service Commission. (2012)

-Oppose wireless broadband networks that interfere with GPS operations. (2011)

-Support net neutrality. (2014)

-Support broadband development to increase access to high-speed internet in rural Montana. (2015)

-Support disclosure of public utilities executive salaries. (2013)

-Support Renewable Energy programs and projects. (2020)

## **FOOD AND FOOD SAFETY**

-Food safety policies can and should protect consumers without limiting farmers, ranchers and small food processors who sell into local and regional markets. (2009)

-USDA and FDA should deliver educational programs to assist in understanding and meeting FSMA requirements. (2017)

-Urge closer control of additives, non-food substitutes and fillers, in foods, which lessen nutritional value.

-Food and off farm sales must be protected from excessive government regulations. (2009)

-Support funding of the Montana Food and Agricultural Development Centers. (2009)

-Support the development of local and regional food systems and infrastructure that shorten the distance between the farm and table. (2009 and 2011)

-Supports Department of Agriculture, DPHHS and Livestock creating and monitoring standardized state programs for food safety at farmers' markets and within the "cottage" food industry. (2013)

-Products entering the U.S. must be produced and processed under the same sanitary and phytosanitary restrictions as those imposed on American family farmers and clearly labeled with country of origin (2021).

## **IMITATION OF MEAT**

-Support meat being defined as flesh from an animal harvested in a traditional way being used as food. (2018)

-Oppose cellular cultured food being defined as agriculture. (2018)

## **PUBLIC POLICY**

-We recognize that there are many ethical, moral, and societal issues which are important to us as citizens, but don't relate directly to our organizational purpose. In these areas we encourage our members to utilize, where applicable, this public philosophy when participating in the formulation of such public policy, whether individually or as a part of other groups dedicated to responsible investigation and solutions to these issues. But where public policy involves us as rural citizens and as Farmers Union members, we accept our responsibility to speak to these issues whether in the global arena, on the national scene, or in our state, cities and rural communities.

-The United States enjoys the safest, highest quality, and most economical food supply in the world. We request our state and national organizations insist that government maintain the high inspection standards for foreign vegetables, meats and food products, which apply to U.S. producers.

-We encourage people to buy locally produced products. (2013)

-The strength of the United States is rooted in self-sufficiency in natural resources, particularly food production. We must not become dependent on imported food, which would be vulnerable to terrorist activity. Federal spending priorities must not shortchange our domestic family farm agriculture.

**-International trade agreements must not include language that allows multinational corporations relief from domestic legislation holding them responsible in areas regarding the environment, labor standards, sustainable family farm and ranch protection, privacy issues, and control over misinformation, hateful and violent communication via social media and all other applications. (2022)**

**-Negotiations on trade agreements must be transparent and accessible to agricultural, labor, and environmental organizations in a manner equal to or greater than participation by large multinational corporations and any other impacted entities. (2022)**

-Encourage removing term limits for public office of Montana office holders.

-Support universal rates, rules, and regulations on federal land leases.

-Support further multi-lateral trade negotiations involving agricultural products provided the following concerns are satisfied before negotiations enter the final phase:

- Global trade should not drain the wealth of one country for the benefit of others. (2003)
- Oppose the outsourcing of Federal Government jobs. (2004)
- There must be a mechanism in place to mitigate the adverse effects of currency exchange rate fluctuations.
- The sovereignty of the USA and its states to govern within their borders must not be diluted or internationalized at all.
- We demand a transparent democratic process in trade negotiations and oppose the abdication of Congressional responsibility by granting fast track in the approval of any trade agreement. (2013)
- Oppose currency manipulation regarding trade. (2015)

-Oppose misuse of eminent domain laws by private companies and government. Any person or entity should not be allowed to install another system on the taken property unless the owners of each parcel of the condemned property consent and are compensated in an amount negotiated by the owner. The person who lost

possession of the land through eminent domain should be released from liability for any damage. (1999)

-We support efforts to reform eminent domain law. It must include liability of developers for damage to the land. There must be clear evidence that the project will serve Montana's public interest, enforcement of a mitigation plan, and a just compensation for damages. Landowners and tenants should both be involved in the process of granting the easement. (2012) Landowners should also have the option of leasing, rather than deeding the land condemned, with appropriate safeguards for the landowner should the land be eventually returned. (2000)

-Support reform to Montana's eminent domain laws related to just compensation that provides the landowner with the option to receive payment for their condemned property as an annual rental payment or as a one-time lump sum payment. (2012)

-Oppose expanding trends to massive land holdings in America by foreign individuals and corporations and foreign and domestic non-profits.

-Support review of land purchased by foreign individuals and urge legislation to form policy to limit land purchased by out-of-state foreign individuals or organizations. (2010)

-Eliminate foreign ownership of large food processing entities. (2020)

-Encourage the FTC and DOJ to investigate agriculture industry corporate mergers for violations under anti-monopolization and pro-competition laws. (2017)

-Support volunteer fire departments and EMT's. (2019)

## **DATA OWNERSHIP AND ACQUISITION**

-All data collected on an agricultural operation is the exclusive property of the operation and its management. Storage and use of such data

should be strictly prohibited without the well-defined legal consent of such individuals. (2015)

**-Farmers should have the right to opt out of data harvest, and all harvested data should have strict oversight. (2022)**

-Oppose the use of drones for unauthorized surveillance of agricultural operations and invasion of personal privacy. (2013)

## **PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION**

-Support expansion of public transportation in Montana to better serve rural communities. (2013)

-Support continuation of the Essential Air Service subsidy so that air links serving Montana's smaller cities can continue to operate.

-Call for an upgraded, efficient public passenger transportation systems, such as Amtrak.

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

-Urge federal and state government to expand, invest, and improve the instate investment and loan programs.

-Urge federal and state government to invest in infrastructure needed for rural communities to meet their economic opportunities.

-Continue to support federal and statewide efforts by regional economic development programs that benefit agriculture such as the Food and Agriculture Development Centers and the Montana Cooperative Development Center.

-Encourage federal and state government to help fund the startup or continuation of local food processors. (2020)

## **TAXATION**

-Montana Farmers Union supports the concept that taxes are levied to provide services people cannot provide efficiently for themselves based on the following principles: (1990)



- Property taxes are a stable source of revenue and should be based on equitable appraisal. (1990)
- Income taxes based on ability to pay are the fairest method to generate revenue. (1990)
- Taxes on business should not be restrictive, but appropriate to their use of public services. (1990)

-Oppose any effort to limit the right of states to tax their natural resources.

-Agricultural "inventories" should not be taxed if business inventories are exempt from taxation.

-Support a Rural Micro Business Tax Credit. (2010)

-Request development of methods requiring absentee mineral interest owners to share the tax burden now borne solely by the surface owner.

-Encourage tax exemptions for energy saving devices.

-Oppose any general sales or value added tax at either the state or federal level

-Urge the Montana legislature to remove all tax advantages by non-agricultural operations that are derived from agricultural production.

-Support a fair and equitable timber tax.

-Support fair and equitable taxation of marijuana

-Encourage increases in marijuana and tobacco taxes for uses that would benefit the public good. (2020)

#### **Fair Market Value**

-Support fair and equitable valuations for all agricultural based operations.

-Support a land classification system, which assures uniform and equitable assessed values, which must be straightforward and easy for taxpayers to understand.

-Classification should be based on productive capacity of the different soil types, based on sound science and taking into consideration the influence of climate on agricultural production.

-We support property tax reform to more adequately reflect land use. We seek to have material participation as the basis for classification as agricultural production land. (2018)

-Expand the tax credit to include leasing land to beginning farmers. (2014)

-Ask that property owners be granted the lowest land classification on all private land used for public roads and stream beds which are required to be open for public use.

-Support a continual review of all tax-exempt property.

#### **Estate**

-In lieu of estate tax repeal, we support estate tax relief for family-owned farms, ranches and small businesses in order to facilitate the transfer of those enterprises to the next generation. We also recommend:

- 1) Opposing any reductions to any federal estate tax exemptions. (2016)
- 2) Simplify the exemption qualification rules and requirements;
- 3) Implement graduated rates, and;
- 4) Retain current Ag exemptions. (2005)

-Encourage that inheritance taxes on agricultural land be eliminated if land is passed to direct heirs and remains in agricultural use, operated by them, for at least 5 years.

-Support estate transfers at fair market value. (2017)

-Support a reasonable federal gift tax credit to children of farm families in recognition of their contribution to the business when the farm is incorporated and stock is distributed.

-Oppose the repeal of agriculture homestead exemption. (2018)

#### **Utilities**

-Support the Montana Electric Cooperatives' Association in its efforts to retain the existing property tax rates on electric transmission and distribution facilities. We oppose imposition of an excise or sales tax on electric utility customers.

-Call on the State of Montana to require investor-owned utilities and corporations to pay taxes on the declared value of the property, which is then used for the purpose of ratemaking.

#### **Transportation**

-Oppose any increase in the Farm Gross Vehicle Weight tax.

-Urge that full, realistic and accurate values be used for taxing railroads operating property in the State of Montana.

-Oppose suspension of the fuel tax due to the fact that fuel taxes generated are being spent to match Federal highway monies that create good paying jobs and a healthy highway construction program in Montana. (2005)

-Oppose any effort to increase motor fuel taxes and divert the revenue into the general fund at either the state or national level.

#### **Worker's Compensation**

-Urge continued efforts to improve the operation of the Workman's Compensation program, including closing "fraud loopholes".

-Support a single classification for all agricultural operations within Montana for Worker's Compensation. (2015)

-Oppose the privatization of the Montana State Fund. (2021)

#### **MEDICAL CARE**

-Support 100% deductions for health insurance premiums of the self-employed and retired. (1994)

-Urge a cooperative effort between all health care and educational agencies to seek a solution to the critical shortages of health care personnel, particularly in our rural health care facilities. (1991)

-Urge cost containment be an element in any health care plan.

-Urge the Congress of the United States to enact comprehensive health care reform that provides all American citizens an affordable public option. (2009)

-Oppose cuts in health care benefits and all premium rate increases to all Medicare and Medicaid recipients and veterans.

- Urge recruitment of primary care physicians to rural Montana communities. (2013)

- Urge increased support of home health care for rural Montanans. (2013)

-Support funding for mental health resources especially for rural communities. (2019)

-Support Medicare and Medicaid's ability to negotiate for lower prescription drug costs, similar to the Veterans' Administration (2021).

-Support allowing importation of generic and name brand prescription drugs from countries with similar or equal to regulatory oversight as compared to the United States. (2021)

#### **SOCIAL SECURITY**

-Oppose any cuts in either benefits or cost of living increases for Social Security recipients. (2021)

-Oppose any changes in the program, which would raise or move the retirement age.

1 -Oppose deferral or cutting of payroll taxes,  
2 which would jeopardize the sustainability of  
3 Social Security. (2020)

4  
5 -Oppose taxing of Social Security benefits by  
6 the state of Montana.

7  
8 -Support raising the maximum income level  
9 upon which a person is required to pay social  
10 security taxes in order to maintain solvency of  
11 the Social Security System. (1999)

## 12 13 **RURAL SOCIAL ISSUES AND CIVIL** 14 **RIGHTS**

15 -Support equality under law for all citizens  
16 regardless of race, age, gender, sexual  
17 orientation, ability and religion. (2014)

18  
19 -Urge the federal and state government to  
20 continue funding the Experience Works  
21 Program.

22  
23 -Support and urge recognition of the importance  
24 of Senior Citizen's Centers as a vital function in  
25 our communities.

26  
27 -Support the continuation of nutrition programs  
28 for people of all ages as well as other beneficial  
29 programs.

30  
31 -The United States Postal Service provides  
32 critical services to Montanans, and we demand  
33 a financially solvent, widespread, reliable and  
34 timely system through:

35  
36 -Retaining rural Post Offices affected by the  
37 exclusion of the 10 mile distance.

38  
39 -Support reforms to the Postal Service that  
40 would increase solvency by changing the  
41 congressional mandate that pensions be prepaid  
42 in advance

43  
44 -Support fair and equitable service fees,  
45

46 -Insist on current services through offices and  
47 blue boxes be maintained or expanded  
48

49 -Oppose any privatization of the Postal Service.  
50 (2020)

51  
52 -Oppose right-to-work legislation.

53  
54 -Support an equitable minimum wage. (1990)

55  
56 -Oppose the intimidation and harassment of  
57 federal, state, county, and local officials while  
58 carrying out their appointed duties. (2021)

59  
60 **-The right to vote is fundamental for our**  
61 **democracy and must be preserved and**  
62 **encouraged. (2022)**

63  
64 **-Promote voting processes which secures the**  
65 **ease of access to voting by all citizens,**  
66 **including but not limited to mail-in ballots,**  
67 **ballot drop boxes, early voting, convenient**  
68 **access to polling places, and same day**  
69 **registration. (2022)**

70  
71 **-Oppose the intimidation and/or harassment**  
72 **of voters, in local, state, and national**  
73 **elections, while exercising their right to vote.**  
74 **(2022)**

75  
76 **-Oppose undermining the will of the people,**  
77 **as expressed by the public vote, by state**  
78 **legislators, and other public officials. (2022)**

## 79 80 **FEDERAL AND STATE LAWS AND** 81 **REGULATIONS**

82 -Require adequate compensation for land and/or  
83 relocation of facilities condemned under the  
84 Flood Plain Act by the federal government.

85 -Urge setting fair and equitable rental fees on  
86 state land, and an accurate evaluation of  
87 production potential based upon land  
88 classification.

1 -Urge redefinition of "Public Use" to curb  
2 abuses by questionable "Public Need"  
3 applications.

4  
5 -Request a study of the cost of liability  
6 insurance, including both high punitive damage  
7 awards and limitation of awards.

8  
9 -Ask that federally funded food programs in  
10 schools and at institutions and military  
11 installations use meat and dairy products  
12 produced and purchased in the United States.

13  
14 -Support current child labor regulations for  
15 agriculture. (2011)

16  
17 -An exemption for agricultural use for above-  
18 ground petroleum storage of up to 10,000  
19 gallons should be granted by the EPA. (2014)

20  
21 -Oppose the transfer of all federal lands to state  
22 and local control. (2014)

23  
24 -Support farm equipment owners and operators  
25 having the right and ability to repair their own  
26 equipment. (2016)

27  
28 -Oppose Federal requirements to have a locator  
29 service check every spot that a soil sample is to  
30 be taken. (2016)

### 31 32 **FOREIGN POLICY**

33 -Oppose withholding agricultural food products,  
34 exported or imported, at the State Department  
35 level as a tool in foreign policy.

### 36 37 **ORGANIZATION POLICY**

38 -We believe in the benefits of a grass roots  
39 organization.

40  
41 -Montana Farmers Union is non-partisan and  
42 does not endorse candidates or provide financial  
43 support; members are encouraged to participate  
44 in the activities of the political party of their  
45 choice.

46  
47 -To be an effective force, members must be  
48 involved in the organization. Such involvement  
49 demands communication and motivational  
50 focus from its leadership in order to accomplish  
51 its goals, to develop the talents of the

52 membership and to foster feelings of self-worth  
53 as individuals and as a group.

54  
55 -Develop programs to increase interaction of  
56 agricultural and non-agricultural groups with  
57 the purpose of achieving common goals. (2013)

### 58 59 **ORGANIZATION PROGRAM** 60 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### 61 62 **NATIONAL FARMERS UNION**

63 -Urge the establishment of affiliate member  
64 relationships with like-minded organizations.  
65 Such relationships could enhance lobbying  
66 efforts and government policy preparation.  
67 (2005)

68  
69 -Strengthen ties and communication with  
70 member state organizations.

71  
72 -Encourage membership and other  
73 organizations to explore and develop  
74 long- range farm programs.

75  
76 -Hold conventions in states with a large rural  
77 population and with significant Farmers Union  
78 membership amenable to farmer and rancher  
79 seasonal schedules.

80  
81 -Hold Convention before Congress returns to  
82 session so that national policy is consistent  
83 throughout the time that Congress is in session  
84 for that calendar year. (2015)

#### 85 86 **MONTANA FARMERS UNION**

87 -Encourage MFU members to run and to  
88 participate in community, state, and national  
89 activities and offices.

90  
91 -Implement the expansion of all facets of  
92 traditional and non-traditional membership,  
93 including associate memberships.

94  
95 -Hold seminars for leadership development.

96  
97 -Encourage coverage of agricultural  
98 information and education in Montana media,  
99 and show appreciation when such coverage  
100 appears.



1 -Provide an arena for dialogue among the  
2 membership and between farm organizations  
3 concerning farm programs.

4  
5 -Continue a positive public relations role with  
6 other organizations, groups and individuals to  
7 further the understanding of agricultural issues.

8  
9 -Keep membership informed as to state and  
10 national legislative and organizational  
11 developments.

12  
13 -Provide non-partisan information on all  
14 candidates for public office together with  
15 judicial candidates and include voting records  
16 on issues pertinent to the Farmers Union and its  
17 policies and programs.

18  
19 -Urge expansion of agricultural coalition to  
20 include all agricultural organizations. (2013)

21  
22 -Support and continue to use social media as a  
23 channel of communication for MFU news and  
24 events. (2012)

25  
26 -Encourage member and youth to use their  
27 talents in the Farmers Union and in civic affairs.

28  
29 -Support creation, expansion, and  
30 communication of and with active locals. (2013  
31 & 2021).

### 32 33 **ORGANIZATION EDUCATION POLICY**

34 -An educated, involved membership is the  
35 essential ingredient in the Farmers Union if our  
36 membership participation and governance is to  
37 be effective.

38  
39 -Support organizational education incorporating  
40 Farmers Union philosophy as a source of  
41 renewed commitment and as a means of  
42 organizational development so that our  
43 agricultural vocation and our rural communities  
44 may benefit.

45  
46 -Promote programs designed to assist Montana  
47 Farmers Union members in areas pertinent to  
48 their lives as agriculturists: economics, money  
49 creation, consumer education and the broad  
50 range of problems faced by producers and to  
51 assist improving the system of marketing.

52  
53 -Install a program to educate the public about  
54 the accomplishments of the American family  
55 farmer, including their high-quality productivity  
56 and environmental awareness. The program is  
57 to include how the U.S. farm policy works to  
58 ensure affordable food for the entire nation and  
59 the small part of the Ag budget the farmer  
60 receives.

61  
62 -Promote member attendance at conferences to  
63 educate themselves about the importance of  
64 their involvement in family farming.

65  
66 -Urge continued support of land transfer  
67 programs to connect beginning farmers with  
68 retiring farmers. (1992 & 2021)

69  
70 -Link with other state and national groups to  
71 research and develop farm programs and  
72 policies.

73  
74 -Support the development and use of Arrowpeak  
75 Camp for cooperative, legislative, educational  
76 opportunities and membership use.

77  
78 -Establish short-term and long-term educational  
79 goals for all age groups.

### 80 81 **2022 Resolutions Committee**

82 Ben Peterson, Judith Gap, Chair

83 Erik Somerfeld, Power

84 Tammy Copenhaver, Rudyard

85 John Wicks, Ledger

86 Ron deYong, Kalispell

87 Walter Schweitzer, MFU President

88 Rachel Prevost, MFU Staff

89 Eleanor Ferrone, MFU Staff

## **2022 Special Orders of Business**

### **Trade Policy**

Access to global markets is critical for family farms in Montana. Montana agricultural exports account for about 75-80% of Montana farm incomes. Montana farmers and ranchers rely heavily on strong export markets and are struggling with the retaliatory tariffs placed on commodities that Montana farmers and ranchers produce. We support efforts to expand trade with fair trade agreements that raise labor and environmental standards in other countries.

Urge that the retaliatory tariffs be resolved to stop the monumental losses to farmers and ranchers including the loss of global market share and the decrease in farm income.

Support the continuation of efforts to open trade offices and trade missions with trading partners.

Urge the restoration of open fair trade with countries around the world through enforceable trade agreements and the elimination of current adverse trade practices that affect agriculture.

### **Right to Repair**

Montana Farmers Union demands the right for farmers to repair our own equipment.

Equipment manufacturers refuse access or charge exorbitant prices for technical advisor software needed to troubleshoot equipment.

Almost all newer equipment utilizes electronic control units to control equipment operation.

Without the software and hardware needed to troubleshoot farmers and ranchers are forced to use the dealer for minor and major repairs. The cost of repairs and downtime has a severe impact on our bottom line and adds undue stress to our lives. Farmers, ranchers, and independent repair technicians need fair access to the tools necessary for repairing equipment.

### **Meat Processors Curriculum**

The Covid pandemic put a microscope on our food supply chain, and it is broken. Local

butchers are struggling to find skilled labor to keep up with demand. MFU supports developing curriculum and apprenticeship programs to train people in all facets of meat processing.

### **Fairness for Farmers**

Food security is of major concern to American consumers in a changing world. Adopting policies that address food security will be of great benefit to our producers and offer protections to consumers. For too long, producers and consumers have been subject to “cheap food policy”, which gives corporate monopolies control of our food dollar and furthering food inequality.

Supply chain issues will continue into the future caused in part by corporate consolidation and trade wars.

Foreign nations and large corporate monopolies have been allowed to manipulate markets and supply chains for far too long, endangering the sustainability of family agriculture and putting consumers at risk of food shortages. We resolve that:

- Urge the Department of Justice (DOJ) to follow through with anti-trust investigations in the agricultural sector and prosecute any violators of the laws in place.
- GIPSA must be fully reinstated and enforced.
- We must minimize the foreign influence and control of crop production supplies in the United States.
- Encourage domestic production of commodity inputs.
- The commodity loan program must be changed, to include more crops, and a loan rate that reflects 85% of the parity price for a given commodity. This will both provide producers with a higher, more stable price and refill our strategic

1 commodity reserves, furthering our food  
2 security.

3 • Communities and local governments  
4 should be involved in aiding  
5 policymakers in the creation of local  
6 supply chains.

7 • Encourage federal and state  
8 governments to help fund the startup or  
9 continuation of local food processors  
10 and distributors.

11  
12 **Farm Bill**

13 Strengthen the farm safety net through  
14 increased price-based triggers to reflect higher  
15 prices and input costs.

16  
17 Expand and enhance permanent disaster  
18 programs so that family farmers and ranchers  
19 can recover quickly.

20  
21 Expand conservation programs to help family  
22 farmers and ranchers enhance good  
23 conservation practices and address the climate  
24 crisis.

25  
26 Promote resilient regional food systems and  
27 diverse markets.

28  
29 Support a strong Nutrition Title.

30  
31 Increased baseline funding is needed.

## Glossary

**1000 Bird Exemption** – Limited provisions of the Poultry Product Inspection Act (PPIA) apply to poultry growers who slaughter no more than 1,000 poultry in a calendar year for use as human food. A person may slaughter and process poultry that he or she raised on his or her premises and they may distribute such poultry without mandatory inspection when five criteria are met.

**APH** – Actual Production History

**APHIS** – Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

**BSE** – Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

**CAFO** – Concentrated animal feeding operations

**CBB** – Cattlemen’s Beef Board

**CCC** – Commodity Credit Corporation

**CDL** – Commercial Driver’s License

**CHS** – Formerly Cenex Harvest States Cooperative

**COOL** – Country of Origin Labeling

**CRP** – Conservation Reserve Program

**CSP** – Conservation Stewardship Program

**DEQ** – Department of Environmental Quality

**DPHHS** – Department of Health & Human Services

**DSA** – Designated Surveillance Area

**EIS** – Environmental Impact Study

**EPA** – Environmental Protection Agency

**EQIP** – Environmental Quality Incentives Program

**ESA** – Endangered Species Act

**FDA** – Food and Drug Administration

**FSA** – Farm Service Agency

**GIPSA** – Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration Rule

**GE** – Genetically engineered

**GMO** – Genetically modified organism

**GPS** – Global positioning system

**GRAS** – Generally Recognized As Safe

**GVW** – Gross Vehicle Weight

**MFU** – Montana Farmers Union

**NAIS** – National Animal Identification System

**NFU** – National Farmers Union

**NRCS** – Natural Resource and Conservation Service

**PARITY** – The average regional cost of production of a commodity

**RECD** – Rural Economic Community Development programs

**RFS** – Renewable Fuel Standard

**RMA** – Risk Management Agency

**TIP** – Transitions Incentive Program. The 2008 Farm Bill includes a brand new provision in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) for a transition option for beginning and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers.

**US Antiquities Act of 1906** – *An Act for the Preservation of American Antiquities* is an act passed by the United States Congress and signed into law by Theodore Roosevelt on June 8, 1906, giving the

President of the United States authority to, by executive order restrict the use of particular public land owned by the federal government.

**USDA** – United States Department of Agriculture

**Universal Service Fund** – “The Telecommunications Act of 1996 expanded the traditional definition of universal service - affordable, nationwide telephone service to include among other things rural health care providers and eligible schools and libraries.” (*Source: Federal Communications Commission*)

**Universal Telephone Service** – “Prior to the Telecommunications Act of 1996, the Universal Service Fund (USF) operated as a mechanism by which interstate long distance carriers were assessed to subsidize telephone service to low-income households and high-cost areas” (*Source: Federal Communications Commission*)

**WWAMI** – Washington, Wyoming, Alaska, Montana, and Idaho medical education program

**WICHE** – Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education

**WTO** – World Trade Organization – body created in the last major trade agreement that handles disputes between signatory nations to the Uruguay Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade

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