

FARM BILL

PRIORITIES FOR STATE DEPARTMENTS OF AGRICULTURE

These 10 areas are critical for the new farm bill to address in order to support food and resource production:

- Agriculture research
- Animal disease
- Conservation and climate resiliency
- Cyber security
- Food safety
- Hemp
- Invasive species
- Local food systems
- Specialty crop block grant
- Trade promotion

The next farm bill must remain unified, securing a commitment to American agriculture and the critical food and nutritional assistance programs for those who need it most. NASDA directs its farm bill policy advocacy efforts regarding the bill toward these policy areas.



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NASDA's farm bill policy.*



AGRICULTURE RESEARCH

NASDA recommends significantly increasing funding for research on the safety and security of our food system and the improvement and protection of our natural resources. Robust support for agricultural research including funding for extension programs and research infrastructure is vital to ensuring U.S. agriculture remains competitive globally.

ANIMAL DISEASE

NASDA endorses the three-tiered animal disease prevention and management method established by the 2018 Farm Bill. The comprehensive program includes three critical components to identifying, addressing and responding to diseases:

- Early disease detection and surveillance
- Prevention
- Rapid response

NASDA recommends building upon the three-tiered program and ensuring the National Animal Vaccine and Veterinary Countermeasures Bank has adequate funds to increase available resources for the livestock industry. NASDA supports building an early disease detection warning system to enhance coordination between intergovernmental agencies and industry for a One Health approach in preparing and responding to new disease outbreaks.

CONSERVATION AND CLIMATE RESILIENCY

AGRICULTURAL CONSERVATION EASEMENT PROGRAM

- USDA conservation programs are effective tools in helping farmers and ranchers implement and maintain conservation practices. NASDA recommends increased funding for the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program.

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY INCENTIVE PROGRAM

- NASDA supports increasing the total funding amount for the Environmental Quality Incentive Program and the program's federal matching contribution percentage.

CLIMATE INITIATIVES

- NASDA recommends creating additional investments in research, incentive programs for voluntary practices and technical assistance resources that equip more farmers and ranchers with additional options to protect and conserve natural resources through farming practices.
- NASDA supports compensating farmers and ranchers already using climate-smart strategies to reduce emissions, sequester carbon and improve resiliency.

WATER QUALITY

- NASDA encourages Congress to create incentives for state and local governments to invest in outcome-based water quality programs.

FARM BILL



CYBER SECURITY

NASDA supports maintaining the Comprehensive Food Safety Training Network at the authorized level of \$20 million a year. Cyberattacks pose risks of serious harm to agricultural businesses including financial losses, loss of confidential business information and intellectual property and disruptions to our nation's food supply.

FOOD SAFETY

The Food Safety Modernization Act overhauled American food safety regulation from response-driven to preventive and farm-focused. The next farm bill should provide resources to assist farmers in complying with the law.

HEMP

NASDA recommends amending the federal definition of hemp to increase the total THC concentration to one percent or less. Increasing the THC concentration to one percent would enable farmers to plant more seed varieties. This action also retains limits on THC concentration while giving farmers greater assurance their crop will be viable.

INVASIVE SPECIES

NASDA endorses an increase in funding for the highly successful "Plant Pest and Disease Management & Disaster Prevention" and the "National Clean Plant Network" programs that provide additional tools for domestic invasive species issues.

LOCAL FOOD SYSTEMS

FOOD PROCUREMENT EFFICIENCY

- The farm bill must include supply chain solutions that create increased equity in food systems for socially disadvantaged as well as black, indigenous and people of color in the agricultural community.

FARM TO SCHOOL GRANT PROGRAM

- NASDA supports increasing flexibility for participating schools to increase direct purchases of local products outside of the school food service contract. This will increase direct purchasing power and stimulate the local economy. This will also increase opportunities for local farmers and ranchers to participate in Farm to School programs.

GUS SCHUMACHER NUTRITION INCENTIVE PROGRAM

- NASDA recommends increasing the number of farmers markets and other authorized retailers that accept SNAP benefits as a means of encouraging participants to provide consumers with a greater volume and variety of fruits and vegetables while supporting local farmers.

SPECIALTY CROP BLOCK GRANT

NASDA recommends increasing funding for the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program while ensuring a flexible, locally responsive and state-led program.

TRADE PROMOTION

NASDA supports increasing the Market Access Program that promotes American grown and made food and agricultural products that are in competition with heavily subsidized foreign products. According to an Economic Impact Study of USDA Export Market Development Programs, for every one dollar invested in export market development programs, \$24 is returned in export revenue.

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FOOD SYSTEMS

STRENGTHENING
U.S. REGIONAL FOOD
SYSTEMS, SUPPLY
CHAINS AND NUTRITION
SECURITY

Strengthening the connectivity within supply chains not only creates new market opportunities for small, medium-sized, and beginning farmers but also bolsters rural economies and improves access to nutrient-dense foods. NASDA supports science-based policies and food safety standards, urging policymakers to uphold evidence-based dietary recommendations that promote safe, healthy food for all.



*Scan to learn more about
NASDA's Food Systems
policy.*



BACKGROUND

Connecting local agriculture to regional feeding programs addresses food insecurity and public health challenges while generating new market opportunities, especially for small, medium-sized and beginning farmers. **Policies that enhance connections between regional food systems and nutrition security can support food systems in a variety of important ways:**

- **Strengthening Supply Chain and Regional Food System Resiliency:** USDA's Regional Food Business Centers and the Regional Food Systems Initiative have shown that linking local and regional food systems with nutrition security creates market opportunities for small and medium-sized farmers while enhancing supply chain resilience. NASDA supports programs like these as they are vital for improving supply chain infrastructure and advancing smaller-scale farmers.
- **Increasing Nutrition Security:** Initiatives that connect local agriculture with federal and regional feeding programs reduce food insecurity and improve public health.
- **Preventing Food Waste and Crop Loss:** NASDA advocates for policies and programs that prevent surplus foods and crops from becoming waste, increase flexible and regional solutions for food procurement and redistribution of surplus crops into nutrition security programs. NASDA also works to support farmers and food processors in offsetting distribution costs to expand access to charitable food programs and ensure excess food reaches communities in need.
- **Prioritizing Public Health via Regional Foods in "Food as Medicine" Initiatives:** NASDA recognizes the significant potential at the intersection of regional food systems and growing interest and demand from healthcare to prevent and promote health and wellness and consumers through increased access and consumption of nutrient-dense foods. NASDA supports policies and programs that bolster opportunities for local and regional food systems to provide nutrient-dense foods into these growing public health-focused initiatives.

FOOD SYSTEMS

STRENGTHENING
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NASDA POLICY ASKS

NASDA advocates for continued and increased investments in nutrition and food assistance programs to combat national food insecurity, bolster local and regional food systems and improve public health outcomes.

- 1. Strengthen the Resiliency of Regional Food Systems & Supply Chains:** Support programs that connect local and regional food systems with nutrition security initiatives. NASDA urges Congress to prioritize policies that enhance the resiliency and adaptability of food supply chains, ensuring they can withstand and recover from disruptions.
- 2. Promote Public Health Through Nutrition Security:** Expand policies and programs that ensure all communities have access to affordable, nutrient-dense foods, promoting better health and well-being.
- 3. Enhance Administrative Support & Flexibility at the State and Implementation Level:** Increase funding and resources for programs that allow states to implement tailored solutions, addressing the specific food security challenges faced by different regions.
- 4. Strengthen Procurement Opportunities for Local & Regional Food Systems in Nutrition Assistance Programs:** Enact policies that facilitate greater local procurement within federal feeding programs, enabling communities to integrate regionally sourced foods into nutrition assistance programs more effectively.

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PESTICIDE REGULATIONS



Predictable, enforceable, science-based pesticide regulatory frameworks are essential to achieving food security, minimizing impacts to the environment and endangered species, and meeting agricultural sustainability goals. NASDA encourages the U.S. EPA to adopt the best available science and adhere to FIFRA's risk-benefit mandate when registering new pesticide products and re-registering existing pesticide products.

With respect to the Endangered Species Act Workplan, NASDA encourages the EPA to develop a robust compliance strategy that meaningfully incorporates concerns raised by state departments of agriculture about its current enforceability challenges.



*Scan to learn more
about NASDA's pesticide
regulations policy work.*

BACKGROUND

EPA AND ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT BACKGROUND

Under the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act, the EPA is required to assess a wide variety of potential human health and environmental effects when considering a pesticide product for registration or re-registration. Under EPA's Endangered Species Protection Program, the Agency must also evaluate if the pesticide "may affect" a listed species or designated critical habitat, as determined by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service under the Endangered Species Act. If so, a lengthy and intensive consultation process between EPA and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is triggered.

EPA has struggled to keep up with its increasingly demanding ESA workload for years. Consequently, EPA has faced escalating, often successful, legal challenges alleging that the EPA has failed to comply with its FIFRA obligations with respect to ESA. In 2022, in response to these challenges, EPA published "Balancing Wildlife Protection and Responsible Pesticide Use," known as the ESA Workplan.

The ESA Workplan constitutes EPA's efforts to develop a systematic, holistic approach to bringing its pesticide regulations under ESA-FIFRA compliance. To date, under the ESA Workplan, EPA has published a final Herbicide Strategy, a draft Insecticide Strategy, a final Rodenticide Biological Evaluation, and a final Vulnerable Species Pilot Project. A draft Fungicide Strategy is also expected in 2025.

NASDA INVOLVEMENT

In 43 states and Puerto Rico, the state department of agriculture is a co-regulatory partner with EPA and is responsible for administering, implementing and enforcing the production, labeling, distribution, sale, use and disposal of pesticides under FIFRA.

As co-regulators, NASDA represents a uniquely critical perspective in the pesticide regulatory space. Our priorities and recommendations are grounded in a commitment to developing regulatory policies that are science-based, transparent and enforceable.

PESTICIDE REGULATIONS



REGULATORY ACTION

NASDA is grateful for the significant time and energy EPA has dedicated to bringing its pesticide regulations into ESA-FIFRA compliance and we respect the difficulty of designing a novel and holistic approach to achieve this goal.

Nevertheless, as identified in submitted public comments on the draft versions of the published strategies, NASDA remains deeply concerned that the proposed mitigation measures are overly restrictive and lack transparency. Compliance will be prohibitively costly for growers, reasonable enforcement will be unworkable for state lead agencies, and there are insufficient resources for training and education, among many other issues.

- [NASDA Comments on Draft Herbicide Strategy](#)
- [NASDA Comments on Draft Insecticide Strategy](#)
- [NASDA Comments on Draft Vulnerable Listed Species Pilot Project](#)

NASDA POLICY

Pesticides are an essential component within many agricultural and horticultural crop production systems that result in the production of a safe, abundant and affordable food supply. Pesticides are also critical tools in a variety of public health activities. NASDA supports the scientifically-sound development, review, registration and re-registration of crop protection technologies and uses to enable growers to produce our nation's food, fiber and fuel. In situations where requirements of other environmental statutes overlap with FIFRA, NASDA supports incorporating those requirements into the FIFRA registration process in a science-based, transparent manner that allows for the complete examination of the risks and benefits of the proposed action.

NASDA believes EPA and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service must establish a collaborative, transparent and streamlined consultation process for pesticide registrations. The process should include clearly communicated criteria between EPA and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, be based on the best available science and eliminate any duplicative steps. Any decisions made between the agencies should not place unreasonable requirements on registrants and farmers and should include adequate time for implementation and robust opportunities for input from state departments of agriculture and other stakeholders.

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PFAS

Per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances

Per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are steadily emerging as a hazard to U.S. farmers and ranchers. Federal agencies should work with state departments of agriculture to support farmers in managing risk and keep agricultural operations safely productive and economically viable.



*Scan to learn more about
NASDA's PFAS policy
work.*



BACKGROUND

PFAS are a large group of synthetic fluorinated chemicals that do not fully degrade in the environment. Historically, PFAS chemicals have been widely used in consumer products that are stain, oil, heat and water resistant. Federal and state agencies are increasingly studying the impact of PFAS on humans, the food supply and the environment. Federal and state governments are also studying means to remedy agricultural land impacted by PFAS.

Does PFAS impact our food supply?

- The U.S. food supply is among the safest in the world. To date, most food does not have a detectable level of PFAS, according to the FDA. States and federal partners are working to test food grown in specific geographic areas with known PFAS contamination.
- No PFAS have been detected in over 97% of the fresh and processed foods tested from the FDA's Total Diet Study, which began in 2019. While the safety of the food supply is not of concern, site and community-specific impacts must be addressed to protect the health of farmers, farmworkers and others with direct exposure to PFAS.
- Continued research and additional analyses of foods, including animal food, will help inform state and federal partners' efforts to identify and prioritize activities in understanding the threshold levels of PFAS in food.

PFAS in Biosolids

- There have been three primary management practices for biosolids – the solid matter left at the end of the wastewater treatment process – use and disposal: land application, incinerations and placement in solid waste landfills.
- The benefits of using biosolids as soil amendments are similar to those provided by animal manures. Biosolids provide crops with critical nutrients and organic matter. However, recent studies have shown that it is possible for PFAS to end up in biosolids.
- NASDA, in partnership with the EPA and Environmental Council of the States, jointly developed "[Principles for Preventing and Managing PFAS in Biosolids](#)." The principles highlight the importance of collaboration among state and federal environmental and agricultural agencies as the science and policy landscape evolves.

PFAS

Per- and poly-fluoroalkyl
substances



NASDA'S POLICY ASKS

- **NASDA supports developing strategies to remediate lands contaminated with PFAS** that allow farmers and ranchers to keep their agricultural land productive.
- **NASDA supports federal legislation that increases state funding and resources** for responding to identified and emerging toxic pollutants, particularly PFAS, impacting agricultural lands, groundwater, surface water, livestock and the nation's food supply.
- **NASDA encourages the development of a federal framework that collaboratively supports states** responding to PFAS and minimizes impacts on interstate commerce.
- **NASDA encourages using the best available science** and appropriate risk assessment in establishing any regulatory standards of threshold levels for PFAS in food products. We encourage complete toxicological evaluations and interpretations before any relevant federal agency releases the data.
- **NASDA supports robust financial support** for impacted farmers.
- **NASDA supports federally funding research for mitigation strategies** on the risk of PFAS contaminants in the food supply and cleanup efforts.

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STATE COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT FUNDING

Escalating budget shortfalls and drastic cuts from federal agencies to state agencies are an active reality. These reductions are resulting in widespread job losses at the state level, wiping out millions of dollars in investments made to train and maintain a state workforce. Additionally, the replacement of efficient, cost-effective state-run systems with more expensive, non-local federal personnel drives up federal costs and weakens essential prevention measures. This erosion of state programs and infrastructure is putting the integrity and security of the U.S. food supply at risk.



*Scan to learn more about
NASDA's cooperative
agreements policy.*



What are Cooperative Agreements?

Cooperative agreements are a collaborative funding instrument used by federal agencies to provide money to other entities for specific programs that benefit the public. Unlike grants, they involve shared responsibilities and active collaboration between federal agencies and recipient organizations (e.g., state governments, nonprofit organizations and universities). The use of fully funded cooperative agreements ensures successful and impactful outcomes, particularly in the vital areas of food safety, biosecurity and public health.

The Critical Role of State-Federal Partnerships in Prevention:

Cooperative agreements leverage state resources, which are more cost-effective than federal agencies conducting the same work. Federal agencies can save extensive amounts of money and labor.

Prevention of foodborne illnesses, disease outbreaks and other public health threats is a shared responsibility between state and federal agencies. The benefit of cooperative agreements is the close cooperation between state and federal agencies, enabling the effective implementation and monitoring of essential agricultural, food safety and biosecurity initiatives. Cooperative agreements allow federal agencies to ensure that local expertise and resources are available.

NASDA'S POLICY ASKS

NASDA urges Congress to restore and increase funding for cooperative agreements. By strengthening these state-federal partnerships, we can bolster the U.S. food system's resilience and security.

STATE COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT FUNDING



NASDA is particularly focused on three cooperative agreements requiring immediate attention:

FDA Cooperative Agreement: State & Local Food Safety Programs

States conduct 50% of human food processing inspections, 70% of animal food inspections and over 90% of produce safety inspections. Proposed cuts from \$117 million to \$83 million could reduce inspection capacity by 50%, increasing the risk of foodborne illness outbreaks and job losses.

- NASDA requests \$170 million for state and local Food Safety Regulatory Activities.
- NASDA asks Congress to include a line item along with the increased budget to detail specific funding for state and local food safety issues for the FDA to ensure they have the budgetary certainty needed to carry out their work. This includes:
 - Produce Safety Rule Implementation through the State Cooperative Agreement Program
 - Food Safety Outreach & Education Programs led by states
 - Including the Produce Safety Alliance administered by Cornell University.
 - Preventive Controls for Human Food Rule Implementation
 - Preventive Controls for Animal Food Rule Implementation

USDA FSIS Cooperative Agreement: State Meat & Poultry Inspection Programs

State inspections support small and medium-sized local slaughter facilities. Traditionally, USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service has provided state programs with a full 50% funding match for inspection activities. However, in recent years, USDA FSIS has been providing state programs with significantly less funding, challenging states' ability to provide inspection services. Funding reductions could lead to the closure of these facilities and disruptions in local markets.

- NASDA requests \$75 million for State Food Safety and Inspection, a \$3.4 million increase to maintain state inspection programs.

USDA APHIS Cooperative Agreement: Animal Disease Protection

State agencies are crucial in combating and protecting against diseases such as highly pathogenic avian influenza, foot and mouth disease and African swine fever. States are critical partners and are often the frontlines for prevention, surveillance, early detection, management and, ultimately, eradication of foreign animal disease. Budget cuts would limit disease surveillance and rapid response capabilities, increasing the risk of disease outbreaks.

- NASDA requests \$400 million for Animal Health Programs, which is a 1.75% increase to support animal disease prevention and response efforts.

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