

**Contact:**

Sarah Grace Fowler  
Director, Communications  
(202) 296-9680  
[sarah.fowler@nasda.org](mailto:sarah.fowler@nasda.org)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
February 3, 2026

**The National Association of State Departments of Agriculture sets its federal policy focus for 2026**

WASHINGTON, D.C. — NASDA's members-led Board of Directors chose five issues to serve as the organization's primary policy focus for 2026. They include [agricultural labor reform](#), [animal disease preparedness and traceability](#), the [farm bill](#), [pesticide regulations](#), and [regional food procurement and distribution](#). NASDA President, Commissioner Amanda Beal, remarked on the impact NASDA will have for farmers and communities with these priorities.

"As the nonpartisan, member-led association representing state departments of agriculture, we sit at a unique intersection, where federal policy meets on-the-ground implementation, where national priorities meet local realities," Beal said. "These priorities are grounded in what works, what farmers need, and what states know. We will work urgently to address the opportunities these policy priorities represent."

NASDA CEO Ted McKinney remarked on the significance of these issues for 2026.

"NASDA members have designated these priorities as critical to farmers, ranchers and consumers nationwide," McKinney said. "They also represent key areas where state departments of agriculture are uniquely positioned to lead policy solutions and serve communities across their states."

NASDA has [published one-pagers](#) offering background and insight for each policy priority.

**Agricultural Labor Reform**

All segments of American agriculture are hindered by critical labor shortages, artificially high costs associated with the H-2A program, and other regulatory barriers to a full and skilled agricultural workforce. NASDA is imploring Congress and federal agencies to establish an agricultural labor policy framework that provides a legal, reliable workforce and treats workers with respect.

**Animal Disease Preparedness & Traceability**

State departments of agriculture, along with other federal and state partners, are responsible for tracking, responding and containing outbreaks of animal diseases in their states to protect the livestock industry, and more broadly, the U.S. food supply. NASDA's policy positions advocate for establishing strong animal health programs that could save billions of dollars of losses in the future from economically devastating diseases.

**Farm Bill**

The upcoming farm bill must be dedicated to supporting American agriculture and essential food and nutrition assistance programs. This bill shapes agricultural policy, supports farmers, ensures food security and promotes sustainable natural resource management.

**Pesticide Regulations**

A predictable, enforceable, science- and risk-based pesticide regulatory framework is essential for maintaining agricultural productivity while minimizing adverse impacts on human health, the environment and endangered species. To this end, NASDA supports state primacy in the enforcement of



National Association of State Departments of Agriculture  
4350 North Fairfax Drive, #810  
Arlington, VA 22203  
Tel: 202-296-9680  
[www.nasda.org](http://www.nasda.org)

pesticide activities under the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act and calls on Congress for appropriate and sustained funding for state lead agencies as co-regulatory partners with EPA.

#### **Regional Food Procurement & Distribution**

NASDA will advocate for policies that strengthen regional food systems through infrastructure investments, flexible state purchasing programs, and expanded institutional procurement of local foods to support the viability of small and medium-sized farms and nutritional outcomes.



*NASDA President, Maine Agriculture Commissioner Amanda Beal, shares NASDA's 2026 policy priorities during the 2026 Winter Policy Conference.*

###

NASDA is a nonpartisan, nonprofit association which represents the elected and appointed commissioners, secretaries, and directors of the departments of agriculture in all 50 states and four U.S. territories. NASDA grows and enhances American food and agricultural communities through policy, partnerships and public engagement.



National Association of State Departments of Agriculture  
4350 North Fairfax Drive, #810  
Arlington, VA 22203  
Tel: 202-296-9680  
[www.nasda.org](http://www.nasda.org)