



OHIO FARM BUREAU FEDERATION

**Agriculture for Good Government**

POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE

**1. What is the appropriate role of the government in assuring Americans continue to have access to a safe, affordable and abundant food supply?**



Politicians on the far right and far left criticize the Farm Bill and farm policy and often vote to undermine critical components of the farm safety net. I reject those extreme arguments, including from members of my own party. Since I came to the Senate, I have worked to improve the farm safety net for Ohio farmers and seek bipartisan consensus to benefit Ohio's agricultural economy. During the 2018 Farm Bill debate--I was proud to add my vote to that of 87 of my colleagues to support the bipartisan legislation negotiated by Republican Senate Agriculture

Committee Chair Pat Roberts. I would note that the 13 votes opposing the Farm Bill all came from Republicans Senators.

We must continue to reject extreme partisan ideology--especially when Ohio's economy and our nation's food security is at stake. That is why I will continue to fight for Ohio farmers and work with colleagues across the aisle including Republican Senators John Thune from South Dakota, Chuck Grassley from Iowa, Roger Marshall from Kansas, and Mike Braun from Indiana to enact common sense legislation that works for Ohio including the farm bill, support for biofuels, tax credits for methane digesters on dairy farms, and additional dollars for voluntary conservation programs, among many others.

American farmers are the best in the world. America feeds the world, and we do so because of the hard work, ingenuity, land stewardship, and perseverance of American farmers. Government policy and programs don't get the crops planted, the cows milked, or the hay raked, but the government has a role to play in supporting American farmers and American food production through targeted voluntary and incentive-based policies and programs.

Government investments during the Great Depression helped bring electricity to rural Ohioans -- and continue to support rural electric co-ops today. Without the federal Morrill Act, there would have never been the Ohio Agricultural and Mechanical College -- the predecessor to The Ohio State University -- our state's flagship institution of higher education. Without the Smith-Lever Act of 1914, Ohioans wouldn't have access to cooperative extension which has opened new opportunities for farmers and farm communities. Refrigeration enabled farmers to cool and store their milk -- enabling larger herds and greater production. Telephones connected farmers with one another and with brokers and dealers. And cooperative extension helps farmers improve yields, fight disease, and discover new crops and enterprises. Smart, focused government programs have time and again stepped in when markets have failed or weather disasters destroy crops providing farmers with a safety net and consumers with a reliable food supply.



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Government can support farmers. It should not get in the way of them, and it can never replace them.

Today, effective government policies and programs support best practices, help create new markets -- at home and abroad -- and assist farmers when weather disasters arise. Farmers are the original environmentalists, and government policies and programs are supporting farmers by helping to promote best practices that keep runoff out of Lake Erie. Government policies help promote new markets at home and abroad. For instance, The Renewable Fuels Standard supports American energy independence while providing domestic corn and soybean producers with a valuable market for their crops. Market access programs help farmers sell their product overseas -- increasing profits and reducing our agricultural trade deficit. And as any good farmer knows "nature bats last" and that's why smart, responsive, and agile safety net programs are essential.

Finally, as we know, our farmers have to compete with nations and corporations that don't always play by the rules. When farmers face corporate consolidation, unfair foreign subsidies, or foreign trade barriers, they need the government to help foster fair and competitive markets.

**2. By the end of 2025 many of the provisions of the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act will have expired or will expire. Many of these provisions have benefited farmers and ranchers since the enactment of this legislation. What are your thoughts on future tax packages? Do these provisions need to be renewed or is there a different course of action you would take to help promote agriculture?**

No family farmer should lose their farm because of tax policy. Family farms belong with the family that has worked the land for generations. Furthermore, no family should have to hire fancy accountants and financial planners to keep their farm where it belongs -- in the family.

Farmers are fiscally responsible. They save for the future and only borrow when doing so is a smart investment that makes them more competitive and resilient. Borrowing to buy a new combine or erect a new pole barn while expensive, increases long-term revenue and profitability. Government must be similarly focused. Tax and spending policy should make our nation more efficient and prosperous. Tax cuts that benefit the wealthy few and do not support national prosperity should be rejected.

As we consider tax policy, I will support policies that protect family farms. Additionally, I will work to rewrite our tax code to support and build markets for farmers. For example, tax policy has helped to grow the market for biofuels and in future tax packages should be used to improve and extend tax credits that support the production and use of biofuels made with domestic



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agricultural products. Future tax packages also present opportunities to support new emerging markets for agricultural commodities, such as renewable chemicals. I am also interested in other ways tax policy can support farmers and rural communities such as changes to the tax code that help beginning farmers access land and grow their operations and promote responsible conservation practices. Smart credits could also support the next generation of farmers. And Ohioans across the state want clean water and soil – I want to explore how tax policy can help support and reward farmers who protect these invaluable resources.

**3. The past few years have been difficult for the agricultural industry with a \$107 billion annual increase in farm production expenses, a \$80 billion drop in US net farm income, and two straight years of a trade deficit. What, if any, checks and balances should be placed on federal agencies to prevent additional administrative burdens on agriculture operations? Should there be federal legislation that prevents states from implementing regulations that have national ramifications on agriculture (i.e. California's climate disclosure rule/Prop 12)?**

Farmers have faced a myriad of challenges the past few years – and the rising cost of inputs and the increasing ag trade deficit are primary among them. Both must be tackled directly. We tackle input costs by cutting our foreign energy dependence and supporting an all-of-the-above, American-produced energy policy. We tackle input cost by producing fertilizers in America and Canada – not Russia and China. We must reduce our ag trade deficit by supporting American foods at home and abroad. Bills like my bipartisan American Food for American Schools Act and my decades-long work on local foods help ensure that schools and families have healthy food options that use products grown and produced in Ohio. Promoting market access programs means people around the world are buying food grown and processed in Ohio.

Reducing input costs and finding new markets are of fundamental importance. But that doesn't mean there isn't red tape to be cut and processes to be improved. USDA programs work but farmers have to deal with an alphabet soup of USDA agencies. One farmer dealing with one field may have to deal with FSA, NRCS, Farm Credit, and the EPA to apply for and comply with all eligible programs. We can and should take steps to ensure federal programs are as responsive and flexible as the farmers using them. And this means that federal regulations - not state regulations or ballot initiatives - should form the basis of American agricultural policies. Fifty states seeking to impose 50 different policies on the American farmer is a recipe for chaos. Such an approach undermines settled expectations and only confuses farmers. In fact, in the last Farm Bill I worked with both Iowa senators to make federal conservation programs easier to use for farmers and focused on what best improves the environment.



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**4. In November 2023, congress passed an extension to the 2018 Farm Bill that is set to expire on September 30th of this year. Do you support the passage of a 5-year farm bill? Are there any provisions in the current legislation you would like to see passed or provisions that give you concerns?**

My approach to the Farm Bill has been simple: I listen to Ohio farmers because the best ideas come from Ohio. The first thing I did after joining the Senate Agriculture Committee was to meet with Ohio farmers and listen to their concerns and ideas. During such a meeting on the farm of Mark Schweibert outside of Napoleon, we discussed the need for a market-oriented revenue protection program, thus the idea for the ARC program was born. After ARC became law, I was proud to receive the National Corn Growers Association's prestigious President's Award for my work.

Historically, the biggest divisions on the Committee have been regional, not partisan. Because of that fact, I have been able to work with other Midwestern Senators to fight for Ohio. The results speak for themselves: No Ohio senator has done more in the Farm Bill than I have. Because of the ARC program, which John Thune (R-SD) and I wrote together, Ohio farmers have a revenue-based risk management tool to support them when either yields or prices unexpectedly fall. Sen. Grassley (R-IA) and I worked to make sure that farm payments go to farmers, not Wall Street investors. I also worked with Sen. Grassley and Sen. Ernst (R-IA) to improve conservation programs to better support local farmers. I helped create the Regional Conservation Partnership Program that seeks to support farmers while improving the health of the Western Lake Erie basin. Similarly, my work on local foods means that more Ohioans can buy eggs, meat, dairy products, and produce produced in Ohio — whether Bill Patterson's apples or salad greens from 80 Acres Farms in Hamilton.

This approach hasn't changed since I began on the Committee and the current Senate Farm Bill discussion draft includes many items that will benefit Ohio farms – and I worked to ensure that the ideas I heard from Ohio farmers were included. As I look to finish the next Farm Bill, I want to build upon all that we've achieved for Ohio farmers and rural communities in previous farm bills, but also address some important issues we have not tackled sufficiently in the past. Specifically, I am concerned about the lack of oversight into the acquisition of farm land and interests by foreign entities. I am working to increase oversight of foreign investors buying U.S. farmland, particularly by adversaries like China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea. As Chair of the Senate Banking and Housing Committee, I have oversight of the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States (CFIUS), which examines certain foreign investments in the U.S. My desire is to see USDA play a greater role in the CFIUS process.

I have also heard from farm families, rural mayors, and rural small businesses about how the lack of access to affordable and quality child care in rural communities is a barrier to economic



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growth. In response to hearing about these challenges from Ohioans, I worked with an Ohio State professor, who is an expert on rural child care issues, and the Ohio Farm Bureau to introduce legislation with Sen. Marshall (R-KS) that would provide the USDA with new tools to increase access to quality child care. That bill is in the draft Senate Farm Bill.

Working with Ohio State University, I have worked to include new programming aimed at supporting research efforts to develop cutting-edge tools for precision agriculture that will help farmers do more with less, be better stewards of the land, and lower input costs. There are funds to support Ohio's two land grant universities, and we have been successful in our efforts to protect and improve crop insurance in a fiscally-responsible manner. However, one of the biggest deficiencies in the Senate Democratic draft is the Chair's failure to double the funds for market access and development. I will work to fix this failure.