

2017 AGRICULTURE POLICY STATEMENT

Agriculture is, as always, a foundation of America's economy, providing directly, or indirectly through value-added processing, currently approximately 5.7% of our Gross Domestic Product (GDP). For 150 years the National Grange has been working to improve agriculture in America, and the welfare of those who work the soil or care for the creatures of the field. Our roots are in agriculture and our future is tied to our faith in the perennial cycle of planting and harvest.

Conservation of our soil, water and air quality remains a priority for the Grange, keeping in mind that all pertinent regulations should reflect local conditions. A key component of the future security of our water supply for both domestic and agricultural uses is the ability to store it. Challenges from environmental groups and climate change have brought progress in that area to a standstill. The National Grange will continue to promote water storage projects that benefit agricultural and domestic needs while appropriately safeguarding fish and wildlife safety concerns.

Agricultural producers have been leaders in protecting the environment. The National Grange urges Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) agencies to implement Nutrient Management Plans (NMP's). Good soil health, including proper nutrient management is a priority and we encourage all farmers to develop and follow a Nutrient Management Plan to insure that no more nutrients are applied than are needed to grow the crop.

The National Grange recognizes that other additional challenges facing producers are the precipitous drop in commodity prices coupled with ever-rising cost of inputs and the yearly increases in property taxes. We will continue to work on solutions to help minimize their impact on the agriculture sector. The National Grange continues to monitor issues concerning GMO-related food production and labeling. The National Grange supports voluntary labeling of Genetically Modified products. We further request that the National Grange Legislative Director share the latest reliable research on this subject with State Granges on a continual basis. As consumers become more concerned about where and how their food is produced, the National Organic Program (NOP) has become more popular. The National Grange supports the continued growth and federal support for the NOP, in order to meet the increasing consumer demand for organic food products.

Support for Country of Origin Labeling (COOL) is a long-standing position of the National Grange and is favored by consumers. We support voluntary labeling programs that provide clear information about country of origin and processing so that consumers can make informed choices about the food they feed their families.

Food safety continues to be a significant issue for Americans in light of the ever-increasing amount of our food that is imported. We believe the responsibility for all food safety inspection should fall under one federal agency, preferably the US Department of Agriculture. Healthy bee populations are critical to food production in the US. We are pleased that the USDA has information available to assist first-time beekeepers in learning how to begin production. The National Grange supports ongoing efforts to preserve proven bee health practices, while

identifying new pesticide crop treatments that are not harmful to bee populations. Although Neonics are a critical component of seed treatments, their misuse via over-the-counter products has resulted in their increasing presence in water and wetlands. Their toxic effect on bee populations has reached the point where we feel it is time to consider designating Neonics as a restricted use pesticide.

The use of drone or UAV (Unmanned Aerial Vehicle) technology is rapidly becoming an important tool for agricultural production. However, privacy concerns have arisen as drones have become more popular. The National Grange supports the implementation of developed FAA (Federal Aviation Administration) regulations governing the use of drones, and will continue to work with USDA, FAA and other agricultural organizations to address issues related to drone use as they pertain to agriculture.

The National Grange continues to support extensive research by our Land Grant Colleges and Universities into both short-term and long-term effects on the environment and on human nutrition, of all new crops, whether Genetically-Modified or traditionally bred. One of the major issues facing animal agriculture in our country is the effort for certain "Animal Rights" groups to define "Humane Treatment" of animals. The National Grange should work together with other like groups, to ensure that sound science is used in determining humane treatment of animals.

The National Grange strongly supports agriculture education at all levels including agriculture science as well as Cooperative Extension Service and encourages the partnership between 4-H, FFA and Cooperative Extension Service to draw on and develop leadership abilities. Adequate funding of Extension must be continued and increased if we wish to ensure the availability of innovative practices and new tools beneficial to agriculture and society. We support educational programs, such as Farm to Table or Farm to School, that teach the importance of proper diet and nutrition. It is more critical now than ever to help consumers understand the basic food system, where their food comes from, and what, if any genetic-alteration was integral to its development. It is vital that we encourage the younger generation to enter into farming. We support programs or policies that will enhance the ability of young farmers to be successful as they pursue production agriculture as an occupation. Opportunities exist to expand agricultural tourism as an additional source of income for farm families. The National Grange urges government at all levels to remove unnecessary laws and regulations that hamper its expansion.

As production agriculture becomes more dependent on computer technology, access to high speed internet has become critical to farming and marketing activities. The National Grange strongly supports expanded funding efforts necessary to develop high-speed internet access in rural areas that are currently under-served.

The National Grange recommends that the 2018 Farm Bill address several issues. Among them is the USDA Margin Protection Program (MPP), which has not been an adequate safety net for dairy farmers, and does not properly calculate the milk margin over feed price in various regions of the United States. We recommend that it be addressed in the next farm bill so as to correct its current deficiencies. The National Grange also strongly supports retaining adequate

levels of financial support for the USDA Risk Management Division and the Federal Crop Insurance Program (FCI) so that coverages accurately reflect cost of production, provide adequate price protection, yet insure that premiums remain affordable. Disaster Relief programs are also a critical component of farm income safety nets and must be addressed in the 2018 farm bill. We also strongly urge that provisions are made to adequately address the needs for a reliable source of seasonal as well as year-round farm labor.

Individual incomes in developing countries are rising, leading to changes in diet that will increase demands on the world's food supply even as population growth adds its inevitable impact. Cooperative nonpartisan effort is the "Grange way," and an understanding of the direct relationship between science and the natural world will be required, to answer the question "How will we feed them all?" It is a well-known fact that a strong agriculture makes a strong country.