



**Missouri Farmers Union
Policy Statement**

As accepted by

**MFU Membership
at the January 31, 2009 Convention**

1 **MISSION STATEMENT**

2 To protect and enhance the economic interests and way of life of family farmers and
3 ranchers and the rural communities they represent.

4
5 **PREAMBLE**

6 We, the members of the Missouri Farmers Union, strive to achieve and implement the
7 fundamental agricultural principles necessary for a domestically produced food supply
8 system and an independently owned family farm structure.

9
10 The goals of the Missouri Farmers Union come from our experiences as family farmers and
11 rural citizens, our understanding of God and the laws of nature, as well as a love for our
12 country and a deep respect for past, present, and future generations.

13
14 We believe cooperation comes from knowledge of, and respect for, other people and
15 cultures. Our spirit of cooperation must continue to grow and not have limits. Our
16 challenge is to take this knowledge and spirit and incorporate it into meaningful policy
17 through legislation on local, state, and national levels.

18
19 We believe justice demands an independently owned, family farm system as the foundation
20 for healthy rural communities and proper stewardship of all natural resources.

21
22 We believe strong and productive family farm agriculture is essential to our national
23 security and should be a priority when formulating national security policy.

24
25 This document springs from the spirit of Missouri family farmers and ranchers, and all
26 those that make up the Missouri Farmers Union.

27
28 **FOUNDATIONS OF A FOOD AND AGRICULTURE POLICY**

29 Missouri Farmers Union recognizes that food is a universal human right and must be made
30 available for all people. We support agricultural policy that is directed towards and
31 beneficial to independently owned and operated family farms. An agriculture program
32 should provide stability and fairness as well as:

- 33 • Ensure an adequate and safe food supply system for all people
 - 34 • Promote links between family farm producers, and consumers
 - 35 • Enhance the potential for profitability through appropriate legislative and
36 regulatory mechanisms
 - 37 • Direct farm program benefits toward family farming operations
 - 38 • Allow planting flexibility for farmers and ranchers
 - 39 • Promote adequate land stewardship and conservation practices
 - 40 • Enable producers to derive farm income from the market place
 - 41 • Provide an adequate economic safety net
 - 42 • Include livestock producers in food and farm policy and programs
 - 43 • Promote effective inventory management programs
 - 44 • Promote programs that will allow the entrance of young and beginning farmers into
45 family farming
 - 46 • Protect the traditional and historical right of farmers to save their own plant and
47 animal life for reproduction
- 48

49 **AGRICULTURE LABOR**

50 The National Labor Relations Act should be extended to workers on corporate and other
51 farms that employ enough hired help to be subject to the federal minimum wage provisions
52 applicable to agricultural workers.

- 53 • Strengthen worker protection standards regarding wage rates, health, safety and
54 housing conditions for migrant, seasonal, minority and other farm laborers and for
55 education of their children.

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57 **BIOTECHNOLOGY**

58 Genetically modified organisms (GMOs) have created a series of ethical, environmental,
59 food safety, legal, market, and structural issues that impact everyone in the food chain.
60 Consumer and producer concerns must be addressed.

- 61 • Restrict the release of new biotechnology-based products predicated on the
62 "precautionary principle" and release only those products that have proven
63 beneficial effects for family farmers, consumers and the environment
- 64 • Increase monitoring and surveillance by government regulatory agencies over
65 biotechnology
- 66 • Maintain genetic biodiversity and the purity of the gene pool
- 67 • Support mandatory labeling that lists specific types of GMO's in a product
- 68 • Oppose the release of biotechnology that has not been FDA approved for human
69 consumption or that is detrimental to the export market
- 70
- 71 • Support legislation that protects farmers from liability and awards them real and
72 punitive damages resulting from biotechnology contamination due to industry
73 negligence
- 74 • Support the recall of all GMO products that have not met the "precautionary
75 principal," and full review.

76
77 **CLIMATE CHANGE AND CARBON SEQUESTRATION**

78 Missouri Farmers Union is concerned about the possible effects of climate change and
79 believes further research and analysis is necessary to determine its impact.

- 80 • Support farmer and rancher consultation as the U.S. moves forward to reduce its
81 emission of greenhouse gases;
- 82 • Support carbon sequestration as an innovative way to enhance income for producers
83 and protect our environment. Therefore, the trading of carbon credits and the
84 potential for inclusion of carbon sequestration as an agricultural conservation
85 practice for green payments should be encouraged;
- 86 • Support carbon sequestration research that is not biased toward a single practice,
87 such as no-till, and instead encompasses other agricultural practices, including
88 grazing lands, energy feedstock production, organic cropping, wood lots, the
89 Conservation Reserve Program and other proven conservation methods;
- 90 • Support the continuation and expansion of the Chicago Climate Exchange as a way to
91 compensate farmers and ranchers for sequestering carbon; and
- 92 • Support a national mandatory carbon emission cap and trade system to reduce
93 greenhouse gas emissions.

94

95 **CONCENTRATION**

96 Consolidation of multi-national food/agribusinesses threatens the existence of family
97 farmers and healthy rural communities as well as a safe food supply

- 98 • Enact a moratorium on approval of mega-agribusiness mergers
- 99 • Reenact provisions similar to those contained in the 1921 Packers and Stockyards
100 Act, and provide funding adequate for full enforcement
- 101 • Urge Congress to increase funding for anti-trust and P&S enforcement
- 102 • Prevent any company or cooperative, including farmer-owned coops, from requiring
103 farmers to accept bundled grain and livestock input sources
- 104 • Enact legislation that establishes a level of concentration that is prima facie proof
105 of antitrust violation
- 106 • Support legislation to amend the Clayton Antitrust Act to make it clear that a
107 person who suffers indirect as well as direct harm can recover damages for any
108 anti-competitive practice
- 109 • Explore anti-trust remedies to prevent concentration on the global level for
110 companies doing business in the U.S.
- 111 • Oppose joint ventures or mergers between cooperative lenders and multi-national
112 corporations

113

114 **CONSERVATION**

115 Family farmers have a responsibility to maintain and improve the quality of their soil and
116 water resources. MFU should work to achieve the mutually beneficial objectives of proper
117 stewardship and the maintenance of family farm agriculture.

- 118 • Support full funding and implementation of the Conservation Security Program as
119 passed in the 2002 Farm Bill
- 120 • Encourage participation by family farmers and family farm advocates on the State
121 Technical Committee
- 122 • Support targeting of Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) payments to
123 small and medium sized farms and ranches
- 124 • Support making all farm and ranch programs readily and easily accessible by family
125 farmers and ranchers
- 126 • Support statewide programs that promote and assist sustainable agriculture
- 127 • Initiate a collaborative effort to develop an effective and balanced policy for the
128 Missouri River

129

130 **CONTRACTS**

131 Currently production and marketing contracts contribute to the captive supply of
132 agricultural products and threaten the existence of independent producers.

- 133 • Support policies that protect farmers who contract
- 134 • Protect contracting poultry farmers' rights under Grain Inspection, Packers and
135 Stockyards Administration (GIPSA.)
- 136 • Provide publicly open/posted contracts through USDA and the Dept. of Justice for
137 all commodities and livestock to include poultry and private marketing agreements
- 138 • Provide independent producers with legal counseling when contractors have violated
139 their contract
- 140 • Support agricultural fair practices through federal bargaining legislation
- 141 • Provide a fair trial before a jury of peers rather than mandated arbitration

- 142 • Award producers just compensation in the event a company (contractor) cancels a
143 contract through no fault of the producer
144

145 **COOPERATIVES**

146 The purpose of a coop is to serve all its members. Family farmer owned cooperatives are an
147 effective tool through which family farmers reduce the costs of production, maintain a
148 reliable source of inputs and effectively market and process farm products.

- 149 • Oppose cooperative involvement in production agriculture in ways that put coops in
150 adverse competition with their family farmer/producer owners
151 • Urge coop owners/members to provide the education, leadership and management
152 necessary to effectively run local coops
153 • Encourage the organization and growth of community credit unions as an effective
154 means of rural reinvestment and re-vitalization
155 • Enhance access to capital for community-based cooperatives and other farmer
156 controlled entities that engage in value-added activity that sustains Missouri farm
157 families and rural communities
158 • Promote the development of broadband communication cooperatives that would
159 provide the opportunity for access by all rural residents
160 • Encourage the formation of value-added cooperative efforts that are formed for
161 the welfare of the local community; that are producer owned; controlled through
162 democratic processes and leadership; and whose business affairs are responsive to,
163 and for the benefit of all its members.
164

165 **COUNTRY-OF-ORIGIN LABELING**

166 We believe consumers should have the information to make informed decisions about the
167 origins of their food.

- 168 • Support mandatory country of origin labeling for all food products
169 • Allow consumers to make informed food choices through adequate product labeling
170 • Label "Product of the U.S." only those products produced/born/raised/processed
171 100% inside the U.S.
172 • Ensure products coming into the U.S. are not being minimally processed and/or
173 blended inside the U.S., thus making them eligible to obtain a "USDA Inspected"
174 label and to be marketed as a U.S. product
175

176 **DAIRY**

177 Dairy prices should sustain viable family farms.

- 178 • Support regional milk marketing compacts
179 • Support developing a new basic formula for pricing milk
180 • Establish, through BFP, a floor price that applies to all classes of milk
181 • Support mandatory dairy price reporting
182 • Measure dairy policy fairness by its ability to:
183 ○ Produce reasonable profit for producers
184 ○ Provide a high-quality, stable supply for consumers
185 ○ Promote sustainable environmental practices
186 ○ Enable producers to enter and exit farming
187 • Eliminate exclusivity practices by contract buyers toward dairy producers; e.g.
188 canceling dairy producers' milk contracts when they hold back any portion of their
189 milk to sell for any other purpose.

- 190 • Support farmers, and retailers right to label milk *BST free*, and the consumers
191 right to know

192

193 **ECONOMIC AND TAX POLICY**

194 **Estate Tax**

195 We support:

- 196 • The estate tax as the federal government's only tax on accumulated wealth; without
197 the estate tax, unrealized capital gains would remain untaxed forever--because the
198 income tax forgives those deferred taxes at death.
- 199 • The estate tax as a more equitable system of paying for government, it encourages
200 charitable giving, helps build character, promotes America's core economic and
201 democratic values, and is good for rural communities and family farmers.
- 202 • Indexing the exemption annually
- 203 • Implementing graduated rates

204 **Taxes**

205 We support:

- 206 • A more equitable, progressive, and sustainable federal and state tax structure
- 207 • An equitable and progressive tax system that allows the majority of people to pay
208 less because those with the very highest incomes pay more
- 209 • A tax system that fairly and adequately provides revenues for the programs and
210 services that are essential to good governance and the general welfare
- 211 • Full deductibility for individual payment of premiums for health care, long-term
212 care, and disability
- 213 • Provisions in the tax code that reduce concentrations of wealth and power, and
214 promote equality of economic opportunity.
- 215 • A refundable federal and state earned income tax that allows the working poor to
216 keep more of their earned income

217 **1031 EXCHANGES**

218 We Oppose:

- 219 • 1031 Exchanges as currently enacted

220 We Support:

- 221 • Reform of the tax code to eliminate or restructure 1031 Exchanges in such a way
222 that they do not work against the interests of family farmers, rural communities,
223 and the common good.

224

225 **ENERGY**

226 Energy is the lifeblood of our mechanized society. Dependence on foreign sources of fuel
227 threatens not only our way of life but also the ability of family farmers to raise the food,
228 fuel and fiber on which our nation depends.

- 229 • Urge development of community-based, sustainable, alternative, and renewable fuel
230 and energy production systems
- 231 • Encourage research and utilization of alternative sources of energy for Missouri
232 e.g. wind, solar, biomass, bio-diesel, hybrid technology, innovative battery technology
233 and other alternative fuel sources
- 234 • Enact legislation to prohibit the use of methyl tertiary butyl ether (MTBE) in
235 reformulated gasoline to be sold in the state of Missouri
- 236 • Support labeling of all fuel products containing ethanol

- 237 • Support efforts to establish alternative fuel refueling stations in Missouri i.e. E-85
- 238 stations, bio-diesel capabilities at truck stops and card stations, blended pumps
- 239 • Strongly encourage and support energy conservation
- 240 • Allow rural electrical cooperatives to provide utility service to new customers and
- 241 local communities in areas in which they currently are prohibited due to population
- 242 increase caps
- 243 • Support net metering of utilities that target and benefit individual rate payers and
- 244 family farmers
- 245 • Support targeting government assistance for green energy programs to family
- 246 farmers and community-based local businesses
- 247 • Support education, research and development for production of cellulosic energy
- 248 sources
- 249 • Support regulation of utility companies
- 250 • Support access to dependable, consistent, affordable, sustainable utilities for all
- 251 rural areas.

252

253 **HEALTH CARE**

254 Access to health care services is sorely deficient in many, if not most, of the rural areas of

255 the state. Obtaining health care services is especially difficult for the rural elderly who

256 can no longer drive and live in those areas where public and affordable transportation

257 services do not exist. Family farmers notably are lacking in health care coverage. Being in

258 an occupation considered more dangerous than most others increases health insurance rates

259 for family farmers, and finally the reality is that most health insurers have considerably

260 higher rates for single family coverage, and there is no provision for group rates among

261 family farmers.

- 262 • Support universal single-payer health care access
- 263 • Make emergency services more accessible to rural residents
- 264 • Support legislation that would allow/facilitate the development of alliances
- 265 between/among family farmers, small businesses and the self employed that would
- 266 help them secure affordable health care coverage
- 267 • Support legislation that would prevent health care providers from discriminating
- 268 against people without health insurance by charging them higher fees than those
- 269 with health insurance
- 270 • Prevent health insurance companies from excluding applicants on the basis of pre-
- 271 existing conditions.
- 272 • Support publicly provided health care for all children 0 to 18 years of age.

273

274 **Revision of Medicare Part D for Prescription Drug Coverage**

275 We support:

- 276 • Elimination of control over the program by insurance companies,
- 277 • Removal of the so called, "donut hole"
- 278 • Simplification
- 279 • Full coverage for all prescription drugs

280

281 **LIVESTOCK**

- 282 • Strengthen the Packers and Stockyards Act and Anti-trust laws
- 283 • Urge the Secretary Of Agriculture to enforce Packers & Stockyards laws
- 284 • Oppose vertical integration by processors into production agriculture

- 285 • Support anti-trust legislation to limit the market-share percentage of captive
- 286 supplies
- 287 • Support ban on packer ownership of livestock feeding operations, including
- 288 corporate ownership or corporate financing of non-farmer owned operations
- 289 • Urge Congress to supply adequate funding for family farm based agricultural
- 290 programs
- 291 • Promote the development of local and regional livestock processing facilities that
- 292 enhance the profitability of independent producers through open and competitive
- 293 bidding
- 294 • Support a meat inspection, grading, and labeling system that protects food safety
- 295 and quality, and the integrity of the family farm food system.
- 296 • Support the right of processors to access domestic and international markets that
- 297 demand source-verified or BSE-tested livestock
- 298 • Oppose any system of mandatory animal, or premise identification
- 299 • Ensure any animal identification system that may be adopted is government
- 300 administered
- 301 • Oppose privatization of dog breeder inspections
- 302 • Precede any rule change in the USDA Animal Welfare Act with an appropriate
- 303 comment period and only then record it in the Federal Register
- 304 • Support fair and even inspection and regulation of dog breeders throughout the
- 305 states
- 306 • Support teaching animal welfare, as opposed to animal rights, through educational
- 307 programs and agricultural organizations
- 308 • Support humane treatment of all domesticated animals, and their right to have
- 309 proper food, shelter and water for survival
- 310 • Oppose the regulation of domestic livestock and animal husbandry by ballot
- 311 initiative.
- 312 • Support USDA inspected humane harvesting of livestock including horses for meat
- 313 markets

314

315 **LOCAL CONTROL**

316 In a democratic system of government, elected public officials make many decisions that
 317 have a profound impact on the lives and well being of its citizens. We believe that these
 318 important decisions are most likely to yield positive community results when the process
 319 occurs closest to where citizens live and work, and when local citizens are able to
 320 participate more fully in the decision-making processes that will affect them, their families
 321 and their community. Strong local government is essential in protecting and promoting
 322 grassroots democracy throughout Missouri.

- 323 • Support county governments ability to maintain their democratic rights to enact
- 324 health ordinances that protect the public health of their citizens
- 325 • Support legislation that enables local government (i.e. municipal, township, county) to
- 326 enact ordinances, planning, and zoning that serve the best interests of the local
- 327 community and that are democratically enacted
- 328 • Oppose state and federal government, or any international and/or quasi-
- 329 governmental structure, from enacting laws, regulations or rules that give them the
- 330 ability to put in place sanctions; or to otherwise impede or negate the right of local
- 331 communities to enact labor, environmental, health, or safety laws, regulations,
- 332 ordinances, planning, or zoning that serve the best interests of the local community

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PATENTING

- Disallow any person to sell, distribute, or use a non-germinating, genetically-engineered seed- rendered incapable of naturally producing second-generation seed (including terminator and/ or suicide seeds)
- Oppose any new commercial patenting of life forms
- Support the promotion of research in and commercialization of high quality, conventionally bred, and non-genetically modified seed

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

- Oppose unfunded federal mandates to state and local school authorities
- Support publicly funded, community based schools with reasonable child-to-teacher ratios
- Support adequate and equitable funding of rural schools
- Support decision making regarding consolidation of school districts be made at the local level
- Oppose forced school district consolidation by the Missouri General Assembly
- Oppose giving control of public schools to private enterprises such as charter or contract schools, and all school voucher programs
- Promote farm-to-cafeteria programs
- Support serving only wholesome, nutritious food in public schools and other institutions
- Support legislation that funds and requires all Missouri public schools to provide free breakfast, lunch and after school meals to low income children; with said meals being prepared solely from food produced in the United States

RESEARCH AND EDUCATION

- Research and education involving farm and food issues should be carried out in the public interest and for the common good.
- Support increased funding for research, education and development that under girds family farming, organic and sustainable agricultural methods
 - Increase research that protects a family farm/sustainable system of agriculture
 - Support intellectual property rights, paid for by taxpayer monies, remaining in the public domain
 - Strengthen consumer education regarding the issues/policies impacting independent family farmers and ranchers and its relevance to consumer health and safety
 - Encourage public participation in the development of University research agendas
 - Support development of agriculture curricula at all educational levels that build and support family farming and sustainable agriculture methods
 - Support nutrition education that focuses on sustainability and community development
 - Support practices and policies that reduce and eliminate pesticides found on pollen used by honeybees
 - Support further research into those issues challenging bee populations such as colony collapse syndrome.

379 **STATE ASSISTED PROGRAMS**

380 We support funds and/or loan guarantees that are administered by the Missouri
381 Department of Agriculture, as well as, all other state-assisted programs that may benefit
382 agriculture and are directed to the needs of independent family farmers/producers.

383
384 **RURAL COMMUNITY**

385 Missouri's educational institutions should adopt courses of study that encourage
386 entrepreneurship, enhance rural communities, and return young adults to rural areas.

- 387 • Press state and local governments to enact so-called "Aggie Bond" programs as
388 allowed under federal law
- 389 • Support establishing a "Farm Link" program to join beginning farmers with
390 established farmers
- 391 • Support development of social and political infrastructures that will allow the
392 targeting of agriculture policies, programs, and benefits necessary to encourage the
393 entrance of young people into family farming
- 394 • Support any effort to assist and encourage rural entrepreneurship by youth
- 395 • Support the creation of a state Farm-to-Cafeteria program that includes
396 opportunity and funding for Missouri schools, hospitals, institutions and small
397 businesses to purchase from community-based Missouri producers.
- 398 • Support stringent efforts by Missouri law enforcement and prevention agencies to
399 halt illegal drug production and trafficking in rural Missouri;
- 400 • Oppose a reduction of federal drug task force funding to local communities;
- 401 • Support providing state and federal assistance and resources to Missouri family
402 farmers and rural communities to compensate for damages incurred by drug
403 trafficking and/or the law enforcement activity designed to counter it, and to
404 implement prevention, treatment, and educational programs.

405
406 **TRADE**

407 We believe all international trade agreements should be based on principles of fair trade.
408 Future trade agreements should not be encouraged until issues of past agreements that
409 have resulted in adverse impacts for Missouri agriculture (family farmers) are resolved. It
410 is crucial to fair trade negotiations that imported products adhere to standards found in
411 the U.S. with respect to worker safety, environmental protection, consumer safety and
412 public liability.

- 413 • Support fair trade agreements that address currency fluctuations and appropriate
414 health, labor, environmental and safety standards
- 415 • Exempt U.S. agriculture from WTO trade sanctions
- 416 • Orient trade policy to the domestic producer
- 417 • Establish the needs of the U.S. family farmer and rancher as a priority issue
- 418 • Utilize agricultural exports to enhance family farmer and rancher price and income

419
420 **U.S. Border Safeguards to Domestic Livestock Health and Safety**

421 We support:

- 422 • Allowing only beef from animals under 30 months of age to enter from the nation of
423 Canada,
- 424 • USDA maintaining the health and integrity of the US livestock industry by
425 promoting policy that protects US borders from penetration by foreign and
426 contagious diseases

- 427 • USDA advocate for US livestock producers and not the international marketplace
428 • USDA issuing directives that protect the integrity of the US livestock industry and
429 the sovereignty of the United States border.
430

431 **SPECIAL ORDERS OF BUSINESS**

432
433 **COMMUNITY BASED RENEWABLE ENERGY**

434 WHEREAS, our national leaders have passed and initiated renewable fuels standards
435 intended to benefit farmers, consumers and the ecology; and

436 WHEREAS, potential renewable energy resources exist in nearly every rural community; and

437 WHEREAS, capturing and producing renewable energy is a significant economic opportunity
438 for farm families and rural Missouri communities; and

439 WHEREAS, our nations security, economic and ecological interests are best served with a
440 highly diverse, sustainable source of renewable energy;

441 THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that Missouri Farmers Union supports aggressive expansion
442 and acceleration of the Renewable Fuels Standard, (E.G. 20% sustainable and renewable by
443 the year 2020), net metering and other incentives that focus on the production of
444 community-based, locally owned, renewable energy such as cellulosic, wind, solar and bio-
445 mass; and

446 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Missouri Farmers Union supports the creation of a farm-
447 stored Strategic Renewable Energy Reserve, dedicated to the storage and production of
448 community-based energy feedstocks to ensure a dependable long-term, uninterrupted supply
449 of these raw materials.
450

451 **EMINENT DOMAIN**

452 Whereas, MFU opposes taking private property by eminent domain for private entities, and
453 Whereas, should land be obtained by eminent domain for a public purpose, which is later,
454 cancelled or voided, the land should revert to the original owner/s.
455

456 **PROPERTY RIGHTS**

457 We support sticker enforcement of federal and state laws that protect farmer property
458 rights and require legal search warrants and governmental law enforcement representation
459 before entering farm fields and animal facilities.
460

461 *Shown as amended at the January 31, 2009 annual convention business meeting*