



# 2017 Fly-In Talking Points

## Overview

American family farmers and ranchers secure our nation's food supply, energy independence, and the well-being of rural communities from Maine to Hawaii. So when times get tough, family farmers expect their federal representatives to find workable solutions to federal level problems. That's where we are now. Farm income dropped 50 percent in the last four years, farm prices are staying consistently low, production costs remain high, and the services and infrastructure underpinning many rural communities are deteriorating.

On behalf of nearly 200,000 member families nationwide, the family farmers and ranchers participating in the 2017 NFU Fall Legislative Fly-In traveled to the nation's capital to advocate for a number of legislative priorities that will affect their operations and communities. These members are urging Congress to ensure the farm safety net works for producers, the growth of the American biofuels industry continues to reap benefits for rural communities, and family farmers and ranchers have access to affordable, quality health care. This packet highlights their concerns and solutions.

## Top Issues

1. A Strong Farm Safety Net
2. Access to Affordable, Quality Healthcare
3. Transition to a Homegrown, Renewable Energy Future



For more information about these issues, contact the NFU Government Relations Department at (202) 554-1600. To contact your members of Congress, call the U.S. Capitol switchboard at (202) 224-3121.



## 1. A Strong Farm Safety Net

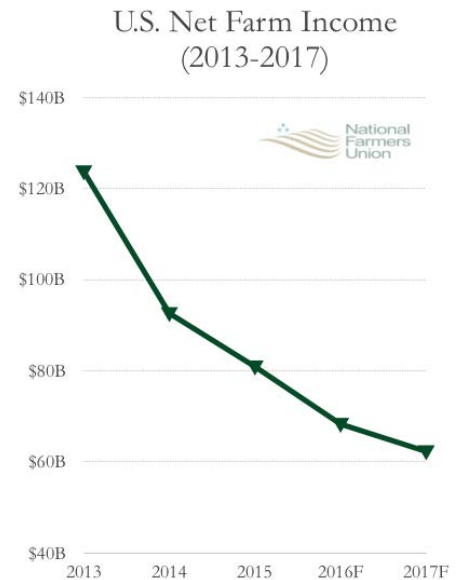
American family farmers and ranchers are enduring a severe economic downturn. Prices of major commodities have plummeted over the past four years, and projections indicate this trend will continue into the foreseeable future. To ensure the growth and success of family farm agriculture, Congress must strengthen the overall farm safety net.

### The State of the Farm Economy

- ~ Net farm income has dropped by 50 percent in the past four years, and is projected to be \$62.3 billion in 2017.
- ~ The median farm income in 2017 is projected to be negative.
- ~ Farm lending dropped by 40 percent from one year ago.

### Farming: Inherent Risks, Unique Markets

There are two things farmers can't control: the weather and the markets. Programs in the federal Farm Bill have historically helped mitigate these two risks so that family farmers and ranchers can continue to grow high quality food, fiber, feed and fuel for the country.



### A Strong Farm Safety Net

To ensure farmers and ranchers can continue to provide for the country and the world, a strong farm safety net should provide meaningful support through severe economic downturns like the one we're in.

Congress can do this if they:

- ✓ **Improve farm programs**, which provide relief for farmers struggling with low commodity prices.
- ✓ **Protect crop insurance**, an essential risk management tool for farmers who suffer crop loss or loss of revenue.
- ✓ **Provide increased access to credit**. USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) set a new record across its loan portfolio last year and needs additional funding.
- ✓ **Support agriculture mediation programs**, which provide support to farmers struggling to meet financial obligation.

## What Congress Should Do

- ~ **Support a Farm Bill that addresses the needs of family farmers & ranchers without budget cuts.**



## 2. Access to Health Care

Health care is a top priority for family farmers and ranchers. As their health insurance premiums rise and the marketplace becomes more unstable, farmers need Congress to improve the **accessibility**, **affordability**, and **quality** of health insurance.

### What is working?

- ✓ **The current system of tax credits & premium subsidies**
  - ~ These help farmers and ranchers maintain consistent coverage.
- ✓ **Medicaid expansion**
  - ~ The success of the Medicaid program is crucial to the viability of rural hospitals, where patients enroll in the program at a higher rate than their urban counterparts.
- ✓ **Protections for individuals with preexisting conditions**
  - ~ These protections ensure premiums do not skyrocket for those individuals.
  - ~ Two-thirds of farmers and ranchers report having a pre-existing condition.

### What needs fixing?

- ✗ **The health insurance marketplace**
  - ~ Health insurance marketplaces continue to be unstable in many areas, leading to significant increases in premium costs.
- ✗ **Insurance companies cherry-pick profitable marketplaces**
  - ~ This leaves many farming and rural communities with little choice on health insurers.
  - ~ In fact, 41% of rural enrollees currently have just one insurer option.
- ✗ **Inadequate support for rural hospitals**
  - ~ This forces rural hospital closures, stranding farmers and rural residents.

### BY THE NUMBERS:

### Farming & Healthcare

# 58,000

adult farm injuries are estimated to have occurred in 2014 alone.

# 3/4

of farmers & ranchers rely on an off-farm job to obtain health insurance.

# 46%

of rural hospital patients rely on Medicaid.

# 52%

of farmers and ranchers are not confident they could pay the costs of a major illness or injury without going into debt.

## What Congress Should Do

- ~ **Support bipartisan legislation that increases the number of family farmers and ranchers with access to affordable, quality healthcare.**

## 3. A Renewable Energy Future

The transition to a homegrown, renewable energy future for the U.S. is well underway. The growth of renewable energy use in transportation fuels, powered through policies like the Renewable Fuel Standard (RFS), has been a success story for all Americans. For the U.S. to realize the full potential of the renewable energy sector, we should promote clean, higher-blended ethanol, like E30, and advanced biobased fuels.

### How to Transition

#### ✓ E30

~ Remove arbitrary legislative and regulatory barriers to higher blends of ethanol, like E30, that clean up our air and benefit farming and rural communities.

#### ✓ Advanced Biofuels

~ Protect demand for new and advanced biofuels through policies like the RFS, removal of regulatory barriers, and further research, development and infrastructure investments.

### Benefits from this Transition

#### ✓ Climate Change Mitigation & Environment

~ Clean-burning fuels cut down on greenhouse gas emissions that exacerbate climate change, as well as pollutants that cause smog and increase ozone levels, which are hazardous to human health.

#### ✓ American Family Farmers

~ Family farmers rely on expanded markets for their crops and biobased products, especially as they endure the worst national farm economy in a generation.

#### ✓ Rural Communities

~ Biofuels development brings billions of dollars of capital investment, millions of dollars of new tax base, and many thousands of new, well-paying jobs with benefits to struggling rural communities.

#### ✓ Consumers

~ Higher blends of ethanol save consumers billions of dollars every year at the gas pump, and because of their higher octane rating, they allow engines to perform better by reducing knocking.

#### BY THE NUMBERS:

#### Homegrown Fuels

# 43%

Ethanol's reduction in greenhouse gas emissions compared to conventional gasoline.

# 500 Million

barrels of imported oil are replaced by homegrown ethanol each year.

# \$100 Billion

in savings per year for consumers at the gas pump.

# 113

Octane rating for ethanol - improving the ability to meet fuel economy & emissions standards.

## What Congress Should Do

~ Continue to support a strong RFS.

~ Eliminate barriers to higher-blended ethanol and advanced biofuels.