



## **FAMILY FARMING AND CLIMATE CHANGE 2021 SPECIAL ORDER OF BUSINESS**

The extreme weather events of 2020 show once again that climate change jeopardizes the livelihoods of U.S. family farmers, ranchers, and rural residents, as well as our nation’s food, fuel, and fiber supply. The challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic have taken priority throughout much of 2020 and into 2021, a disruption that provides an opportunity to upgrade systems and infrastructure to address climate change. The devastating effects of climate change have not relented, as evidenced by the fact that in 2020 there were more “billion-dollar disasters” in the United States than any other year on record. Urgent action is needed to address this crisis. National Farmers Union (NFU) calls upon the Administration and Congress to take immediate and concrete steps aimed at curbing greenhouse gas emissions, increasing the resilience of the land and its people, facilitating ecosystems services market development, and holistically addressing climate change.

America’s family farms and ranches are uniquely positioned to be an integral part of our nation’s solution for climate change. Healthy soils and diverse vegetation can provide a range of ecosystems services, including but not limited to the removal of existing greenhouse gases from the Earth’s atmosphere, agricultural emissions reductions, and mitigation of the effects of extreme weather. However, there are also unique challenges for agriculture due to complications stemming from issues of land ownership, years of stagnant farm income, consolidation across the sector, and changing scientific and agronomic advice.

Farmers and ranchers must be leaders in addressing climate change. Farmers and ranchers must drive policies and programs that are developed to ensure all these opportunities and challenges are appropriately addressed.

The work of providing healthier land and more functional watersheds, supplying ample healthy food for people, and limiting risks from severe weather events to the entire human population is best done by family farmers as they are more present on the land and in their local communities. This is work that must be regarded and compensated like other services and goods. Family farmers and ranchers must be empowered to tackle the challenges and opportunities posed by climate change.

NFU supports policies, programs, and efforts throughout the agricultural value chain that:

- Support research, education, outreach, cost share, risk management, and other incentives to help family farmers and ranchers install and manage practices and infrastructure that mitigate and adapt to climate change, build soil health and increase watershed function, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and sequester carbon at the farm level and throughout food supply chains;
- Establish the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) as the federal lead on all issues pertaining to agriculture and climate change. Further, USDA’s longstanding protections for producer data and privacy must be applied to climate efforts and extend to marketplace contracts;
- Encourage USDA and the private sector to explore income opportunities for family farmers and ranchers—including those categorized as “early adopters” of soil health and regenerative agriculture practices— from the ecosystems services generated on their land through improved management practices. Potential opportunities should include voluntary marketplace initiatives and new and existing federal agriculture and environmental programs such as a carbon bank, expanded Conservation Stewardship Program, or other ecosystems services payments;
- Facilitate the development of a USDA-led ecosystems services credit practice-based verification system to support the ability of farmers, ranchers, and other landowners to affordably participate in public or private market opportunities and establish a base standard for credit verification;
- Engage USDA’s Climate Hub network and other agency outreach efforts to highlight the positive work across agriculture that is being done to adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change through Farm Bill conservation programs and other initiatives;
- Build relationships between USDA and other federal agencies to systematically design, coordinate, and enhance the effectiveness of programs that assist agriculture and our nation’s communities to better adapt to and mitigate the causes of climate change. Such initiatives should include potential coordination of USDA conservation and rural development programs, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) non-point source pollution and water and wastewater programs, and other federal initiatives to maximize greenhouse gas reductions, reduce soil erosion, improve water quality, increase fuel and energy efficiency, and improve wildlife habitat. Any verification or regulatory provisions developed that are related to climate change and farms and ranches must be administered by USDA, not EPA;
- Ensure the needs of farmers, ranchers, and our nation’s communities are addressed by state and federal efforts to strengthen and expand our nation’s infrastructure—including electrical and telecommunications networks; water, wastewater, and flood control systems; and transportation networks—to better withstand the effects of climate change;

- Develop and implement a comprehensive national energy and fuel strategy that reduces carbon emissions using renewable energy, carbon capture, ethanol and biofuels, and other technologies while balancing rural energy needs and jobs;
- Focus tax and other economic incentives on rural areas that historically have relied upon fossil fuel industries to promote job creation and growth in the new “green economy” and limit job loss and unemployment. Tax credits or grant programs should also be implemented to help provide relocation assistance or career path retraining for employees who transition from a fossil fuels related industry to a renewable or low-carbon industry; and
- Develop resilient local and regional food systems that build connections between local farmers and citizens and communities.