



FAMILY FARMING AND AGRICULTURAL WORKFORCE AND FOOD PROCESSING REFORM 2022 SPECIAL ORDER OF BUSINESS

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed significant weaknesses in America’s agricultural and food supply chains. Chief among areas in need of reform are food (and especially livestock) processing and infrastructure, and the agricultural workforce.

Disruptions to highly centralized and consolidated processing infrastructure have resulted in lower prices paid to farmers, and higher prices for consumers at the grocery store. To achieve fairer, more competitive, and more resilient farm and food supply chains requires more local and regional processing options for farmers and ranchers. Expanded meat and poultry processing capacity are especially needed to ensure farmers, ranchers, and consumers have more choices in the marketplace.

As it is currently structured, our farm labor system does not work well for anyone. Farmers struggle to find skilled, stable, and affordable labor, and they often face excessive red tape in hiring. On the other hand, workers, whether in fields or processing plants, do not have adequate workplace protections. Our highly consolidated farm and food system is not only hurting family farmers and ranchers, but the workers they employ.

To address these issues, National Farmers Union supports the following principles or policies:

- Increased funding to support new and expanded local and regional processing infrastructure;
- Increased funding for farmers, food hubs, cooperatives, and others to construct food safety qualified infrastructure, such as washing stations, commercial kitchens, packaging, and other value-added facilities;
- Increased funding for training for the agricultural workforce through work-based certification programs, vocational schools, and/or land grant universities, including to expand the pool of labor in meat and poultry processing, and to train and recruit more USDA inspectors;
- Robust enforcement of worker safety measures and protections;
- The right for workers to fair wages and a safe working environment;

- The continued effort of Farmers Union to find common ground with agricultural workers, and groups representing the agricultural workforce – the needs of workers and farm and ranch owners are interdependent;
- Immigration reform, including agricultural workforce reform, that includes a sensible path to legal status for undocumented workers, and that reforms the H-2A temporary agricultural worker visa program so that it serves the needs of workers and family farmers and ranchers;
- The National Labor Relations Act should be extended to workers on corporate and other farms that employ enough hired help to be subject to the federal minimum wage provisions applicable to agricultural workers;
- Regulations, fees, and requirements that are appropriate for the size and scale of operations, and that account for the differences between family farms and large corporations; and
- Line speeds that are regulated to protect worker health and safety in warehouses, product handling facilities, and meat processing plants.