

Virginia Farm Bureau Federation

2022 Policies

These issue positions were approved by the Voting Delegates the annual meeting of Virginia Farm Bureau Federation.

Commodities

Animal Care and Husbandry

100

- POLICY:** We support best management and husbandry practices for livestock and poultry as provided by our land grant colleges, industry assurance programs, and other institutions. We support an educational program oriented toward the general public, as well as our members, on the current movement to regulate the livestock and poultry industry. We oppose any type of pro-animal rights legislation. We also oppose public funding for studies of animal rights issues by any group other than the land grant colleges of agriculture.
- POLICY:** We believe that public animal shelters should not restrict or prohibit the use of euthanasia. (2021)
- POLICY:** We support the continued use of livestock, as defined by the Code of Virginia, to be utilized for food and fiber production.
- POLICY:** We strongly oppose the use of educational materials in our public schools that discourage use of animal products in the diet and various other areas.
- POLICY:** We oppose designating any day as meatless for school lunch programs.
- POLICY:** We oppose regulations addressing when agricultural animals should be sheltered based upon outside temperature.
- POLICY:** We oppose restrictions preventing the tethering of any animals in Virginia.
- POLICY:** We support increased funding and emphasis on training and certification for Animal Control Officers through the Office of the State Veterinarian in the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.
- POLICY:** We oppose the banning of agriculture practices and agriculture industries regardless if they currently are in Virginia or not.
- POLICY:** We oppose attempts that unreasonably restrict the flow of animals to legitimate medical research facilities or the transportation of animals to livestock processing plants.

POLICY: In the event of an unfounded animal cruelty complaint, we support animal control officers disclosing the name of the person(s) who made the unfounded claim and/or assessing a fine of \$500 plus the cost of the investigation of the animal abuse/neglect. (2016, a. 2018, a. 2022)

Aquaculture

110

POLICY: We believe VDACS' animal health laboratories should be staffed and equipped to provide health diagnostic services that facilitate the interstate movement and export of aquaculture species from Virginia.

POLICY: We support restricting menhaden fishing in the Chesapeake Bay within a three-mile distance from the shore.

POLICY: We recommend that a single business owner should have the oyster handler license instead of each employee. (2017)

POLICY: We support the work of the land-grant universities and public and private institutions of higher education in conducting marine and freshwater aquaculture and aquaponics research. We further recommend they be adequately funded to continue to meet their research and operational needs. (a. 2018)

POLICY: We support the involvement of fish culturists along with the use of sound scientific documentation, independent research, and economic analysis in the development of any regulatory requirements, including TMDLs, on aquaculture facilities. (a. 2018)

POLICY: We support the recognition at the state and national levels of cultured seafood cage growing of oysters and clams, aquaculture products grown for market as agricultural products, as well as the development of game farm fisheries.

POLICY: We support electronic notification for public notices required for water quality permits to reduce the expense to the permittee. (2015, a. 2017)

POLICY: We support the strict enforcement of current laws and penalties in cases of theft and/or willful destruction of fish and shellfish raised for sale and/or research and support legislation to enact more stringent penalties for such acts as needed.

POLICY: We support the activities of the Aquaculture Advisory Board to assist industry expansion and development, as enacted in the 1992 Aquaculture Development Act.

POLICY: We recommend that aquaculturists be exempt from Department of Wildlife Resources permitting requirements for the raising of native and naturalized fish species.

Biotechnology

115

POLICY: We support the use and further development of biotechnology to benefit consumers and increase the marketability of agricultural products. We support efforts to educate consumers on the science and benefits of these products. (a. 2014, a. 2016, a. 2017, a. 2018)

Commodities (General)

120

POLICY: We support the expansion of support for local farm food products to school lunch program initiatives.

POLICY: We support defining “locally grown” for farm and food products.

POLICY: We support an amendment to the Virginia Limited Brewery License that would require a measurable percentage of land in bona fide agricultural production with a minimum of 10% of acreage of non-water ingredients be grown on the farm similar to the requirements for farm wineries. (a. 2022)

POLICY: We request that all federal, state, and local agricultural inspection officials have a working knowledge of farm production. (2015, a. 2018)

POLICY: We feel that producers of legal agricultural products should not be held responsible or liable for health problems that may occur from the products’ consumption or use. We support consumer education on safe food handling practices. (a. 2014)

POLICY: We support legislation that prevents farmers from being charged a surcharge on farm products during times of uncertainty, like the “coronavirus surcharge” coming out of every milk check. (2022)

Commodity Check-off

123

POLICY: We support legislation that sets the assessed excise tax on peanuts at \$5/ton. (2013, a. 2014, a. 2021)

POLICY: We support using Dairy Check-Off dollars to promote the sale and use of whole milk products. We would ask that the Dairy Marketing Initiative be evaluated to ensure that dollars are not being used in the promotion of non-dairy products to consumers.

POLICY: We recommend legislation providing for any commodity check-off promotion program to include the following:

- the right of the individual producers to vote in a referendum on any commodity check-off promotion program for a commodity which they produce
- when commodity boards have had a previous referendum, 10% or more of the number voting may petition for a subsequent referendum of those

affected commodity producers, with reference to existing code requirements

- the board, which is to administer collected funds, should be appointed by the Governor from producers and other individuals where applicable and nominated by the producer organizations representing the producers of the affected commodity
- responsibility for the conduct of the referendum should be placed with the Commissioner of the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
- provisions should utility-scale requiring broad notification of the proposed referendum
- districts should be based on the specific commodity standards and should be spelled out in the act in order that the producer can understand the system of representation before being called to cast a vote (a. 2014)

POLICY: We believe agricultural commodity boards, reforestation of timberland programs, and Virginia Agricultural Council monies should not be used to balance the state budget. These dedicated special funds should only be used for purposes specified by their respective legislative statutes as enacted by the past Virginia General Assemblies.

Cotton **130**

POLICY: We support establishing May 30 as the cotton planting date for RMA reporting. (2021)

POLICY: We recommend that the Farm Service Agency (FSA) continue to certify cotton acreage, assist in conducting referendums, and make farm maps available for the boll weevil eradication programs.

POLICY: We support adequate funding for the Boll Weevil Eradication Program and request state funding as necessary to ensure annual producer assessments are minimized and to offset unforeseen program cost overruns.

Dairy **140**

POLICY: We support the Virginia State Milk Commission (VSMC).

POLICY: We oppose modifying the definition of marketing areas to include all Virginia counties and cities under the federal milk marketing order regulations.

POLICY: We support the voluntary Virginia Johne's Disease Control Program.

POLICY: We believe all milk and dairy products sold for human consumption in Virginia must be from inspected sources and pasteurized, or in the case of cheese, aged. However, should lawmakers seek to allow an exemption to state laws and regulations, we believe an exemption should only allow for the regulated sale of raw milk and dairy products processed from raw milk on the farm where it was produced, processed, and packaged for

consumers' personal use. Regulated raw milk and dairy products sold on the farm must: 1) originate from herds tested free of contagious diseases; 2) be tested for pathogens and contaminants; 3) be labeled to identify the potential health consequences of consuming unpasteurized products and the producer's contact information; and 4) originate from a facility inspected for sanitation. Raw milk and dairy products should be required to have a Grade A permit and must meet those benchmark standards for pathogens, contaminants, and temperature rather than be required to use specific infrastructure and equipment. We support the enforcement of state and national milk and dairy product standards. We recommend VDACS revise state regulations in a timely manner in order to remain consistent with federal definitions and standards and to prevent any competitive disadvantage for Virginia dairy producers. We oppose state and federal regulatory changes that threaten the quality and marketing of milk and dairy products or weaken labeling standards. (a. 2018)

POLICY: We support laws and regulations that oversee the use of cow-share agreements in order to ensure food safety and enforce the prohibition of the sale of raw milk directly to consumers. (2012)

Direct Sales of Farm Products 145

POLICY: We support state funding or staffing support for the development, expansion, and improvement of traditional Farmers' Markets, as well as regional markets that benefit Virginia agriculture, and direct from the farm to consumer type local markets.

Equine 155

POLICY: We recognize the equine industry as an integral part of the overall agricultural industry and further support efforts to keep the industry viable and that it is entitled to programs available to other agricultural sectors. We strongly support a uniform definition of all equine as agriculture livestock and be defined as such in the State Code of Virginia and Virginia Tax Code. (a. 2017)

POLICY: We support horse breeding and racing in the Commonwealth of Virginia. (2015)

POLICY: We support requiring cases of stranglers to be reportable to the state veterinarian. (2018)

POLICY: We are opposed to any plan by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to relocate wild horses from the western United States to public lands in Virginia. (2011)

Feed Grains, Soybeans, and Wheat **170**

- POLICY:** We believe that weight tickets for grain should show the moisture, the net bushels of grain (corrected for moisture shrinkage), and drying charge and be clearly posted. (a. 2017)
- POLICY:** We support the startup and operation of soybean processing facilities in Virginia that produce biodiesel, roasted soybeans, or other soy products.

Fiber Crops and Cannabis **175**

- POLICY:** We support the Virginia Crop Improvement Association overseeing the seed and variety certification program for industrial hemp. (a. 2021)
- SPOLICY:** We support including industrial hemp for permanent crop insurance protection under Risk Management Agency. (2021)
- POLICY:** We support increasing the THC limit from 0.3% up to 1.0% in order to maximize the production of CBD in industrial hemp. (a. 2021)
- POLICY:** We support crop research and market development for all fiber crops.
- POLICY:** We support the use of state-licensed and approved facilities to research the medical benefits of cannabis. (2017, a. 2022)
- POLICY:** We support the agricultural production of industrial hemp and all cannabis species allowed by law. We support farmers having representation on all boards governing production practices of any cannabis species. (2021)
- POLICY:** We oppose the legalization of marijuana for recreational use.

Honeybees **180**

- POLICY:** We support a balanced approach to addressing the decline of the honeybee population that educates producers but will not inhibit the ability of producers to use all available products on crops. We further support establishing communication between beekeepers and production agriculture to create a relationship of coexistence. (2016)
- POLICY:** We support state funding of research of pest control, mortality rates, hive management for beekeepers, and crops that produce excess nectar. (a. 2021)

Livestock **185**

- POLICY:** We support the allocation of resources and the development of measures to control the spread and to eradicate the Asian Longhorned Tick in the United States to prevent economic and mortality losses in livestock. We support establishing an indemnification program and funding to mitigate livestock owners' financial losses associated with the Asian Longhorned Tick. (2021)

- POLICY:** We support all agriculture, including Intensive Livestock, when operated under Best Management Practices (BMP), Nutrient Management Practices (NMP), and all state guidelines.
- POLICY:** We support continuation of the educational programs offered by VDACS and Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) regarding the Veterinary Feed Directive (VFD) and the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) that make the laws easier to understand and minimize any adverse financial impact to the farming community. (2017, a. 2018)
- POLICY:** We believe the office of the State Veterinarian should pursue the issue of infectious diseases in non-traditional and/or non-indigenous animals being raised in captivity in Virginia and any species that may be introduced in the future to Virginia. We recommend that practical guidelines and/or regulations be put in place, maintained, and enforced to ensure the protection of Virginia’s dairy and livestock herds and flocks from infectious diseases carried by any animals.
- POLICY:** We support the activities of the State Veterinarian in the implementation of a voluntary animal disease traceability program that will protect the animal health and maintain the economic competitiveness of Virginia’s livestock industry within the state and beyond while maintaining the confidentiality of information. (a. 2012)
- POLICY:** We recommend that environmentally safe and timely burial of dead animals must continue to be an option for disposal along with composting, cremation, rendering, and other approved methods. If regulations must be made, the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services’ Office of the State Veterinarian should oversee the disposal of dead animals.

Marketing and Bargaining Initiatives 190

- POLICY:** We support federal and state grant funds to individuals and localities for infrastructure, equipment upgrades, and other start-up costs to incentivize meat processing, including inspection. (2022)
- POLICY:** We believe additional regulatory oversight is needed to prevent monopolies within the meat and poultry processing industry. (2022)
- POLICY:** We support public schools purchasing dairy products from processing facilities that process milk produced on Virginia dairy farms.
- POLICY:** We support the establishment of new grade and quality standards and consistently utilizing such standards for cotton, grains, peanuts, and any other commodity to more accurately reflect the value and specific commodity criteria.
- POLICY:** We recommend that governmental agencies, private industry, and producer groups work together to promote sales of all agricultural products, both locally and in foreign markets, and to encourage the support of local agricultural incubator sites/agricultural complexes for the purpose of promoting the development of existing and emerging agricultural enterprises. (a. 2022)

- POLICY:** We support the term “meat” be defined as any “edible portion of livestock, poultry or captive cervid carcass” and that any “meat product” be defined as “anything containing meat intended for or capable of use for human consumption, which is derived, in whole, from livestock, poultry or captive cervid.” We further support prohibiting the use of commonly used nomenclature or specific “meat” terms such as beef, chicken, pork, turkey, lamb, veal and fish or specific cuts of meat such as roast, steak, ground, breast, chop, filet, etc. in culture protein and plant-based protein product standards in labeling. (a. 2021)
- POLICY:** We oppose federal or state funding used to support research and development of cultured protein products. (a. 2021, a. 2022)
- POLICY:** We oppose any reduction in the state meat inspection program or transfer of the responsibilities to USDA.
- POLICY:** We support the construction of federally-inspected canneries and slaughter facilities in Virginia for the processing of all types of livestock including poultry. (a. 2017)
- POLICY:** We support streamlined and cost-efficient inspection of small-scale meatpacking and processing facilities including developing a plan to allow contracted inspectors when needed. (a. 2022)
- POLICY:** We support flexibility in USDA’s meat inspection hiring process to allow contract agreements with licensed veterinarians to perform inspection services in underserved and understaffed areas and in the event of temporary disruptions within the industry. (2021)
- POLICY:** We oppose direct farm sales of unregulated meat products to consumers.
- POLICY:** We believe FDA must develop and enforce identity standards and labeling regulations for protein food products, including meat and dairy, cultured from mammalian protein and plant-based products. (a. 2021)
- POLICY:** We support all meat, milk, milk-derived products, cultured meat, and cultured milk be regulated jointly by the USDA and the FDA. (a. 2021)
- POLICY:** We support Country of Origin Labeling on all meat products (beef, pork, chicken, lamb, and goat). We believe imported agricultural products should be held to the same standard as U.S. products. USDA will require additional funding for comprehensive inspections.
- POLICY:** We oppose labels that mislead consumers regarding the use of animal antibiotics, hormones, and housing practices.

Peanuts

195

- POLICY:** We recommend that when the present method of testing indicates the possible presence of aflatoxin, freeze damage, or excess foreign material, the farmer may reclean and submit the load for retest. (a. 2016)
- POLICY:** We recommend that peanut loans come due on or before June 1. (2011)
- POLICY:** We believe governmental agencies, private industry, and producer groups should work together to promote sales of Virginia type peanuts in domestic and foreign markets.
- POLICY:** We support keeping area marketing cooperatives intact and viable as a producer marketing alternative for peanuts.
- POLICY:** We support maintaining a separate peanut payment limitation from other commodities.

Poultry

200

- POLICY:** We recommend that contract producers be furnished accurate weight tickets on all poultry sold from their farms and on feed delivered to the farm. We further believe condemnation deductions should be based on the actual weight of the condemned poultry instead of using the flock's average bird weight.
- POLICY:** We recommend that integrators, growers, and state agencies work together to practice all possible biosecurity methods to help prevent and control disease during an outbreak. We further recommend integrators notify all producers of any contagious diseases in their area.
- POLICY:** We recommend that whatever indemnification a company receives payment for, whether state or federal, a pro rata share should go to the grower.
- POLICY:** We request that poultry contractors provide long-term contracts with growers, which consider the substantial investment in housing and equipment.
- POLICY:** We recommend that efforts be made to establish improved communications, with a regular, recognized dialogue, between growers and contractors in the following areas: contract pricing, quality assurance, complaint resolution, environmental issues, disposal of dead poultry, management guidelines, weighing of poultry and feed, conflict of interest of company employees, and others.
- POLICY:** We recommend that all live fowl be subject to the same USDA testing procedures that pertain to commercial birds and that indemnity funding reflects the same considerations.
- POLICY:** We recommend a written report from the lab be furnished to the producer/grower stating the problems found with the birds along with sensitivity reports on medication that would work to correct disease problems.

Risk Protection (Crop) Insurance

205

- POLICY:** We support reforms to the crop insurance program that would provide adequate coverage that is actuarially sound at an affordable price for all commodities in all regions.
- POLICY:** We recommend review of Risk Management Agency planting dates for all regions in Virginia to match current agricultural practices. (2018)
- POLICY:** We recommend that disaster indemnification be based on individual commodity and not on a whole farm income year. (a. 2022)

Tobacco

215

- POLICY:** We recommend the Virginia Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission (VTRRC) continue to provide tobacco families with financial aid for a college education.
- POLICY:** We support the right of adults to use traditional tobacco products.
- POLICY:** We support continuing strict accountability of the Tobacco Commission regarding disbursement of funds. (2012, a. 2015)
- POLICY:** We support maintaining production of each type of tobacco in Virginia.
- POLICY:** We oppose any organization or branch of government using taxpayers' money against the use of tobacco products. (2015)
- POLICY:** We support the current funding percentages and mechanisms for the Virginia Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission's (VTRRC) efforts to promote agriculture initiatives, including value-added beef and lamb, new industries in Southside and Southwest Virginia, and existing industries expanding job opportunities. (a. 2014, a. 2015, a. 2018)
- POLICY:** We support the Master Settlement Agreement whereby the payment would allow 50% to quota holders, tobacco producers, and tobacco communities; 10% to health; and 40% to the general fund. (a. 2013, a. 2015)
- POLICY:** We strongly support the inclusion of tobacco and tobacco products in all trade negotiations of the United States. (2013)
- POLICY:** We support the development of nontraditional uses for tobacco products. (a. 2022)

Wine and Grape Industry

220

- POLICY:** We support all provisions of the Virginia Farm Winery Act and support retaining all specified privileges within the Act, including self-distribution and the use of five remote licenses. We further support the right to sell wine on the wineries' premises in accordance with local rules and ordinances.

- POLICY:** We support strict enforcement by Alcohol Beverage Control agency (including spot audits) of the requirement that all Class A farm winery licensees grow 51% of the fruit used to manufacture wine on their owned farm or land leased by them. (2015)
- POLICY:** We support interstate and intrastate direct shipment of wine.
- POLICY:** We support directing the entire amount of wine excise tax collected from Virginia farm wineries to the Virginia Wine Promotion Fund. (2011)
- POLICY:** We support farm wineries as an agricultural enterprise to include wine as an agricultural product.

Education

Agricultural Education 300

- POLICY:** We support at least two agriculture education specialists. (a. 2012, a.2014, a. 2017)

Education 305

- POLICY:** We support a reformulation of educational funding from Commonwealth to localities to reflect costs associated with state mandates and to address disparities in education funding in rural areas due to shifts in the economy and declining population levels. (2018, a. 2021)
- POLICY:** We support a \$75,000 appropriation earmarked for the subscription cost of an electronic system for tracking work based learning.
- POLICY:** We support that all absences from schools in Virginia, for students participating in 4-H activities or contests be considered an excused absence.

Energy

Energy Sources and Renewable Energy 350

- POLICY:** We recommend that any Virginia energy policy adopted contains the importance of renewable energy from agriculture and forestry. (a. 2018, a. 2021)
- POLICY:** We support a continued effort to make America less dependent on foreign oil by encouraging the development and use of our domestic energy resources and the continuing development of alternative, cost-effective energy supplies. (a. 2012, a. 2017)
- POLICY:** We support state and national research for the production and use of alternative energy with an emphasis on the advancement of technology for biofuel creation from cellulosic feedstock. (a. 2018)

- POLICY:** We oppose the use of eminent domain for the construction of natural resource pipelines, unless the project has been determined for the public use, and compensation has been made for the disturbance of land and crops at the highest and best use value. (2020)
- POLICY:** We believe more studies should be done on the impact that utility-scale solar energy has on agriculture, and the potential environmental impacts and lifecycle costs for the manufacture, disposal, re-use, or recycle of material inputs, before any additional projects are approved on prime agricultural lands.
- POLICY:** We do not support tax incentives, credits, subsidies, governmental grants, etc. for terrestrial wind and solar energy on prime agricultural land. However, we support incentives for solar and wind energy for use on landowners' agriculture enterprises and operations except on prime agricultural land. (a. 2012, a. 2017, a. 2018, a. 2021)
- POLICY:** We oppose any legislation that would allow state authority over localities in developing utility-scale solar projects.
- POLICY:** We support proposals to repeal the 80% discount on tools and machinery tax on utility-scale solar projects.
- POLICY:** We support the local enactment of bond requirements that would protect landowners from clean-up costs that may be associated with decommissioning solar energy projects. (2022)
- POLICY:** We support utility scale solar facilities being located on marginal lands, brownfields and mine reclamation sites. (2022)
- POLICY:** We support the mandated use of non-invasive, weed-free, certified seed as determined by testing by the Virginia State seed lab for use on utility scale solar projects as ground cover or pollinator habitats. (2020)

State Corporation Commission (SCC) and Public Utilities

355

- POLICY:** We support the expansion of high-speed internet and cellular phone coverage to all areas through greater state investment. We believe that a service provider should only charge the customer for services they can provide. (a. 2012, a. 2017, a. 2018)
- POLICY:** We support requiring cable TV and public utility companies to raise their lines higher so farm equipment can pass underneath or enforce laws regarding the proper burial of lines. We further believe that utility companies need to make equipment, pedestals, and junction boxes visible to prevent damage. We believe if farm equipment accidentally damages a pedestal hidden in weeds, brush, or other foliage, the liability should be on the utility company. (a. 2014)
- POLICY:** We encourage the State Corporation Commission to require public utility companies to properly maintain and repair their landlines in a timely manner. (2012)

- POLICY:** We support the return to a cost-of-service regulatory model that existed prior to electric utility deregulation in 1999. We support efforts to mitigate negative effects of the re-regulation of the electric utility industry in order to ensure affordability, availability, and reliability of service to rural Virginia.
- POLICY:** We oppose any demand fees by electric utilities for usage under 100Kw and on electrical services of 400 amps in size and smaller. We support an agricultural tariff rate for farms. (2014, a. 2016, a. 2018)
- POLICY:** We support revisions of the state regulations to make a repair of existing septic systems and application for new septic systems in rural areas less cost prohibitive.
- POLICY:** We support access to the "Miss Utility" system for all farm properties, including parcels without an e911 address.

Governmental Agencies

Regulations and Governmental Oversight

395

- POLICY:** We oppose any legislative or regulatory action that requires farmers and landowners to report their records to a government entity for the purposes of reducing agriculture's environmental impact without a proven scientific justification. (2021)
- POLICY:** We oppose federal agencies turning over the names and contact information of producers to activist groups.
- POLICY:** We request that legislators demonstrate a benefit-to-cost advantage and more oversight to any new food, water, or environmental regulation or to an interpretation of existing regulation. (2013, a. 2014, a. 2015)
- POLICY:** We are opposed to the expansion of power by regulatory agencies through the use of guidance documents and executive branch orders to circumvent the legislative process. (2018)
- POLICY:** We insist that all legislation and regulatory action be based on sound scientific evidence, a risk/benefit analysis, and mandated programs should be fully funded for the entirety of the program by those levels of government requiring such programs.
- POLICY:** We request that local, state, and federal governments include agricultural representation on committees formulating proposed laws or regulations that impact farmers and/or landowners.

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) 400

POLICY: We support Farm Service Agency increasing the number of its appraisers and loan officers in Virginia.

Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) 405

POLICY: We support the continued assistance of VDACS in providing grading, promotion, marketing, and market development opportunities for the Virginia Livestock industry, and that the Livestock Services Program manager be tasked with fulfilling these duties. (2021)

POLICY: We support funding for marketing, grading, and inspection programs by VDACS, including restoration of funds for annual inspections of livestock scales.

POLICY: To promote a transparent environment in the agricultural regulatory community, we support the development of a policy by VDACS to address conflict of interest involved in the agricultural grading process.

POLICY: We believe funds generated by inspection and grading services should be used only to defray the cost of providing such inspection and grading services to farmers.

POLICY: We support VDACS filling staff vacancies at Regional Animal Health Laboratories in a timely fashion and maintaining sufficient staff to cover temporary vacancies.

POLICY: We support VDACS expanding available testing and ensuring necropsy services are provided at each Regional Animal Health Laboratory, while keeping services affordable for producers.

POLICY: We support VDACS or other state agencies employing safety specialists to provide safety training and assist farmers and to coordinate training education for fire and rescue personnel in the proper handling of farm and farm vehicle accidents.

Misc. State Agencies 407

POLICY: We recommend the utilization of current funding for quality farm machinery safety and extrication training to be available on a regular basis to Fire and/or EMS personnel or agencies in Virginia. (2018)

Virginia Tech and Virginia State University 410

POLICY: We recommend restoring funding at Virginia Tech and Virginia State for agriculture teaching, research, and extension service, including funding for capital projects. In addition, we believe that Virginia Tech and/or Virginia State University must:

- maintain strong and strategic staffing levels for all Virginia commodities at the Agriculture Research and Extension Centers (AREC)

- be accountable with respect as to how the funding is allocated for teaching, extension, and research
- maintain a strong land grant mission
- maintain a degree program in agricultural education
- strengthen the link between community colleges and Virginia Tech
- have strong representation from the agriculture and forestry industries on the Boards of Visitors
- staff local offices that house a minimum of an agriculture extension agent, a 4-H agent, and a secretary that is funded in accordance with the current arrangement between the localities and Virginia Tech
- consider re-establishing collegiate livestock and horse judging team programs to provide experiential and competitive opportunities for students
- ensure that capital projects are reasonably built and meet the long term needs of the agriculture and forestry industry (a. 2013, a. 2015, a. 2016, a. 2017)

POLICY: We support having at least one member of the agriculture community serving on the Board of Visitors at Virginia State University. (2018)

POLICY: We support funding at Virginia Tech for upgrades to soil test equipment to continue to provide accurate soil samples for agricultural producers at no cost. We can accept an additional fee for more sophisticated testing to support precision ag if the fees are used to enhance equipment. (2015, a. 2017)

POLICY: We support the Virginia Tech College of Agriculture and Life Sciences filling the field crops plant pathologist and entomologist positions as well as the position working on small fruits research at the Southern Piedmont AREC.

Health

Health Care and Health Care Cost Containment Measures

450

POLICY: We support the development and utilization of advanced technological systems such as telemedicine to better serve rural areas.

POLICY: We support multistate reciprocity for medical professionals for the purpose of allowing telemedicine across state lines. We support full reimbursement for telehealth services provided by all healthcare practitioners. (2021)

POLICY: We support equal reimbursement between physicians and advanced practice providers for the same service from Medicare and third-party payers. (2021)

- POLICY:** We believe more research should be done concerning Alpha-gal, Lyme disease, Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever, and other tick-borne illnesses and develop treatments or vaccines for humans.
- POLICY:** We support increased funding and emphasis on training related to farm stress for mental health professionals in rural areas. (2021)
- POLICY:** We support a coalition of Virginia state or local agencies to seek government or private grants to provide workshops for farmers in crisis to help with sorting through options to get assistance with financial restructuring and mental health. (2021)
- POLICY:** We believe that health care is primarily the responsibility of the individual. We support efforts to improve health care delivery and foster health care competition. We encourage revision of present health care laws to include:
- removal of unnecessary mandated benefits which are not applicable to the individual's coverage
 - coverage of only American citizens in exchange for mandatory participation in health coverage without rate differential for health status
 - prohibition of government programs that result in further subsidization by private insurers
 - preservation of a competitive private insurance system with local service agents
 - opposition to a public option or government-run program to provide health insurance including the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act
 - opposition to further reductions in Medicare reimbursement rates to doctors, hospitals, and other health care providers
 - the ability for individuals to purchase health insurance across state lines subject to state regulation
 - requirements that if an individual who can afford health insurance chooses not to purchase coverage, they should be required to pay for medical services received
 - opposition to any measures that could result in the rationing of health care
 - opposition to an employer mandate to provide coverage to existing employees, terminated employees, or if fully implemented, an exemption for agricultural producers from the mandatory requirement to provide health insurance to their employees
 - measures to eliminate fraud from the health care system

- small business health plans and voluntary regional insurance purchasing cooperatives, subject to state-specific regulation where those policies are offered, to permit individuals and small companies to receive the same price advantages that corporations receive (a. 2013, a. 2014, a. 2015, a. 2017)

POLICY: We are opposed to any tax on any agricultural commodity being used to fund a health care program.

Labor

Agricultural Labor

500

POLICY: We support Virginia's Right-to-Work law and Section 14(b) of the Taft-Hartley Act. Further, we oppose any effort to prevent the permanent replacement of strikers.

POLICY: We oppose any increase to the minimum wage that adversely impacts agriculture.

POLICY: We oppose additional employee mandates on farm employers. (2021)

POLICY: We are opposed to any changes in the Workers' Compensation Act that would expand employee benefits resulting in increased rates for the employer. Further, we support the present definition of injury under workers' compensation and the option to pay premiums semi-annually or quarterly. (a. 2021)

POLICY: We oppose funding for and support limiting the authority of Legal Aid regarding agricultural labor.

POLICY: We support opportunities for youth to work on farms under healthy and safe working conditions as defined and regulated by the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). (2015) (a. 2020)

POLICY: We oppose any governmental regulations on extended family members working on farms.

POLICY: We believe that agricultural labor facilities be exempted from regulations as a public waterworks system. (2021)

POLICY: We believe that access to private property by government and private agencies that inspect facilities or provide health care, legal services, and other services to migrant and seasonal farmworkers must be limited to a reasonable frequency, a reasonable time, and with reasonable notice to the employer and employees. (a. 2016)

Immigration

507

POLICY: We oppose any effort to provide local, state, or federally funded governmental services or benefits to undocumented workers. (a. 2021)

Law Enforcement

Judicial System

550

POLICY: We believe law enforcement should receive training on agricultural issues (i.e., farm use) as they enter a rural area. (2017)

POLICY: We support legislation that would require all metal recycling centers to take digital photographs of both the individuals selling scrap and the scrap material they are selling in addition to a copy of the seller's driver's license. These images should be kept for a minimum of 30 days and be available to law enforcement agents to help deter the theft of private property, similar to the law for pawn shops. We further support issuing permits for metal recycling centers and the need for an interstate reciprocity agreement to better combat scrap metal theft. (2011, a. 2015, a. 2021)

POLICY: We support the right of people to keep and bear arms, and we oppose future registration and taxation of all individually owned firearms and ammunition. (a. 2015)

POLICY: The National Appeals Division (NAD) should: have the authority to enforce agency implementation of NAD determinations, streamline or shorten the length of time of the appeal process to allow for a quicker resolution of disputes between producers and agencies, provide clear instructions for implementation of a final determination.

POLICY: The National Appeals Division (NAD) should not allow agencies to reissue a technical determination after the original determination was found erroneous.

POLICY: We believe that damages should be awarded to producers who prevail in a NAD decision.

POLICY: We support state and federal legislation to increase civil or criminal penalties for individuals who break into, vandalize, remove, or contaminate commodities or livestock on an agricultural operation. This applies to production, processing, and/or research facilities. (a. 2017)

Local Affairs

Ag Land Preservation

600

- POLICY:** We believe state land conservation policy should not mandate minimum deed restrictions that prevent a landowner from being able to harvest any viable and legal crops or require implementation of water quality measures above what is required in the Virginia Agriculture Cost-Share Program. (2021)
- POLICY:** We support state funding and promotion of local option farmland preservation programs which allows compensation to owners of such land, and guides growth to urbanizing areas, such as state and/or localities purchasing development rights, transferring development rights, leasing development rights, holding or co-holding perpetual conservation easements, tax credits, or other concepts.
- POLICY:** When development of any kind requires other land be converted to wetlands or exchanged as an offset for non-agriculture water quality requirements, incentives should not disproportionately target the taking of prime farmland out of production in a specific region or adjacent watershed. We also support giving receiving localities the ability to opt-in or opt-out of allowing water quality offsets. (2022)
- POLICY:** We recommend continuing to develop local, state, and federal programs and incentives for new and young farmers to begin or continue farming.
- POLICY:** We support an increase in the cap to \$100,000 each year of allowed conservation easement tax credits per taxpayer. (2018)
- POLICY:** We recommend that all landowners who donate a conservation easement receive a portion of the tax credits in the year that the donation is accepted. (2011)
- POLICY:** We support the land conservation tax credit and that the percentage of value for tax credit purposes should be returned to 50% of the value rather than 40%.
- POLICY:** We support increased funding and a dedicated funding source for Virginia FarmLink and farmland preservation through the VDACS Office of Farmland Preservation.
- POLICY:** We support the continued funding of the position in the VDACS Office of Farmland Preservation to administer farm transitions including coordination of the Farm Link website, maintaining, and updating listings of persons with an agricultural emphasis in the areas of qualified attorneys, tax accountants, estate planners, insurance representatives, agriculture-friendly financial advisors and lenders. (2012, a. 2015, a. 2017)
- POLICY:** We support the Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry establishing primacy over state policies regarding the conservation of farm and forest lands. (2022)

Annexation 605

POLICY: We oppose allowing cities to revert to towns.

Dillon Rule and Local Government 610

POLICY: We support the continuation of the Dillon Rule. (a. 2015)

POLICY: We recommend that towns be required to hold public hearings for ordinances using the same procedure as currently required for counties and cities.

Farm Buildings 615

POLICY: We support the current farm building exemption for production agriculture operations under the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).

Planning and Zoning 620

POLICY: We support the marketing and sales of agricultural products and the preparation and service of food through promotional activities held on farm premises in accordance with state and local rules and ordinances. (a. 2012)

POLICY: We support local control of land use planning. (a. 2016)

Right to Farm 625

POLICY: We believe the Right to Farm Act protects the privileges and rights of farmers to produce without undue or unreasonable restrictions and regulations and provides adequate input in the location of agricultural operations on agriculture and conservation zoned land. We believe a periodic review should be made by VFBF staff to ensure continued protection of farmers under the Act. (a. 2018)

POLICY: We support reciprocal setback or buffers for adjoining landowners for pesticide, fertilizer, or manure applications. (2017)

Natural and Environmental Resources

Air Quality 700

POLICY: We oppose:

- greenhouse gas mandates that adversely impact agriculture
- any attempt to regulate emissions from ruminant animals or any other livestock
- unilateral state, federal, or international greenhouse gas emission reduction requirements

- any carbon cap and trade regulation (2011, a. 2012)

Conservation Programs and Best Management Practices (BMPs)

710

- POLICY:** We support water quality standards and improvement programs that are based on scientific data and realistic goals that recognize farm owner limitations.
- POLICY:** We believe technical assistance, cost-share programs, research, education, and loans should be encouraged, continued, and made available to aid farmers in implementing BMPs. We encourage long term and stable state funding of the Virginia Agricultural Best Management Practices Cost-Share Program from a dedicated revenue source and to pursue alternatives to cost-share programs and incentives for all approved applications of soil and water conservation practices.
- POLICY:** We believe that current voluntary water quality programs adequately protect the water quality of Virginia's rivers and streams. We oppose any river protection plan or designation that limits the landowner's rights to decide how to best use his or her land or put any undue financial burden on any agriculture enterprise.
- POLICY:** We encourage all farmers to implement approved conservation and nutrient management practices that would continue to reduce erosion and improve water quality. We further recommend that agronomic and economic factors be given consideration along with erosion in conservation plans.
- POLICY:** We believe that the fencing of stream banks and/or the right to use rivers and streams for farm animal access shall be done on a voluntary basis. To encourage participation and to facilitate fence maintenance, we support the use of currently approved fencing practices and the use of short-period flash grazing of the setback zone between the top of the bank and the stream exclusion fencing provided adequate temporary fencing is used to keep livestock out of the stream.
- POLICY:** We support incentives allowing for 100% cost-share for stream exclusion with a minimum 25-foot buffer. (2021)
- POLICY:** We believe the Conservation Reserve Program and other programs' land rental rates should not exceed the average agriculture rental rate.
- POLICY:** We encourage more realistic, simplified, and flexible specification for BMP projects that benefit the waters of Virginia. (2020)
- POLICY:** We support the Soil and Water Conservation Boards be composed of a majority of active farmers. We further believe that the Virginia Soil and Water Board should have direct oversight of District funding and operations, the BMP Cost-Share standards and specifications, the Nutrient Management standards and specifications, and the Resource Management Plan Program. (a. 2013, a. 2021, A. 2022)
- POLICY:** We support a grant formula to local Soil Water Conservation Districts that reflects a more equitable and balanced distribution of cost-share funding. (2018)

- POLICY:** We support use of poultry litter, manure, organic fertilizers, ash, and the state-regulated application of biosolids as a source of nutrients on farmland and forestland.
- POLICY:** We encourage the state to be proactive in promoting the concept of converting manure and poultry litter/by-products into fertilizers and other uses. (a. 2017, a. 2018)
- POLICY:** We support the transfer of livestock manure and poultry litter from growers to brokers and end-users as a litter/manure management option. (a. 2012)
- POLICY:** We oppose expansion of the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act to all localities in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. (2020)
- POLICY:** We support eliminating the agriculture requirements under the provisions of the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act as unnecessary since the development of conservation programs and various regulatory permits implemented since its enactment. (2020)
- POLICY:** We oppose enactment of the Virginia Watershed Implementation Plan III recommendation making mandatory nutrient management plans after Dec. 31, 2025, for farms over 50 acres. In addition, we oppose the condition that contract applicators must apply commercial fertilizer on farm operations based on nutrient management plan guidelines as those plans can't be easily adapted to changes made in a farming operation as a result of weather or changes in market conditions for a particular commodity.
- POLICY:** We oppose requiring producers to provide soil samples for the purchase of crop nutrients from fertilizers, animal manure, and other sources except when such requirements are conditions of voluntary assistance programs.
- POLICY:** We believe that land with implemented soil erosion prevention practices and nutrient management through an approved conservation plan be considered in compliance with all TMDL-WIP requirements. (2013)
- POLICY:** We oppose the designation of sprayer nozzles or any other application equipment as point source pollution.
- POLICY:** We believe that compliance with the Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDL) - Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP) requirements is not a prerequisite to participation in land use assessment and taxation or agriculture Best Management Practices Cost-Share programs. (2013)
- POLICY:** We recommend riparian forested buffer installation be voluntary and not mandated by any program, regulation, or law nor promoted above any other best management practice of equal effectiveness in water quality protection. We support riparian plantings and buffers as a beneficial tool to achieve nutrient load reductions for improved water quality. However, we believe the Commonwealth's proposed goals for nutrient load reductions from riparian buffers are not realistic and oppose mandates to achieve these goals in the future.

- POLICY:** We oppose the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s policy determination that riparian forest plantings and livestock exclusion fencing are considered “man-made development” and are therefore regulated by the National Flood Insurance Program. These important conservation activities are critical to meeting the required goals for Chesapeake Bay restoration and, in addition, do not markedly contribute to floodwater rise.
- POLICY:** We support the agriculture and forestry exemption from the Virginia Erosion and Sediment Law; and further believe the exemption should only apply to property actively engaged in forestry, the production of crops or cover crops, or pasture within any 12-month period.
- POLICY:** We favor an expansion of agricultural exemptions from fees for stormwater management permits for non-permeable surfaces including agriculture buildings and roads. (a. 2019)
- POLICY:** We oppose any permit fees for agriculture set by DEQ regulations.
- POLICY:** We support state primacy over all environmental or non-point source regulatory issues.
- POLICY:** We support the full funding of the Agricultural Stewardship Program, housed, and maintained at VDACS, which created an enforcement mechanism to address agricultural water quality concerns. We further believe the program should remain the first point of contact for water quality complaints associated with agriculture.
- POLICY:** We oppose attempts to regulate storage tanks as hazardous when used in agricultural operations.
- POLICY:** We oppose increased regulations for the storage of hazardous materials for agricultural producers.
- POLICY:** We oppose local or state regulatory control over groundwater in karst areas.
- POLICY:** We support community awareness of new air and water permits but oppose pre-application mandates on farmers or forestland owners for developing websites to accept comments, holding public meetings, mailing notifications to residents in a three to five-mile radius.

Dams and Dam Safety

715

- POLICY:** We support maintaining the agricultural exemption from impoundment structure laws and regulations. (2021)
- POLICY:** We support the safe operation, requisite maintenance, and adequate funding for the repair of dams.

- POLICY:** We support strengthening the Right to Practice Forestry law. (2022)
- POLICY:** We support full funding for the Virginia Department of Forestry (VDOF) to continue its resource management, firefighting, water quality programs and direct outreach to landowners. (a. 2022)
- POLICY:** We support full funding for the Reforestation of Timberland Program. (2017)
- POLICY:** We support implementation and expansion of the hardwood and habitat incentive program by the VDOF, emphasizing management practices to improve hardwood stand composition and regeneration. (a. 2022)
- POLICY:** We support the use of clear cutting and prescribed burning as beneficial tools in forest, wildlife, and environmental management. (a. 2022)
- POLICY:** We support funding for state and federal research and control on forestry pests and diseases. (a. 2013, a. 2022)
- POLICY:** We support the continuation of state forestry best management practices (BMPs), prior notification of logging, and the Silvicultural Water Quality Law as the guiding standard for forest management. (a. 2015, a. 2018, a. 2022)
- POLICY:** We support efforts to educate the citizens of Virginia on proper forest conservation and management, including utilizing demonstration plots, signage, and other means in the national and state forests and parks as educational tools. (a. 2018)
- POLICY:** We support treating timber theft as a criminal offense, regardless if property lines are unmarked. We further support strengthening laws to enable DOF to provide basic assistance to landowners trying to seek financial recovery from fraudulent or intentional cases of theft of their timber. (a. 2013, a. 2018)
- POLICY:** We support the management of private, state, and national forests as well as refuges on a multiple-use basis with an emphasis on the production of agricultural and forest products including harvesting based on sound forest management of the renewable resource. (a. 2012)
- POLICY:** We support state primacy over practicing silviculture and oppose giving localities any additional authority over silvicultural operations. (2022)
- POLICY:** We support increased funding for VDOF's urban and community forest program and codifying VDOF's authority as the primary resource on trees.

- POLICY:** We support the population control of wildlife and predatory birds by whatever means necessary in order to lessen damage to crops, livestock, and personal property. (a. 2012)
- POLICY:** We support removal of the black vulture from protected status and additional tools to expedite depredation permits, including the elimination of permit fees. (2013, a. 2014)
- POLICY:** We recommend the Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) lengthen the deer season, increase daily bag limits, and allow either-sex deer to be taken for the entire season, based on local preferences. (a. 2017)
- POLICY:** We support an expanded firearms season for bear hunting to control the black bear population and minimize bear damage to crops.
- POLICY:** We recommend continued support and full funding for the cooperative effort between VDACS, the USDA Animal Damage Control Service, and local trappers in coyote and wildlife control. We support additional funding for staff east of the Blue Ridge. (a. 2013)
- POLICY:** We encourage appointing members of the agriculture community to the Board of Wildlife Resources. (2021)
- POLICY:** We oppose any expansion of the elk management area beyond Wise, Dickenson, and Buchanan counties and support counties' efforts to withdraw from the area. (2016, a. 2021)
- POLICY:** We support the hunting of elk outside the elk management zone on a deer tag rather than on a separate elk tag or by a lottery system.
- POLICY:** We support the deer, bear, and turkey hunting license combination. (2016)
- POLICY:** We oppose introduction or reintroduction into Virginia of any plant, insect, or animal species that adversely affects agricultural and forestry enterprises. (a. 2016)
- POLICY:** We support the use of hunting dogs as currently allowed by state law. (2018)
- POLICY:** We support the law that allows hunters to retrieve their dogs from the property of others; however, when property is posted with detailed contact information, the hunters retrieving the dogs shall contact the landowner to obtain permission prior to entering the property. (a. 2012, a. 2013)
- POLICY:** We oppose the use of dogs to hunt deer and bear on Sunday. (a. 2017, a. 2022)
- POLICY:** We believe crows should be designated as a nuisance species.
- POLICY:** We support the eradication of feral hogs. (2019)

- POLICY:** We believe that endangered species protection programs must balance population preservation with human, economic factors, and private property. (2013, a. 2014)
- POLICY:** We support an extended and uniform statewide migratory and resident Canada Goose hunting season.
- POLICY:** We oppose any anti-trapping law.
- POLICY:** We support lethal trapping of bears as a kill permit option. (2019)
- POLICY:** We encourage the Department of Wildlife Resources to set the deer and bear seasons so that they run concurrently during the bow, muzzle loading, and general firearms seasons.
- POLICY:** We support the ‘Hunters for the Hungry’ program and encourage statewide support and promotion of the program through financial or in-kind contributions.
- POLICY:** We believe that wildlife refuges should be operated in a manner that is compatible with agriculture. We also believe that future expansion of refuges should be by use of easements which do not remove large amounts of productive land from agricultural and forestall production.
- POLICY:** We request that federal and state agencies that administer public lands be required to mitigate crop damage to adjacent lands by wildlife that originates within those public lands.
- POLICY:** We recommend strict enforcement of predator dog laws. We further recommend that the current law requiring compensation for dog damage to livestock be maintained. (a. 2014)
- POLICY:** We oppose changes in the Code of Virginia regarding the licensing of shore blinds for waterfowl. County governments should retain the ability to limit or ban the use of floating blinds within their county.

Weed and Pest Management

735

- POLICY:** We support access to critical agricultural chemicals used for crop production. We support the current arrangement between EPA and VDACS and support increased cooperation to expedite registration of additional new crop protection tools and traits. (2021)
- POLICY:** We oppose the imposition of a fee for the issuance of a private applicator pesticide license. We support inclusion of private applicator pesticide license privileges for any commercial applicator applying to agricultural land they own, rent, or control. (a. 2021)
- POLICY:** We support the implementation of Integrated Pest Management (IPM) practices to control plant and animal pests and recommend continued research of detection, exclusion, and control measures.

- POLICY:** We support an educational program for the general public on the proper use and application of fertilizers and chemicals.
- POLICY:** We encourage voluntary adherence to the pollinator protection program, but we oppose any requirement that pesticide applicators be required to notify all neighbors prior to any pesticide application. (a. 2022)
- POLICY:** We recommend the continuation and expansion of the chemical and chemical container disposal and/or recycling program.
- POLICY:** We strongly recommend that local ordinances, state programs, or management plans be established, implemented, and funded, for control and/or eradication of noxious plants and invasive species. We recommend developing regulations to address the shipping to Virginia of invasive plants and seeds from internet sales. (a. 2016)
- POLICY:** We support the addition of autumn olive, trifoliolate orange, and Bradford pear to the Virginia Noxious Weeds List.

Litter - Solid Waste Disposal 745

- POLICY:** We support enforcement of the existing law and increased penalties for littering.
- POLICY:** We recommend the cost associated with the proper disposal of tires, hazardous waste dumped by others, or the waste associated with illegal activities by others on private property should not be the landowner's responsibility. (a. 2012)
- POLICY:** We favor state and/or local incentives for recycling tires (including large implement tires), batteries, and other recyclable products.
- POLICY:** We support recycling and the use of biodegradable containers, deposits for non-biodegradable beverage and food containers, and waste sorting at landfills.
- POLICY:** We support legislation that would encourage all retailers to use paper bags or reusable canvas bags to reduce the agricultural problems caused by litter from plastic bags.

Nontidal Wetlands 750

- POLICY:** We support local, state, and federal collaborative efforts to develop and implement a plan to mitigate recurrent flooding caused by rainfall and wind tides.
- POLICY:** We believe that wetlands legislation and regulation should only affect tidal wetlands that have hydric soils, saturation for 21 days, and the presence of wet vegetation, and exclude all prior converted farmland and farmed wetlands.

Water Rights

780

- POLICY:** We believe that the Virginia Marine Resources authority should be revoked over riparian ownership as it applies to crown grants designation of ownership of stream beds by those riparian owners.
- POLICY:** We urge the state to develop a uniform water policy that preserves the water rights for farmers.
- POLICY:** We continue to favor the retention of the riparian doctrine in Virginia and oppose the inter-basin transfer of water.
- POLICY:** We support efforts to protect groundwater quantity for drinking and agricultural use. (2014)
- POLICY:** We support legislation that would protect the rights of property owners adjacent to navigable streams from negligent acts by individuals using water for recreational purposes. (2014)
- POLICY:** We encourage farmers to participate in documenting their water usage with DEQ. (2018)
- POLICY:** We believe that navigable waters are only those waterways that have continuous flow 365 days a year, are used for transporting interstate and foreign commerce or can be made navigable for these purposes with reasonable effort.
- POLICY:** We support the current Virginia Code that does not allow for the regulation of ephemeral streams. (2022)

Other

Mining

799

- POLICY:** We support safe and responsible exploration and extraction of natural resources while protecting personal property rights, environmentally sensitive areas, and groundwater supplies. (2012)
- POLICY:** We support continuation of the current moratorium on the mining and/or milling of uranium in the state of Virginia. (2012, a. 2013)
- POLICY:** We believe landowners, farmers, and agribusinesses should be protected from possible adverse impact should the moratorium on uranium be lifted. Should the moratorium be lifted and/or regulations are developed regarding uranium mining and milling, we believe:
- production agriculture should have a voice in developing regulations dealing with the mining and milling of uranium in Virginia
 - the Virginia Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry and a representative

from the Virginia Farm Bureau Federation, Pittsylvania County Farm Bureau, and Halifax County Farm Bureau should be appointed to any board or commission responsible for developing these regulations

- any regulations that may be developed must provide protection for the agricultural industry
- farmers and all landowners should be compensated for damages incurred due to any result of mining or milling activity, and believe the process for a farmer to follow to seek compensation should be clearly defined and economically feasible to pursue (2012, a. 2013, a. 2014)

Tort Reform for Liability Insurance

805

POLICY: We support the right to recover attorney fees and court costs from federal and state agencies and individual persons who institute frivolous or non-meritorious lawsuits. (2018)

POLICY: We support meaningful reform in Virginia tort laws to assure the availability of liability insurance at reasonable rates. To achieve this goal, we support the following tort reform measures to be enacted by the Virginia General Assembly:

- implementation of a sliding scale on contingency fees for attorneys so that the greater the award, the lower the percentage going to the attorney
- modification of the doctrine of joint and several liability so that a defendant who is only partially liable will not wind up paying the entire bill
- abolition of the collateral source rule - juries should be made aware of payments that plaintiffs have received to avoid double or triple recovery
- establishment of limits on medical malpractice claims and a requirement that patients in such cases obtain professional evidence before filing a lawsuit
- placement of a cap on non-economic damages in a single cause of action equal to the higher of \$250,000 or three times the economic damages awarded in the cause of action
- placement of a ceiling on punitive damage awards

Property Rights

Condemnation

850

- POLICY:** We recommend legislation requiring a subcontractor or employees of a condemning entity to notify landowners of the location and purpose of their regular maintenance activities on the property and compensate landowners for any damage to crops, land, livestock, or equipment as a result of the activities.
- POLICY:** We support legislation to require compensation to property owners for all uses of a right-of-way or easement including but not limited to the transmission of electricity, gas, water lines, etc. However, we support the expansion of high-speed internet in rural areas, utilizing existing utility infrastructure, regardless of compensation.
- POLICY:** We believe that the eminent domain laws in Virginia should include the following:
- where at all possible, public lands or existing corridors should be used to avoid the taking of private property in order to minimize the disruption to home, family, and business
 - compensation is based on fair market value of property, taking into account factors that decrease fair market value of residual property including but not limited to magnetic fields, visual blight, loss of revenue due to decreased crop yields, and un-harvestable or damaged commodities
 - full disclosure of how the fair market price was arrived at by the condemning authority prior to any legal action
 - 100% of all relocation expenses paid
 - individuals should be able to recoup legal expenses in condemnation cases where the landowner's valuations are proven to be greater than the original offer by the condemning authority
 - civil penalties for condemners or their agents who misrepresent themselves or operate in a manner that ignores existing law
 - a public utility should not have the authority to condemn property for private entity for any use other than the utility allowing a landowner's ability to challenge a 'quick-take' condemnation for eminent domain when there is opposition to the validity of a need for the condemnation itself
 - revoke the ability of government to condemn land for the purpose of creating public use spaces such as parks, trails, or preserving scenic views (a. 2012, a. 2015, a. 2016, a. 2017)
- POLICY:** We oppose any legislation that would allow state authority over localities, or expand eminent domain authority, in developing utility-scale solar projects. (2022)

Fences

855

- POLICY:** We believe fences are an essential tool for the management of livestock and that Virginia should remain a fence-out state with each county retaining the option to be a fence-in county.
- POLICY:** We believe that the cost of a division line fence should be shared equally between adjoining landowners unless one of them shall elect to allow their land to lie open or unless they shall agree otherwise. We further believe that the cost of such division fence shall reflect the minimum cost of a lawful fence necessary to control the species of livestock.
- POLICY:** We believe fences are an essential tool for the management of livestock and that producers who have well-maintained fences should not be held liable for damages by an escaped animal.

Private Property Rights

860

- POLICY:** We support legislation that would prohibit anyone from taking a video or audio of a farming operation or agribusiness without the approval of the owner when the video or audio is to be used for the purpose of filing legal action against the farm owner and/or when used in any way to negatively impact the farm/farm owner. We oppose any unauthorized aerial surveillance without permission of the landowner; however, we support the use of drones for the beneficial agricultural uses when approved by the farmer. (2012, a. 2013, a. 2014, a. 2015, a. 2016)
- POLICY:** We believe that when original use of a public services easement ceases to exist, then the land the services are on should revert back to the original deeded tracts.
- POLICY:** We oppose requiring deed restrictions or notifications by the state for NASA flight and crash zones. (2017)
- POLICY:** We are opposed to the ‘greenway’ or ‘Rails-to-Trails’ concept that proposes a network of trails and open spaces throughout our countryside without the written informed consent of the adjacent landowner and support of the local government.
- POLICY:** We support the right of landowners to post non-navigable waters on their property.
- POLICY:** We support legislation protecting and securing the rights of private property owners against laws and regulations negatively affecting the market value of their property without the individual owner’s written, informed consent, and compensation.
- POLICY:** We recommend that any government agent or private contractor performing work for a governmental agency, without prior written agreement of the landowner or his/her agent, has to give at least a 24-hour notice before coming on the farmer’s property and send a written explanation of his visit postmarked within 48 hours after leaving the property.
- POLICY:** We support limiting the ability to intervene in regulatory actions against

landowners for environmental problems to adjoining landowners, neighbors, or those directly affected by the alleged violation.

POLICY: We believe that property under conservation easements is still subject to the Virginia laws on pooling of oil and natural gas and that any extraction of oil and gas should also incur royalty payments to the landowners. (2012)

POLICY: We oppose the right of Homeowners Associations to limit agricultural activities in ways that exceed the overriding zoning of the region they operate within.

Trespass 865

POLICY: We recommend establishing minimum penalties for trespassing, stricter enforcement of the trespass law with the court systems enforcing the minimum penalty and/or substantial fines. In addition, we believe that all private land should be considered posted, and the trespasser is held liable for any loss, damage, and up to three times the amount of expenses incurred. We also believe that law enforcement should be given the right to impound the trespassing vehicle.

Spending and Taxes

Agricultural and Forestal Districts 900

POLICY: We support agricultural and forestal districts in Virginia. (a. 2016, a. 2017)

Balancing Governmental Budget 905

POLICY: We believe the Social Security Program should be self-financing by:

- indexing to longevity
- increasing the revenue to the trust fund (by eliminating the cap on FICA payments)
- reducing future cost of living increases to those above certain means levels
- ceasing the utilization of the trust fund as a source of revenue to balance budgets of other line-item programs.

Excise Taxes 910

POLICY: We oppose any increases in taxes on farm products. Further efforts should be made to reduce or eliminate discriminatory taxes on farm products. We support developing a funding formula for returning a portion of tax monies back to those communities that produce that commodity.

- POLICY:** We support the permanent elimination of the estate tax on agricultural businesses, forest land, and agricultural land. (a. 2021)
- POLICY:** We believe grant monies received by an agricultural-based LLC be treated as tax exempt to individual owners. (2018)
- POLICY:** We request the tax code be revised to allow for the deferral of taxes on grants received by small businesses until operation begins. (2012)
- POLICY:** We support the elimination of time limits on the utilization of conservation equipment tax credits.
- POLICY:** We recommend amending the federal and state tax codes to eliminate any income tax liability associated with federal farm payments related to severe weather disaster payments, quota buyout, state master settlement payments, and other federal program payments.
- POLICY:** We oppose the registration and taxation of water tanks and milk tanks in Virginia. (2015)
- POLICY:** We support the refundability of tax credits from the Virginia Department of Taxation include all agricultural best management practices tax credits. We support that all legal entities in Virginia be eligible for all agricultural and conservation tax credits. (2015, a. 2022)
- POLICY:** We recommend that a tax incentive be offered to producers who are forced to make an expenditure outlay in order to comply with federal or state-mandated programs. (2015)
- POLICY:** We support the reinstatement to the Virginia Tax Code of language allowing a \$12,000.00 per person income tax exemption for all persons over the age of 65. (2016)
- POLICY:** We oppose any tax on capital gains. Until the capital gains tax is repealed, we support:
- cutting the tax rate on capital gains
 - indexing capital gains to inflation
 - an exclusion for the sale of agricultural land that remains in production
 - an exclusion for payments for farmland preservation easements and development rights
 - an exclusion for the transfer of a business, including farms, between parent and children

- allowing a taxpayer to defer taxes from the sale of property and machinery by investing the proceeds into a retirement account with taxes due at withdrawal
- eliminating the \$3000 limit on capital losses; and
- an exclusion for land taken through threat of/or by eminent domain (2014)

Land Use Assessment and Taxation 920

POLICY: We believe land use assessment is the most equitable form of taxation of real estate. We strongly encourage all localities use land use assessment. We support:

- strengthening the land use assessment law
- the use of State Land Evaluation and Advisory Council values, and
- no further increases in rollback provisions. (a. 2017, a. 2018, a. 2021)

POLICY: We believe that land protected under a permanent conservation easement be taxed at the land use assessment rate whether or not the county currently has a use-value assessment program. (2016, a. 2017)

POLICY: We support a State Study using the use-value assessment rather than full market value in the composite index. (2016, a. 2017)

POLICY: We oppose utility-scale solar facilities being eligible for land use assessment.

Local Taxes 925

POLICY: We oppose giving locally elected school boards taxing authority.

POLICY: We support restructuring state and local taxes to alleviate pressures on real estate tax to resolve taxing inequities. We further believe that the General Assembly should not shift public service costs from income taxpayers to placing the burden on landowners. (a. 2014, a. 2018)

POLICY: We believe all assessment information for real estate should be readily available to landowners on the internet and mailed to the owner upon reassessment to maintain transparency. (2018)

Mandated Programs 930

POLICY: We insist that all legislation and regulatory action be based on sound scientific evidence, a risk/benefit analysis, and mandated programs should be fully funded for the entirety of the program by those levels of government requiring such programs.

Motor Fuel Taxes

935

POLICY: We oppose any tax on gasoline, diesel, or other energy sources or fuels used for off-road use. (a. 2021)

Sales Taxes

940

POLICY: We support the current sales tax law related to agricultural exclusions. We oppose any application of the sales and use tax on all farm machinery and equipment, including but not limited to skid loaders and compact tractors, used to produce food and fiber for sale. (a. 2014, a. 2022)

POLICY: We urge the state to permit farmers to sell agricultural products that they produce directly to consumers without paying sales tax.

POLICY: We believe all goods and materials, including structural construction materials affixed to real property, bought in order to implement conservation practices should be exempted from sales and use tax. (a. 2017)

Transportation

Department of Motor Vehicles

950

POLICY: We support a formal Farm Use vehicle certification program. (2021)

POLICY: We oppose the abuse of Farm Use tags and encourage the continued education of Farm Use tags and slow-moving vehicle emblems among the general public, and law enforcement agencies, and in driver's education manuals. We believe there should be a continued effort to educate the public on all traffic laws. (2011, a. 2016, a. 2022)

POLICY: We support mandating that all unlicensed farm use vehicles, operated on public highways and manufactured for highway use, have liability insurance and be required to provide proof of insurance.

POLICY: We support amending the unlicensed vehicle laws to allow hauling feed, seed, fertilizer, and other supplies from the supplier of choice even if the distance exceeds the current mileage limit. (2018)

POLICY: We oppose legislation to increase a premium tax on vehicle insurance premiums.

POLICY: We recommend that the State of Virginia removes the non-insured motorist fee of \$500 and that the state law requires liability insurance or no driving.

Federal Motor Carriers Safety Administration

955

POLICY: We believe testing and educational locations for Commercial Drivers Licenses (CDL) should be readily available by increasing testing sites.

Slow Moving Vehicles

960

POLICY: We encourage farmers to use Slow-Moving Vehicle (SMV) signs and flashing lights when traveling on state highways. We also encourage the operators of Slow-Moving Vehicles to allow traffic behind them to pass when it can be done safely. We encourage VDOT and the Virginia State Police to alert motorists of an increase in farm vehicles operating on the roadways during peak planting and harvesting seasons. We believe VDOT and law enforcement should work with operators of farm vehicles when overflow traffic exists at product delivery points. (a. 2014, a. 2022)

POLICY: We encourage VDOT increase the number of “Share the Road” and farm equipment signs on rural roads where significant farming activity takes place. (2022)

Highways

965

POLICY: We support a state highway system that will facilitate the safe and efficient movement of goods and services throughout the state. We support increased state funding for improving the safety and maintenance of farm-to-market roads with special emphasis on unsafe and inadequate bridges and signage for farm equipment. We oppose any unreasonable increase in the truck license fees and any increases in overweight fines. (a. 2018)

POLICY: We recommend that VDOT maintain their right-of-ways in a timely fashion. We encourage the trimming of tree limbs to a minimum height of 15 feet, mowing, and herbicide application to prevent seedhead formation of noxious weeds on the roadsides. We further recommend the use of certified weed-free seed when seeding is conducted. (a. 2012, a. 2015, a. 2018)

POLICY: We encourage VDOT, or the responsible agency, to conduct routine and regular cleaning of road ditches and culverts and maintenance of their right-of-ways to allow proper drainage and protect highway infrastructure.

POLICY: We support a simplified process from VDOT for installing an entrance for agricultural and forestry purposes with all bonds returned upon completion. (2015, a. 2021)

POLICY: We support a private landowner being able to put a logging entrance or other access road on their own property without putting up a bond. (2015)

POLICY: We believe when improvements are made to highway infrastructure, it should be able to support modern farm equipment and emergency vehicles. (a. 2016, a. 2018)

POLICY: We support making overweight permits legal on interstate highways.

- POLICY:** We believe the proposals to widen Interstate 81, in particular, the toll truck lanes, should be monitored to minimize any detrimental effects on Virginia agriculture. We resolve that adequate local access be provided with any new improvements to I-81. Further, we support rail with upgraded tracks and crossings to carry whole trucks and their freight to relieve highway traffic in the I-81 and I-95 corridors. (a. 2018)
- POLICY:** We believe VDOT should take the responsibility to maintain the fences on the interstate highways right-of-ways.
- POLICY:** We oppose the transfer of maintenance and upkeep of secondary roads from state to county government. (2014)
- POLICY:** When there is a need to bury an irrigation pipe under a road for irrigation, we oppose having any of the \$5,000 bond retained in case there is a need to take the pipe back up. (2014, a. 2018)
- POLICY:** We support requiring that all commercial trash trucks, both full and empty, be covered while traveling on highways.
- POLICY:** We believe the Smart Scale system used for transportation funding be changed to allow more funding to rural road projects. (2022)
- POLICY:** We encourage VDOT to install signs and guard rails with adequate width to allow for passage of modern large farm machinery. (2022)

Transportation Systems

970

- POLICY:** We encourage improvements to river transportation systems, ports, and harbors to efficiently transport agriculture and forest products.

Railroads

975

- POLICY:** We support improved safety strategies to protect the safety of farmers at farm railroad crossings. (2021)