

Policy of the



**Adopted by members of the New England Farmers
Union**

The New England Farmers Union (NEFU) was formed and recognized in November, 2006. Six states comprise its membership: Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont, Connecticut and Rhode Island. Since its founding, NEFU and the National Farmers Union have worked closely with the Cape Cod Cranberry Growers' Association, the Cape Cod Commercial Hook Fishermen's Association, and Organic Valley dairy cooperative to bring agricultural and fisheries issues to members of Congress and other leaders in Washington, DC.

New England Farmers Union's mission:

- to increase the economic viability of family farms and fishing operations
- to foster the development of sustainable food production in New England
- to invest in nutrition education and increase connections between farmers and consumers

We also support the development of renewable energy resources for farm use, and from farm and forest sources. NEFU's goals for the next three years are to bring together policy makers in Washington with leaders and consumers in six states to fashion a food policy and a 2012 Farm Bill that benefits the farmers, foresters and fishermen in this diverse and resourceful region.

New England Farmers Union

PO Box 226

5 State Street, 3rd Floor
Shelburne Falls, MA 01370

413.625.3051

www.newenglandfarmersunion.org

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. PREAMBLE	1
II. AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS	3
Specialty Crops: Fruits, Vegetables and Horticulture	
Dairy	
Hay And Pasture	
Livestock	
Seed Banks/Local Varietals	
Honey/Pollination	
Maple Syrup	
Tree Farms and Forestry	
Aquaculture	
Fisheries	
Industrial Hemp	
III. MANAGEMENT PRACTICES.....	12
Organic Agriculture Programs and Standards	
Genetically Modified Organisms and Biotechnology	
Antibiotic Use	
Animal Welfare / Husbandry / Well-Being	
Appropriate Technology Development	
Low Energy Low Input Biological Systems	
Invasive Species	
Nutrient Density	
The Environment and the Family Farm	
IV. GOVERNMENT ROLE IN AGRICULTURE	16
Government Support	
Government Regulation	
V. ENERGY	27
Renewable Energy	
Biodiesel	
Biofuels / Biomass Combustion / Pellet Mills	
Biomass Crops	
Biomass Project Financing	
Gasification / Biochar Production	
District Heating Cooling and Cogeneration	
Low Carbon Fuel Standards	
Soil Based Carbon Sequestration	
Soil Carbon Standards	
Carbon Off-Sets / Credits / Trading	
Ethanol	
Wind and Solar Energy	
Energy Reserves/Resources Landowners' Rights	
Electric Transmission Lines	
Stray Voltage	
VI. INTERNATIONAL TRADE	33
International Trade Standards	

VII. CO-OPERATIVES 35

- Capper-Volstead Act
- Co-operative Financing
- Co-operative Mergers and Consolidation
- Co-operative Affiliations
- Block Voting
- Outsourcing Product
- USDA Cooperative Development Services
- Other Co-Operative Sectors

IX. LAND TENURE 39

- Land Access and Tenure
- Farm Transfer and Succession

X. NUTRITION 41

- School Milk
- Universal Breakfast Program
- Afternoon Milk Program
- Government Nutrition Programs
- School Lunch Program
- Fast Food Industry
- Food and Nutrition Services

XI. ECONOMICS AND THE FAMILY FARM 43

- Farm Credit
- Health (Or Medical) Savings Accounts
- Tax Deductibility for Health Insurance
- Farm Savings Accounts

I. PREAMBLE

We, the members of the New England Farmers Union (NEFU), in the following policy statement, strive to articulate the fundamental principles for a food, fiber and energy policy that will be essential to our region's long-term sustainability. These issues transcend every social, economic, environmental and geographic boundary of our region. We are interconnected, and we are still dependent on the soil underneath our feet and the waters off our shores. We believe that in order to maximize New England's strengths and take advantage of numerous opportunities, we must develop a regional voice for a wide range of issues. This policy book is our contribution to that mission.

Our vision of the New England Farmers Union is that we can help New England preserve and grow its capacity to feed and fuel itself. Climate change, peak oil, growing populations, unstable markets, the paradox of increased obesity and persistent hunger – all of these factors and more will change New England in the next several decades. Farmers, fishermen and other producers of food, fiber, plants and forests will be leaders, innovators, and catalysts for a world in which we will be forced to be more self-reliant and resilient.

But farmers, fishermen and others can't do it alone. They need an army of citizen advocates who will engage with policy, the "rules of the game," and who will become active at state and federal levels. They need a network of professionals to help them test and improve producing and processing methods. They deserve government officials who understand the complexities of harvesting from the land and sea, who bring the latest technologies to bear on every issue, and who fight for New England's concerns with their supervisors in Washington, DC.

New England Farmers Union is part of a larger Farmers Union family. Over 200,000 members – farmers and non-farmers – participate in activities of the 25 state and regional chapters. The National Farmers Union (NFU), founded in Texas in 1902, has a long history of progressive, even populist, policies. The Farmers Union symbol, a triangle with "education" at its base and "cooperation" and "legislation" on each side, symbolizes that FU is dedicated to the advancement of the profession of family farm agriculture and fisheries and to providing an enhanced quality of life for people everywhere.

We, the members of New England Farmers Union, hold these policies as fundamental and pertinent to New England agriculture, forestry and fisheries, and to their relationships with the residents of the region. To us, adherence to these policies will cause a substantial number of independent families to continue farming and fishing our lands and seas, and these policies, as a result, will give support to our interdependent communities – rural and urban. We reaffirm our dedication to the preservation and strengthening of family farmers and fishermen in New England and adopt the following policy to serve as a guideline in accomplishing our goals.

VISION STATEMENT

New England Farmers Union envisions a New England with the capacity to feed and fuel itself in a manner that maintains the integrity and diversity of the ecology of the region.

MISSION STATEMENT

New England Farmers Union, a member-driven organization, is committed to enhancing the quality of life for family farmers, fishermen, nurserymen, and their customers through educational opportunities, co-operative endeavors and civic engagement.

DEFINING MODERNIZATION

NEFU supports state and federal efforts to assist family-sized farms, fisheries, greenhouse and nursery businesses and lumbering enterprises with increased levels of resources, training, education and opportunity. We call on regional and federal policy makers to explore alternative sources of capital for growing New England infrastructure for processing food and fiber. We support co-operatives owned and controlled by farmers and fishermen, nurserymen and forest landowners, workers and consumers.

DIVERSIFIED AGRICULTURE

New England's diversified agriculture base provides many opportunities for rural economic development. NEFU supports efforts to grow, manufacture and distribute agricultural products for local and regional consumption, which may include community-supported agriculture, local feed supplies and farmers markets, co-operative milling and other processing, as well as medium-scale value-chains that support close and just producer-consumer relationships.

SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

NEFU encourages the growing interest among farmers, consumers and environmentalists in adopting and promoting sustainable agriculture practices that protect the soil and reduce the need for chemical and petroleum based pesticides and fertilizers. We support increased research at the land grant universities in New England with a higher priority placed in interdisciplinary research on the social, economic and environmental effects of agricultural policies, technologies, chemicals, and biotechnologies.

FAIR TRADE

NEFU supports the Fair Trade movement and encourages collaboration among farmers, consumers, workers and advocacy organizations in acknowledging the role of all stakeholders in agriculture and their common interest in a more healthy, just and sustainable food system that supports family farmers, sustains rural communities and provides us all with sustenance.

II. AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS

SPECIALTY CROPS: FRUITS, VEGETABLES AND HORTICULTURE

Specialty crops include fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, nursery crops, floriculture and horticulture including turf grass, sod and herbal crops.

NEFU Priorities:

1. Mandatory federal funding for a safety net program to allow producers to earn the cost of production plus a reasonable profit from the marketplace;
2. Federal and state policies to increase investment in research, marketing and risk management targeted toward specialty crop production with a focus on sustainable practices and local and regional distribution systems
3. USDA's promotion of buying local and regional agricultural products as a means to provide new and larger markets for smaller specialty crop farmers. Local products may be defined as being produced within the immediate area, state, or within 100 miles, while the region may be defined as within the six New England states, New York and adjacent areas of Canada;
4. Promotion of farm-to-school and farm-to-institution programs;
5. Promotion of farmers' markets and community-supported agriculture (CSA) to allow consumers greater access to fresh produce and to allow smaller-scale farmers opportunities to market directly to consumers;
6. Language to ensure farmer-friendly and transparent means for certified organic farmers to simultaneously qualify for higher tier Conservation Stewardship Program opportunities;
7. Removal of barriers and provide incentives so that farmers markets and farm stands can redeem food stamps (SNAP), WIC coupons and other federal nutrition program vouchers;
8. Adoption of double value benefits for SNAP at farmers markets;
9. Development of community-based enterprises (i.e., Community Food Projects program) and farmer-owned co-operatives for marketing, processing, aggregation and distribution.
10. Mandatory funding for the Specialty Crop Act. Specialty crop block grants that are provided to states should be provided to producers and qualified service providers (for example, state and regional "Buy Local" organizations and efforts) and not replace state budgets;

NEFU supports:

1. Collaboration with consumer, culinary and other food groups to promote U.S. specialty crops;
2. Protection for specialty crop producers from competitive markets during the primary harvest season for perishable crops (window of harvest);
3. Geographically Disadvantaged provisions for U.S. areas not included in main farm

programs, including Alaska, Hawaii and Puerto Rico; and

4. The purchase of surplus fruits and vegetables through Section 32 and bonus buy programs for distribution through federal food aid programs;
5. Flexibility in USDA crop commodity programs to allow occasional fruit and vegetables production and maintain full program eligibility;

NEFU needs to discuss:

1. *All programs in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program, including Farmers' Market Nutrition Programs, and the Farmers' Market Women Infant and Children (WIC) coupon program. These programs are mutually beneficial for specialty crop producers by providing a market opportunity and low-income consumers who receive high-quality, locally produced farm fresh products;*
2. *Removal of the restrictions for purchase of organic products under the WIC program and application of a more consistent standard of WIC-acceptable products between states. This includes explicit barriers, such as WIC recipients being expressly prohibited in some states from using their WIC certificates or vouchers for organic versions of WIC foods, as well as indirect barriers, such as rules that make it difficult for retail stores that carry organic foods from participating in the program.*
3. *Should farmers markets include farm stands*

DAIRY

NEFU supports policies at the federal and state levels that preserve and protect the New England region's dairy industry, assure a nationwide supply of milk from a diverse number of dairy operations and that assure milk producers a fair return on their labor and investment. NEFU recognizes that the present structure for the processing, packaging, marketing and pricing of farm milk is causing growing harm to New England dairy families and threatens the future supply of fresh, high-quality, locally produced milk and dairy products for the region's consumers.

NEFU Priorities:

1. Continuation of the Milk Income Loss Contract (MILC) program that has provided significant benefits to small and medium sized farms and for that program to be based on criteria that account for the higher overhead costs for New England Dairy Farmers.
2. Require full transparency in the calculation of producer pay prices by co-operatives, proprietary handlers and other entities purchasing and marketing farm milk.
3. Assure all domestic and imported dairy products comply fully with U.S. standards for identity, food safety and country-of-origin labeling.
4. Enforce antitrust laws to prevent predatory and anticompetitive behavior by processors and marketers of dairy products.
5. Encourage growth of markets for farm milk through research and development of new

products and through expansion of exports. Support regional “buy local” efforts.

6. State Raw Milk Policies

NEFU supports the legalization of raw milk sales, in conjunction with rigorous milk-handling inspections and consumer education. Oversight of raw milk sales should be the jurisdiction of state departments of agriculture.

7. The merging of the Livestock Gross Margin Program (LGM) with the Adjusted Gross Margin Revenue Lite (AGR Lite) Program and make the program more consumer friendly and more applicable to small scale dairy operations that provide significant support to their rural community

8. NEFU opposes the use of the label "milk" for any product not derived from milk.

NEFU Supports:

1. Establish a national supply management program that balances milk supply with demand and allow the farmer to choose their production base from any three month consecutive period in the previous 12 months. Such a system should be designed to align production with market demand, prevent the extreme peaks and valleys of farm milk prices that characterize the dairy industry currently, and allow sufficient flexibility to permit entry of new producers and to keep up with growing population and changing production technology.
2. Base pricing formulas on surveys of competitive milk prices actually paid to dairy farmers from cheese manufacturers from across the country rather than on voluntary limited reporting on opaque, thinly traded wholesale commodity exchanges.
3. Recommend a national 400,000 Somatic Cell Count to increase the quality of milk and farm profitability.
4. Assure adequate supplies of milk and dairy products are always available for school lunch, food relief and other nutrition and humanitarian programs especially by fully utilizing the Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) that distribute dairy product to Food Banks and local food distribution agencies..
5. Milk Fortification - Increase demand and supply disappearance in the short term with milk fortification program
6. Require both mandatory and voluntary deduct programs such as milk promotion, beef checkoff and CWT to demonstrate actual enhancement of producer income.
7. Provide grants to encourage dairy farmers to employ sound environmental and conservation practices and provide resources to assist them in achieving sustainable stewardship goals. Increase counter cyclical payment for environmental practices that address the social, economic and environmental benefits of dairy farm to some communities.

8. Acknowledge the impact of non-market influence and artificially inflated costs of input for New England Dairy Farmers including ethanol mandate and subsidies, air and water regulations, ‘freedom to farm’ within and increasing urban environment, labor costs, and lack of infrastructure.
9. Grant based incentives directed specifically at ‘at risk’ small operations that lack resources to:
 - Lower inputs (energy, fuel).
 - Change production practices to enable long term lower cost production.
 - Initiate value-added programs.
 - Allow for whole herd buyout for herds under 200 cows with lifetime prohibition on returning to dairy and a 10 year agricultural restriction on development.
 - Allow for one-time payment to herds under 200 cows to permanently limit production to current levels or a stable pay price fixed to costs of production as defined by USDA tied to a fixed quota of milk entering commerce.
10. Maintain high levels of quality and food safety in the entire dairy industry through effective regulation by USDA, FDA and counterpart state agencies.

NEFU Needs to Discuss:

1. FMMO to utilize regional pricing based on cost of production

HAY AND PASTURE

NEFU believes that hay, forage crops for hay, cover crops and managed pasture should be considered program crops for purposes of government payments. Farmers who grow forage crops for hay or pasture get little direct financial assistance from farm programs, and USDA assistance for the land used for these important crops is extremely limited, even though the crops are very sustainable and well-suited in conservation plans. Their use should be encouraged, not penalized, as is presently done. NEFU values these crops and believes they should be guaranteed financial assistance comparable to other crops that can be grown on the same land. States should fund grazing specialist positions.

NEFU Priorities:

1. Increased funding for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) program as it is invaluable to graziers.
2. Funding for state agricultural agencies and extension services to research and develop localized varieties of forage and hay crops appropriate to each state’s climate and soils.
3. Creation of more intensive dairy grazing research facilities in active and retired research facilities. Forage research should include the research needs of small to medium size

rotational grazing as well as larger farms that focus more on stored forages.

LIVESTOCK

NEFU believes that livestock agriculture, which has been a strong part of the culture, heritage and economy of agriculture in New England, continues to play a significant role and must be supported. As such, NEFU supports a producers' right to own and raise livestock and have livestock recognized as personal property.

Livestock health is critical to production agriculture and our nation's ability to provide a safe food supply. Achieving the necessary means to ensure livestock health is a priority for NEFU.

Further, NEFU believes that the unrestricted importation of livestock and livestock products is causing serious damage to our domestic industry. Additionally, a lack of meat import inspection poses an increased potential of contaminated food reaching tables in the U.S. We recommend that Congress take appropriate steps to protect U.S. livestock producers from unfair trading practices.

NEFU Priorities:

1. Support the promotion of animal welfare, as opposed to animal rights initiatives which would limit production agriculture by imposing mandatory restrictions on traditional methods of agricultural animal production
2. Opposes a ban on the slaughter of horses. We oppose the criminalization of individuals processing, shipping, transporting, purchasing, selling, delivering, or receiving any horse, horse flesh, or carcass for the purpose of harvest.
3. Supports a call for the reinstatement of facilities to deal with the humane disposal of horses.
4. Continue to allow FDA to permit the use of therapeutic antibiotics approved for use in livestock unless valid scientific evidence proves the product is unsafe, and support producers' right to treat his or her animals with antibiotics to maintain herd health while opposing the constant subtherapeutic use of antibiotics;
5. Require more vigorous inspection of imported meats to ensure foreign standards are equal to U.S. standards
6. In order to maintain consumer confidence in the safety and wholesomeness of meat and poultry products, New England Farmers Union urges USDA to ensure that continuous meat inspection systems remain in effect and do not move toward a risk-based system
7. Require conspicuous labeling throughout the processing chain identifying:
 - a. point of origin,
 - b. date of kill,
 - c. whether meat was frozen, and
 - d. the date/dates the meat was subsequently refrozen
8. Educate the public regarding the important use of animals for agricultural and medical

research. Any illegal actions taken by animal rights organizations toward producers should be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law

NEFU Supports:

1. Investigate the impact of foreign pricing practices on the U.S. market
2. Impose countervailing duties to offset subsidies paid to foreign exporters
3. Require the amount of imported meat and live animals intended for slaughter be reported weekly
4. Re-establish Section 301, allowing for the United States to impose trade sanctions against foreign countries that the USTR determines applicable
5. Re-establish the Meat Import Act which was replaced under the Uruguay Round by replacing the existing tariff-rate quota system with an import quota system
6. Require end-use certificates to monitor the flow of livestock being imported
7. Strengthen USDA and FDA safety standards to prevent bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) contaminated products from being imported
8. Ban meat and/or meat products from foreign countries that allow use of medications or additives not approved for use in the U.S.
9. Require more vigorous inspection of imported meat processing facilities to ensure foreign standards are equal to U.S. standards
10. Prohibit ground and shaved meat from being imported into the U.S
11. Enforce all existing quarantine requirements and health standards as set forth by USDA/Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) regarding imports of livestock and other commodities
12. Fully fund a disease (such as chronic wasting disease) eradication program, including testing of non-traditional livestock species and imported livestock and livestock byproducts
13. Ban livestock, animal protein products and meat imports that would jeopardize U.S. efforts to eradicate livestock diseases including BSE and Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD)
14. Encourage congressional support for emergency economic assistance for producers who have suffered economic and market losses as a result of an incident of livestock disease as covered by the Animal Health Protection Act (PL 108-498)
15. Establish funding for a voluntary Johne's Disease testing program
16. Increase research on transmission modes, vaccine regimes and protocol for vesicular stomatitis by federal officials and private organizations
17. Re-evaluate the quarantine restriction and reclassification of vesicular stomatitis from

a Class A to a Class B disease

18. Prevent Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) through:

1. Increasing federal and international research to understand and prevent BSE,
2. Continuing the ban on processing, blending and shipping, from the site where tested, of meat from an animal that has been tested for BSE until the results are available to appropriate parties,
3. Rescinding the USDA rules that allow the import of livestock and meat products from countries with active disease outbreaks without Congressional oversight and producer and consumer input,
4. Continuing ban on animal and meat imports from countries with BSE outbreaks until the disease is controlled and/or eradicated,
5. Banning all meat and feed imports from countries that have not implemented and enforced a ruminant-to-ruminant feed ban,
6. Prohibiting the importation of animal protein products from countries that cannot certify BSE- and transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSE)-free products,
7. Prohibiting TSE-positive materials in non-ruminant feeds, and
8. Cross-referencing all regulations for complete consistency of standards

19. Develop a comprehensive strategy to help producers detect and eliminate stray voltage. The strategy should include research on stray voltage, inspectors to detect the problem, and public education about funding available to assist producers who have suffered losses due to stray voltage

20. Enforce Section 21 General Requirement Rule 215-B of the National Electric Safety Code to prohibit using the ground as the sole conductor or return to utilities substations

21. Require user-fees for importers to implement inspections and disease prevention

23. Encourage Congress to continue funding research and prevention methods for all harmful and life-threatening strains of Avian (Bird) Flu and H1N1. USDA should develop a strategic plan to help producers detect, monitor and eradicate infected animals.

Vaccination compensation for mandatory culling should be directed toward producers with limited finances to prevent the driving out of small producers.

NEFU Needs to Discuss:

Encourage responsible care and management of animals to provide for the welfare of herds and flocks

Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs)

NEFU believes that proposals for very large livestock operations must be individually scrutinized and that any effort to make permits easier to obtain must result in heightened enforcement of state

regulations of specific areas of concern.

NEFU supports the use of anaerobic digester and biomass combustion technology for CAFO Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans.

NEFU supports the study of anaerobic digester and biomass combustion technology and associated nutrient byproducts (such as ash and digestate) for air and water quality effects at CAFO sites, and the development of improved best management practices that retain nutrients and reduce pathogens from animal waste on agricultural lands.

NEFU supports continued and stronger enforcement of Clean Air Act and Clean Water Act rules at CAFO sites, and research on the removal of nutrients from animal wastes that may pollute air and water and on the impact of pharmaceuticals and other contaminants.

SEED BANKS/LOCAL VARIETALS

Seed Banks

Seed is a critical foundation to crop agriculture and horticulture. As depositories of priceless plant genetics, seed banks represent future food security. Seed banks must contain the greatest genetic diversity possible, must organize, catalog and preserve those resources competently and completely, and must allow clear use and access to seed breeders, farmers, serious agriculturalists and other professionals. The nature of the seed bank mission – maintaining the broadest diversity of genetic resources possible for future potential uses – is a significant benefit to society in general and agriculture in particular. As a strategic public asset, NEFU believes that funding for seed banks should be viewed as a societal investment, akin to public libraries and funding for classical plant and animal breeding should be a priority area within the Agriculture and Food Research Initiatives (AFRI) process and the Agriculture Research Service (ARS).

Locally Adapted Seed

Agriculture is diverse so it follows that seed resources also should be diverse to meet the varying needs of local agriculture. The world has an incredible diversity of climates, soils, growing seasons, elevations and crop production challenges. Successful crop production requires seed that is locally adapted to regional conditions and plants that display resiliency and elasticity in the face of sometimes difficult growing conditions. NEFU supports local seed producers who produce locally adapted seed and in doing so create new market opportunities and contribute significantly to regionally self-reliant, successful agriculture.

HONEY/POLLINATION

Pollinators are vital to agriculture and in particular the production of fruits and vegetables. Bee pollinated forage and hay crops such as clover and alfalfa are also used to feed livestock and dairy animals. Introduced parasites have had a significant impact on honey bees in the U.S. Undetermined factors have led to an observed collapse in the bee populations, commonly referred to Colony Collapse Disorder.

NEFU priorities:

1. Agricultural research and education to encourage innovative approaches to protecting

honeybee health and improve genetic stocks of honeybees

2. Development and expanded research to enhance native pollinators
3. Encouraging EPA to enforce its pesticide use-labels to ensure proper application of pesticides
4. Encouraging collaboration between the pesticide manufacturing and pollinator industries to educate applicators and producers about the potentially harmful effects of pesticides on pollinator populations
5. Continued monitoring of pest populations and pest control methods
6. Continued monitoring of pollinator imports, accidental importation of pests and invasive species
7. Ensuring that pollinator-beneficial habitat and best management practices are eligible for cost-sharing assistance and incentives in USDA conservation programs intended to assist producers
8. Public research for the causes on Colony Collapse Disorder.

MAPLE SYRUP

NEFU priorities:

1. Testing and penalties for adulteration of products sold as “pure maple syrup”
2. Eligibility of maple syrup under the USDA Senior Farmers’ Market Nutrition Program
3. Research and development of energy-saving technology in the maple syrup industry
4. Policies that allow for responsible tapping of maple trees on public land
5. Classification of maple syrup as a ‘specialty crop’ under USDA guidelines
6. The formation of producer and marketing co-ops to support the viability of small land holders and sugaring operations.

NEFU needs to discuss:

Voluntary grading systems for maple syrup

TREE FARMS AND FORESTRY

The economic well-being, as well as the independent existence of family-sized tree farmers, is threatened by regulatory uncertainty, over-regulation of wetlands, and restraining buffer zones. NEFU supports the family-sized tree farmers who share problems similar to other agriculture producers.

NEFU encourages private landowners to adopt collaborative sustainable forest management practices, including but not limited to completion and implementation of forest stewardship management plans as recognized by USDA’s Forest Service.

NEFU encourages public-land managers to support and facilitate the formation of locally owned co-operatives and businesses to harvest and process forest products. Sustainable forestry and forestry practices should meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs by practicing a land stewardship ethic that integrates reforestation and the managing, growing, nurturing and harvesting of trees for useful products and ecosystem services such as the conservation of soil, air and water quality, carbon, biological diversity, wildlife and aquatic habitats, recreation, and aesthetics.

NEFU Priorities:

1. The implementation of sustainable forestry by ensuring long-term forest productivity and yield based on the use of the best scientific information available;
2. Long-term forest productivity, carbon storage and conservation of forest resources through prompt reforestation, soil conservation, afforestation and other measures;
3. Developing and implementing stand- and landscape-level measures that promote habitat diversity and the conservation of forest plants and animals, including aquatic species;
4. Encouraging forest landowners to utilize the services of forest management and harvesting professionals;
5. The use of best management practices to protect water quality;
6. Conserving biological diversity, biodiversity hotspots and high-biodiversity wilderness areas;
7. Avoiding illegal logging;
8. Research, science, and technology, upon which sustainable forest management decisions are based;
9. The implementation of sustainable forestry practices through appropriate training and education programs; and
10. The formation and support of forestry co-ops as a mechanism for sustaining small, locally owned woodlots and landholders.

AQUACULTURE

Aquaculture is an important means of providing healthy seafood. Every year the United States imports enormous amounts of seafood into this country. In fact seafood is the third largest portion of our national deficit behind petroleum and automobiles. In 2004 we imported over \$11 billion of seafood. New England aquaculturalists are a leading supplier of fresh, sustainable and locally grown seafood. These farmers are helping preserve working waterfronts and communities linked to the sea. Our water farmers make their living on and literally in the water every day. Healthy ecosystems with high water quality and diverse habitats are a key ingredient in our sustainably grown healthy seafood.

FISHERIES

Fisheries trusts

NEFU supports the development of local “Fisheries Trusts” which will protect depleted fisheries resources, reinvigorate fishing businesses and revitalize coastal fishing communities. These trusts will allow small communities to work together to buy permits that would be financially unavailable otherwise and will offer financial incentives to fishermen that are willing to adopt legally binding leasehold covenants that end overfishing, limit habitat impacts and minimize bycatch.

Fishing permits

Small boat fishermen and their communities are struggling to maintain their fishing heritage due to the rapid increase in the cost of fishing permits. NEFU supports limiting the shifting of quota from small vessels to larger, commercial boats. Any transaction of fishing rights would have to take place within size classes according to the boat that the permit was initially attached to, or to a smaller vessel. This would essentially be “binning” a permit so that large boat owners with more capital could not buy up the entire market.

Ecosystem based management

NEFU supports incorporating a holistic view into all future fisheries management where the cost/benefits to the ecosystem are part of any decision. Ecosystem Based Management considers the whole ecosystem, including humans and the environment, rather than managing one issue or resource in isolation.

Infrastructure

As the number of fishermen using small ports throughout New England has decreased, attention paid to the infrastructure they rely on has dissipated. If we are to have local, small boat fishing in New England, provisions need to be made to ensure that docks, piers, moorings, dredging, and offloading facilities are maintained and available for current and future generations of fishermen.

Selective harvesting practices

NEFU supports selective harvesting practices for fishermen that allow for healthy stocks to be targeted while at-risk stocks are avoided. This would include both supporting current selective harvesting practices and the development of new fishing gear or techniques.

Community supported fisheries

Development of new marketing models like Community Supported Fisheries that provide both a fair livelihood for fishing families and the sustainability of the fishery. NEFU supports extension of USDA Rural Development support for these projects.

Fishery & Aquaculture Co-ops

NEFU encourages the formation, support and promotion of fishery and aquaculture co-ops as mechanisms for supporting fishing families, sustain fishing communities and maintaining local ownership and control of infrastructure.

INDUSTRIAL HEMP

The North American Industrial Hemp Council has been leading a nationwide effort to educate government officials and the public about the agricultural benefits of re-establishing the use of industrial hemp, and several states including Vermont, Missouri, North Dakota, Hawaii, and Colorado have either passed legislation or are considering legislation to permit research into the viability and economic potential of industrial hemp production in the United States and the planting of test plots using modern agricultural techniques. NEFU supports state legislation to permit research and test plots in the New England states.

III. MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

ORGANIC AGRICULTURE PROGRAMS AND STANDARDS

NEFU recognizes the importance of organic farming as a method to help family farms remain viable and as critical to environmental protection and consumer health. Organic farming is a management-intensive approach designed to emulate natural systems as much as possible in producing crops and livestock, and should be maintained as a distinct market

NEFU priorities:

1. Maintaining organic livestock and poultry production standards that are uniform for growers at all scales and account for feeding and animal health care practices as well as access to the out-of-doors which in totality reflect a humane animal husbandry model;
2. Ensuring accreditation and certification costs do not discriminate against small producers;
3. Maintaining and protecting the integrity of organic labeling;
4. Labeling standards encouraging the sale of organic products while not limiting opportunities to market other clearly defined natural or sustainably produced food products, or those adhering to Fair Trade principles and standards;
5. Requiring USDA to maintain the role of the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) as the official source of developing policies and procedures to interpret and implement the federal organic standards. Adequate staffing must be provided to enable the NOSB to fulfill its obligation to organic producers. Farmer or self-employed members of the NOSB should be given financial compensation for loss of earning, increased costs or other specific costs associated with serving on the Board to ensure that they are able to apply for and serve on this volunteer Board;
6. The clear definition, enforcement and monitoring of the USDA National Organic Program (NOP) for which the USDA acts as the accreditor;
7. Sufficient funding for the USDA NOP to administer and enforce the standards of the \$25 billion industry;
8. Close scrutiny of Organic Certifiers qualifications and performance by the USDA National Organic Program (NOP) with mandatory training and licensing of organic inspectors;
9. Adequate and a comparable percentage to non-organic funding for collection of organic data for this \$25 billion industry. As the organic industry matures and grows at a rapid rate, the lack of national data for the production, pricing, and marketing of organic products has been an impediment to further development of the industry and to the effective functioning of many organic programs within USDA.
10. Protecting organic producers from chemical and/or genetic pollution and providing reasonable redress for any damage caused by this drift;
11. GMO contamination prevention: those who seek to avoid GE products must take reasonable precautions to avoid commingling. But when reasonable precautions are not enough, those who own, promote and profit from the technology must be held to their responsibility for the economic and market harm caused by their products.
12. The expectation of the organic consumer by prohibiting genetically modified organisms, irradiation and the use of sewage sludge;

GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISMS AND BIOTECHNOLOGY

Genetically modified organisms (GMOs) have created a series of ethical, environmental, food safety, legal, market and structural issues that impact everyone in the food chain. Consumer and producer concerns need to be addressed. NEFU acknowledges concerns that biotechnology is being used as a trade barrier. NEFU respects all nations' sovereignty and food policies and thus urges open dialogue, cooperation and understanding in trade negotiations relating to biotechnology.

NEFU priorities:

1. A moratorium on the patenting and licensing of new transgenic animals and plants developed through genetic engineering unless and until the broader legal, ethical and economic questions are resolved. The moratorium should include the introduction, certification and commercialization of genetically engineered

crops, including all classes of wheat, and sugar beets until issues of cross-pollination, liability, commodity and seed stock segregation and market acceptance are adequately addressed. Research conducted in an environmentally secure indoor facility should be exempt from this moratorium. Research conducted in open fields production should be prohibited until the above issues are resolved. Should commercialization of a new GMO become imminent, we encourage the appropriate regulatory authority to provide for a public input and review process, including production of economic and environmental impact analysis prior to commercialization including establishing clear lines of legal responsibility to the patent holder for any and all expenses associated with potential or actual contamination and testing;

2. Legislation to exempt farmers from paying royalties on patented farm animals and technical fees on seeds which have been genetically modified;
3. Legislation to prohibit the patenting of heritage seed, animal and biological genetics and individual plant traits;
4. Legislation to prohibit the use of tax dollars in developing terminator technology, e.g., a gene to insure that seed will not reproduce, not be marketed;
5. Legislation to prohibit the development and selling of seed that is sterile;
6. The right of farmers to save and plant seed derived from proprietary organisms on their own land;
7. New products involving GMOs be certified as safe by the FDA in testing done independently of the patent holder, before being allowed on the market. Such testing is to be done at the expense of the specific patent holders seeking to market such products;
8. Legislation requiring that patent holders or owners of GMO technology be held strictly liable for damages caused by genetic trespass including safety, health, economic and environmental effects. Farmers are not to be held liable for food safety, human health or environmental problems, including cross pollination, related to the use of GMOs as long as generally accepted crop production practices are followed;
9. Congressional action to regulate the biotech industry's technology agreements. Farmers should not have to sign away their fundamental rights, including, but not limited to a jury of their peers in court, in exchange for the privilege of growing biotech crops. Grievances should be settled in the home state of the farmer, not the state of the biotech corporation;
10. Any damages caused to farmers through lower prices, lost markets or contamination shall be fully reimbursed to farmers, including legal fees, by the company producing the genetically modified product;
11. All data used in the analysis of the health and environmental effects of GMOs should be public record, and that criminal penalties be established for the willful withholding or altering of such data;
12. Prohibiting government regulatory agencies from licensing genetically modified products that are not acceptable for both human consumption and animal feed;
13. Until USDA and FDA improve oversight and regulation of pharma crops, NEFU cannot endorse or support pharma farming based on economic, environmental, food safety and liability risks to producers and consumers;
14. Requiring government regulatory agencies and input suppliers to ensure that farmers are informed of all potential market risks and segregation requirements associated with planting any licensed genetically modified crop;
15. Government regulatory agencies shall consider domestic and foreign consumer acceptance of the product when licensing;
16. Requiring all GMO seed to be clearly labeled with the following information:
 - a. Markets (foreign or domestic) where the product is not accepted, and
 - b. All planting restrictions;
17. Development of a paper verification system and a storage and marketing plan to aid farmers with non-GMO grains;
18. Requiring GMO crop plantings to be registered with state agricultural officials who shall maintain a public record so that non-GMO farmers and homeowners may be aware of potential contamination locally;

19. Identity-preserved systems and insist they receive protection from cross contamination;
20. The position that GMO contamination of organic seed constitutes irreparable harm to the organic seed industry and undermines the integrity of organic seed. Any detectable level is unacceptable;
21. Requiring genetically altered or engineered food products to be appropriately labeled to inform consumers. Food products derived from cloned animals should be labeled at the retail level.
22. GMO seeds and crops be adequately labeled and stored, so that they do not interfere with the export or import of crops and commodities into countries that have concerns about them.

ANTIBIOTIC USE

Most antibiotics in animal husbandry are used for the prevention of sickness and to accelerate growth. In order to ensure human health and consumer confidence, NEFU supports policies that require independent monitoring of data on the use of antibiotics at food and feed companies, encourage USDA to increase testing for pathogens in processing plants, limit the use of antibiotics to the treatment of disease in livestock and not to compensate for inadequate animal husbandry, environment or genetics.

ANIMAL WELFARE / HUSBANDRY / WELL-BEING

In recent years, interest groups such as the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) have been challenging the use of certain animal handling practices in industrial livestock facilities. Practices such as the use of ‘gestation crates’ in swine production, the use of ‘veal crates’ in veal production, and ‘battery cages’ in poultry production, have been viewed as confinement measures that are too extreme. Though few of these facilities exist in New England, efforts by the HSUS and consumer concern about animals on farms have raised concerns for farmers.

NEFU is a steadfast advocate for responsible farming in which a family manages their land base, their cropping systems, and their livestock as an integrated system. We believe that family farmers in New England should have control over the handling of their animals and that they should comply with each state’s policies for animal husbandry practices.

NEFU supports educational programs to inform the public on the true nature of animal care on the family farm. Family farms base their survival on the personal and humane care to their animals. Farmers share activists' concern about the welfare of animals. We further believe that those who violate the law in the pursuit of their values and beliefs should be prosecuted to the full extent of the law, and should be made to provide full restitution for damages incurred by crime victims.

APPROPRIATE TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT

NEFU supports the development of agricultural tools and equipment that contribute to the broad objective of increasing the viability of the small farm. The gap between traditional inefficient technologies and affordable, appropriately-sized, commercially available equipment is significant. We support efforts to help fill this gap with good quality tools and equipment that are affordable and suited to the scale of operations of the small farmers.

LOW ENERGY LOW INPUT BIOLOGICAL SYSTEMS

NEFU supports research and education on low-energy, low-input agriculture. These management techniques focus on reducing the level of chemical inputs into soil and the amount of fossil fuels used in the course of managing crops. Relying instead on cultural, mechanical, and biological practices that enrich the soil, these techniques have proven more sustainable. Integrated pest management, the use of cover crops to improve fertility, and practices that improve soil health such as nutrient management are all examples of these practices that NEFU supports.

INVASIVE SPECIES

The spread of invasive plants and animals is a serious environmental problem threatening New England’s natural ecosystems. To preserve, restore, and protect native plant and animal communities of our region, NEFU supports:

1. Collaborative efforts among public and private agencies and organizations to develop and implement control plans for states and municipalities threatened by invasives.
2. Training of staff and volunteers in control methods.
3. Public education about the invasives problem.

Given the collective threat these species pose, any programs to remediate or eradicate invasives should not be at the burden or expense of the landowner. In cases where remediation or eradication efforts result in a loss of income

generating crops or value of land for a farmer, NEFU supports programs designed to reimburse farmers for their loss.

NUTRIENT DENSITY

Where appropriate, NEFU encourages the practice of nutrient density farming, which employs biological practices designed to ensure that harvested crops have a measurably larger quantity of a broad spectrum of different minerals, vitamins, phytonutrients, and antioxidants than crops raised using other methods.

THE ENVIRONMENT AND THE FAMILY FARM

NEFU supports a rational, nationwide environmental policy. We believe that family farmers are great contributors toward preserving the environment and that society is interested in rewarding their contributions. Farmers work hard and take great pride in providing a safe and healthy product while contributing to the health of our planet through their care of the land. We oppose efforts to dilute federal and state environmental standards for air, land and water. We support environmental programs that financially encourage farmers to adopt conservation and environmentally friendly practices.

NEFU supports programs that recognize farms as multifunctional and rewards farmers for their contribution to land stewardship, protecting clean air and water, open spaces, and wildlife, supporting rural heritage, supporting small town and rural economies and tourism.

NEFU encourages the adoption and promotion of sustainable agriculture practices that protect the soil and reduce the need for artificial pesticides and fertilizers.

NEFU supports increased emphasis on public interest research at the region's land-grant universities with a higher priority placed in interdisciplinary research on the social, economic and environmental effects of agricultural policies, technologies, chemicals, and biotechnologies. We encourage the universities to establish policies to expand the availability of public information and disclosure of all research projects, whether publicly or privately funded.

IV. GOVERNMENT ROLE IN AGRICULTURE

GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

New England farmers provide important environmental benefits for the region's 14 million residents, including clean air, clean water, wildlife habitat and carbon sequestration. NEFU encourages development of state and federal programs that recognize and reward farmers for the environmental stewardship and benefits they provide. NEFU also encourages USDA to speed development of protocols for private ecosystem markets as authorized in the 2008 Farm Bill.

Payment program eligibility and limitations

NEFU Priorities:

1. NEFU supports the region's Conservation Districts and continued funding for their programs and services, and opposes any further consolidation of Conservation Districts in the region.
2. NEFU supports full funding of EQIP as critically important to the wide diversity of crops produced in the region, as well as to the region's forest resources. State USDA-NRCS offices should be given wide latitude to develop state practices to address specific resource concerns identified by the State Technical Committee.
3. Regional equity has been critically important to producers in New England, providing additional funding for three USDA farm conservation programs (FRPP, EQUIP and WHIP) that are routinely over-subscribed. This funding mechanism recognizes the specific challenges that farmers in New England face, including farming in a densely populated region, high land values and high costs of conservation practices. NEFU strongly supports the continuation of regional equity at the \$15 million level.
4. NEFU supports restoring annual appropriations for the USDA's NRCS Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA) program at the field office level, to implement conservation programs.

NEFU supports

1. the limitation of government farm payment program eligibility on the basis of net farm income
2. full funding of USDA programs that encourage permanent protection of working farm and forest lands, such as the Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program, Grasslands Reserve Program and Healthy Forest Reserve Program. NEFU also support full funding for USDA programs that provide funding for pasture and wetlands restoration, including the Wetlands Reserve Program, Grasslands Reserve Program, and Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program.

NEFU to discuss;

Regional equity program funding flexibility between northeast states

Federal crop insurance

NEFU supports the continuation and improvement of the federal crop insurance program. We advocate for strong educational campaigns to help farmers make informed decisions about the options afforded by the Acreage Crop Revenue Election (ACRE) program.

We support premium reductions for producers who use biotech seeds, if the reductions are based on actuarial research. We support the expansion and availability of federal crop insurance programs to support the diversity of crops that can be grown and recognize the changing infrastructure and markets available to farmers and producers in New England.

Farm viability programs

NEFU supports the establishment of and funding for state farm viability programs to provide business planning assistance and grant funds to support new farm business opportunities and ventures, and direct-marketing and value-added strategies on existing farms.

NEFU supports the funding of farm viability programs with new funds and not the re-allocation of existing monies within state budgets.

NEFU supports the placement of a term easement on the affected land as a requirement of receipt of a grant award under such programs.

NEFU supports the availability of such programs to farms previously protected by conservation easements.

NEFU needs to discuss:

State programs vs federal programs what is our ask?

If we are asking states for anything would it be continuation of departments of ag?

Farm and fisheries profitability

NEFU supports rural development programs that benefit farming and fishing in New England. The direction of rural development initiatives should sustain and increase viability of family farms, family owned fisheries and rural businesses that will result in prosperous communities. Rural development is economic development for New England.

NEFU supports research that examines the flow of money within all the region's agriculture sectors; the positive and negative impacts of federal agriculture policies; potential state actions to enhance the profitability of the region's farmers, foresters, fisherpeople, aquaculturalists and processors; and recommendations for policy changes that would enhance the viability of the

region's agriculture, fisheries and aquaculture operations.

Agricultural census

NEFU supports:

1. Continued to be conducted every five years;
2. Opposition to efforts to increase the minimum financial criteria for classifying agricultural operations;
3. Continued collection of information on direct marketing of agricultural products, the production and sale of organic agricultural products, value-added agricultural products and non-traditional farming operations and ownership;
4. Continued collection of needed data relating to corporate involvement in agriculture and coordination with information collected on foreign involvement in the purchase of farmland and agricultural enterprises to more clearly reflect the pattern of ownership and management of United States agriculture; and
5. Opposition to USDA using information obtained in the census in a manner that is detrimental to family farmers and ranchers.

USDA marketing programs

NEFU priorities:

1. The Farmers' Market Promotion Program (FMPP) which offers grant to support direct marketing, Community Supported Agriculture (and Fisheries), and on farm sales not limited to farmers' markets. New England leads the country in number of farmers markets. We also support allocating 10% of FMPP funds to be used for Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) systems that can read SNAP cards at farmers markets.
2. The Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program which provides seniors with vouchers to buy fresh produce at markets and roadside stands. We also support the allocation of some funds for the use of EBT machines.
3. The Business and Industry Guaranteed Loan Program for local food distribution and marketing enterprises that serve markets in-state or within 400 miles of production site. These loans can fund slaughterhouses, small food distributors, dairy processing, warehouses, mills, kitchen incubators, and can extend funds to urban as well as rural regions.
4. Farm to School and Farm to Institution programs that support the distribution and consumption of New England-grown and -processed food, lumber, and fish in New England institutions.
5. Local preferences programs that allow local schools to establish purchasing preferences for locally produced dairy, as well as fruits, vegetables and meats for school meals.

Community supported farming and fisheries

New England farmers and fishermen, nurserymen and flower growers are establishing

Community Supported enterprises from which consumers/members purchase shares in the enterprise in advance of the season. This gives producers cash at the start of each season, and includes the customers in the risks inherent in farming, fishing, and horticultural operations. New England leads the country in number of community supported efforts. NEFU supports USDA's Know Your Farmer/Know Your Food Initiative as well as state programs that promote the development of community supported enterprises.

Value-added agriculture and processing

NEFU supports the Value-Added Agricultural Product Marketing Development grants (USDA) to help farmers and fishermen develop value-added businesses with an emphasis on local and regional food systems. Adding value to food and fiber means capturing a greater portion of the market value, and New England farmers, forest owners and fishermen have found this to be an effective means for keeping their businesses viable. Clear marketing language such as "Buy Fresh, Buy Local" can assure consumers of the value of their local purchase.

Further, NEFU supports the formation of member owned co-operatives and other structures to facilitate the processing, marketing and distribution of value-added products.

Agri-Tourism

NEFU supports the inclusion of agri-tourism as part of the definition of agriculture and encourages USDA to recognize the value agri-tourism plays in small, diversified farms and communities throughout the U.S. by adopting agri-tourism allowances in its programs.

USDA should develop and implement a program to educate producers about liabilities associated with agri-tourism operations. Subsequently, a limit should be placed on the maximum liability exposure, thus making liability insurance protection more attainable and affordable.

Agriculture education

NEFU supports legislation to allow certain agriculture courses, as approved by the states departments of education, to count as science credits to be applied to state requirements for high school graduation.

NEFU supports every effort to continue and expand educational programs supportive of family farm agriculture and rural communities. We encourage educators to consider innovative approaches to family agriculture, including organic, value-added and sustainable agriculture.

Training New Farmers

NEFU supports state and federal policies – such as low interest loans, grants and tax incentives – that provide adequate financing to help maintain New England's family farm tradition and provide special assistance to beginning family farmers and minority farmers. NEFU supports college and university schools of agriculture, technical high schools with agricultural curricula, and other similar programs. NEFU supports the maintenance and expansion of technical assistance for New England farmers through university extension programs, state agricultural agencies, community based organizations and private consultants.

Land grant universities & institutions of higher learning

NEFU supports research and education within the region's Land Grant Universities that is balanced – supporting the interests of family farms and co-operatives as well as agribusiness. University research, extension and university educational curricula must not support the interests of agribusiness at the expense of family farmers. NEFU calls on the Land Grant Universities education and research community to develop and address the needs of family farmers and rural communities, and to develop and offer content on co-operative enterprise and management.

NEFU notes the near total lack of course content and curricula on co-operative enterprise, history and management in our region's educational institutions, and particularly in secondary schools. This is in clear contrast to the contribution made by co-operatives to the economy and food system in the Northeast. We applaud the efforts of some colleges and universities to address this problem and call for support and investment in courses, certificates, advance degrees and other educational programs that will support the next generation of co-operative leaders in our communities. NEFU supports the continued contribution of Cooperative Extension to the region's farmers, youth and communities.

NEFU Priorities:

1. Increased funding in Cooperative Extension personnel and services related to direct, on-farm assistance and programs
2. Increase Hatch Act funding to better enable land grant institutions in New England to be able to develop viable state and county agricultural research stations
3. Increase cooperative extension funding for outreach and dissemination and distribution of crops and cropping methods, and to facilitate feedback for success and failures.

NEFU supports:

Develop public seed bank of varieties developed and continually refined at the research stations.

Increase North East Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) funding for on-farm field trials.

NEFU needs to discuss:

Formula funding for land grants

Global climate change

NEFU acknowledges the science of global warming and the influence of human-based activities on global warming and climate change. NEFU urges policymakers to fully engage agriculture in clean energy legislation to maximize the environmental benefits to be gained from agriculture and to generate new income opportunities for farmers who will be producing renewable energy and carbon offsets.

Federal estate tax

In lieu of estate tax repeal, NEFU supports estate tax relief for family-owned farms in order to

facilitate the transfer of those enterprises to the next generation.

1. NEFU supports a federal estate tax exemption per estate be set at \$3.5 million, indexed annually, with a top tax rate of 45% (HR 4154).
2. Simplified exemption qualification rules and requirements should be created, along with the implementation of graduated tax rates.
3. NEFU opposes shifting tax liability from the estate tax to the capital gains tax through the elimination of the “step-up” in basis provisions.
4. Section 2032A should be applied based on the use of the land for agriculture and not on the owner, thus allowing land covered by 2032A to be rented to another for farming purposes.
5. Allow property that has been valued using 2032A to be freely transferred without triggering recapture as long as it is maintained in its qualified use.
6. Eliminate the cap on the amount by which an estate’s value may be reduced through the use of Section 2032A.
7. Sale of a conservation easement on land subject to Section 2032A should not trigger a recapture of the avoided estate tax.

Broadband access

NEFU supports efforts to provide competitively priced, high-speed broadband access to the internet for all Americans.

Libraries

NEFU supports adequate funding for rural libraries. NEFU calls upon local, state and federal governments to renew their commitment to America’s libraries. It is through a well-informed public that democracy is best served. Libraries provide access to information for all. NEFU opposes any efforts to cut funds for libraries, including materials and services for the blind and visually impaired.

Postal service

NEFU opposes changes in postal policy that will result in reduced, less frequent or inefficient mail service for rural areas or which would result in increased postal rates. We oppose further privatization of the postal service.

GOVERNMENT REGULATION

Right to farm

NEFU believes in the right to farm, but acknowledges that this right does not imply a right to pollute or to harm our neighbors’ rights. We call upon the region's state legislatures to preserve the current right to farm laws that protect family farmers in New England and the property rights of all. NEFU supports legislative action to ensure that state laws help keep family farmers in New England.

Need to discuss:

Conservation stewardship program (CSP)

CSP has the potential to reward New England producers and forestland owners for environmental stewardship and encourage further on-farm conservation, but complicated eligibility rules and low per-acre payments limit producer interest in the program. NEFU encourages further program simplification and higher per-acre payment rates in areas with high land values and high input and conservation practice costs.

NEFU needs to discuss:

Local Agricultural Regulations (also see land use planning)

Development, propagation and enforcement of regulations that deal with seeds, chemicals, and fertilizers should be public processes that engage a wide range of stakeholders, including farmers engaged in all types and scales of agriculture. Such regulations should not be used to limit, restrict or prescribe the types of management practices employed by farmers.

Building, plumbing, electrical, sanitation and other codes, as applied to farming and on-farm processing of agricultural products, should be appropriate for agricultural facilities as distinguished from commercial facilities.

Local boards of health, sanitation, and other agencies and officials that interact with agricultural enterprises should be offered training and education so that they are fully aware of the need for regulations that foster agriculture in their communities.

Food Security and Sovereignty

In the interest of food security, NEFU believes that a widespread network of many independent family farms is superior to a few very large food production and processing companies. In the advent of disease outbreaks, natural disaster, major nuclear or industrial accidents, or in the event of war or acts of terrorism, a concentrated food supply would leave parts of the country and world more vulnerable to hardship than would be experienced with a family farm system.

The concentration of farm ownership also tends to disenfranchise many at the benefit of few, causing financial and social turmoil over time. The family farm most efficiently utilizes resources to produce and distribute the food and dispose of waste products through energy, labor or transportation systems.

We support establishing a revolving two-year, farmer-owned reserve of commodities to provide an adequate supply of raw materials for use as emergency food or renewable energy.

Food Safety

NEFU believes that a successful agricultural sector requires food safety regulations and policies that protect the public from foodborne illnesses and educate farmers about how to handle their products safely. Regulations should be clearly and consistently enforced, with an emphasis on technical assistance and training, rather than a reliance on punitive action following violations.

NEFU priorities:

1. Regulations pertaining to on-farm processing of foods must be sensitive to issues of scale, recognizing that guidance for small-scale, low-volume operations must be different ~~than that for large, industrial facilities~~. In particular, the cost in time and money of government mandated safety inspections and testing must not be overly burdensome for small producers.
2. Regulations should govern product safety, rather than process, with an understanding that there are many ways to produce a safe food item and that producers should be allowed the flexibility to choose processes that are appropriate for their particular situation.
3. NEFU supports regulations that allow for the interstate shipment of meat and poultry and their products from small state-inspected packing and processing establishments.

NEFU supports:

Building, plumbing, electrical, sanitation and other codes, as applied to farming and on-farm processing of agricultural products, should be appropriate for agricultural facilities as distinguished from commercial facilities. A facility is any place where raw agricultural products are prepared for wholesale or retail sale.

NEFU needs to discuss:

NEFU supports the development and propagation of Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) standards that address environmental, economic and social sustainability for on-farm processes, and result in safe and quality food and non-food agricultural products. We support the United Nations' four 'pillars' of GAP: economic viability, environmental sustainability, social acceptability and food safety and quality.

Food inspection

1. *NEFU supports consolidating food inspection into a single agency and creating and/or maintaining food inspection guidelines as stringent as the USDA meat inspection guidelines.*
2. *We support granting the USDA mandatory recall authority.*
3. *We support research into best handling practices for specialty crops, including fruits and vegetables.*
4. *We support setting state inspection fees at an appropriate level according to the size of operations and to allocate general purpose revenue to maintain sufficient numbers of state inspector positions.*

Value-added and local processing

NEFU supports policies that facilitate the development and operation of on-farm, local and

regional facilities to process raw agricultural and fisheries products into food products for wholesale and retail sale. Public facilities should be accessible to a wide range of growers, producers and fishermen. Safety regulations for these facilities should be appropriate to their scale and use and not be unnecessarily burdensome on operators. Regulations should allow on-farm and fisherman-owned facilities to provide services to other farmers and fishermen.

NEFU supports programs that offer educational services to growers, producers and fishermen around business management and marketing.

NEFU supports efforts to document the existing value-added producers in the region and their contribution to New England's agriculture and fisheries economy. NEFU supports research that develops alternative processing methods for small scale processing of farm and fishery products and explores alternative products from the region's commodities. NEFU supports examining the feasibility of changing regulations and zoning ordinances that inhibit small scale production and sale of finished food and fisheries products.

Food biosecurity

NEFU supports the increase of inspections of imported agricultural products, a limit on the number of ports where foreign foods enter the U.S., and sufficient federal funds to protect our agriculture supply and our ports from bioterrorism.

1. We call for enforcement of importing food products only from nations with USDA-comparable food inspection/sanitation standards, including milk protein concentrates.
2. NEFU calls for disallowing imports of agricultural products from nations that have experienced outbreaks of diseases that could contaminate the food supply until those nations' agricultural exports have been deemed safe.

National Animal Identification / Premises Registration

The National Animal ID program is in response to the health and safety concerns generated by large centralized meat processing facilities and the challenges that that structure creates in tracing back the origin of pathogens introduced into the system. This system exists for animal products destined for national and international distribution, rather than for direct sales and local distribution as is more common in New England. The health and safety aspects of animal ID could be more effectively accomplished in New England by increasing the number of processing facilities and the number of paid inspectors at those facilities. If animal processing is done at a local, distributed scale rather than at a large regional centralized scale, then tracing and isolating health issues becomes easier to track without the requirement or dependence on technology or the civil liberties issues associated with the ID technology. It does, however, require more personnel for quality control and more, smaller local processing facilities. This solution fits New England agricultural production and the needs of direct marketers.

NEFU supports a voluntary national animal I.D. program and a voluntary premises registration program coordinated with appropriate agencies at the federal and state level to prevent and contain animal disease outbreaks in the United States.

1. Agencies that promote such programs and deem them necessary to fulfill their missions should provide the full funding necessary to create and maintain the databases and provide compensation to producers for their costs of implementing the program;
2. Use of the proprietary information should include clear limits to ensure protection under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). Access to producer information should be available only in times of animal disease outbreaks or bioterrorism attacks;
3. Animal identification programs must not be used as a means for packers and processors to transfer liability to the original owner of the animal; instead, trace-back information should mitigate producer liability for contaminated food products.
4. Databases need to remain under the control of the government. Confidentiality of all information must be assured. Allowing such systems to be contracted out privately poses many problems:
 - a. This public database would become a revenue source for private entities seeking to make a profit;
 - b. It would not provide for oversight to protect confidential producer information;
 - c. It would not mitigate producer liability;
 - d. It would create opportunities for packers to condition the purchase of livestock upon participation in a voluntary I.D. program, a condition which would threaten rather than encourage transparency;
 - e. It would assume coordination among a complex web of data with no guarantees of success; and,
 - f. It would assume all sectors of the livestock industry would agree upon the development and maintenance of a single entity to represent each species' interests when, in fact, the interests of each sector are quite varied.

Land use

NEFU Priorities:

Local property taxes

1. NEFU supports use value assessment in calculating local property taxes for all real property associated with agriculture, forestry, fisheries and aquaculture operations.

Comprehensive planning/smart growth

NEFU supports the goals of local, comprehensive planning. We encourage towns, counties and regional planning agencies to develop and update comprehensive plans through a grassroots process that is locally controlled. State funding should be available to support this planning. NEFU supports efforts by municipal governments, township officials, regional planning agencies and all citizens to work together to create community planning that emphasizes the preservation of community character and community values and discourages urban sprawl and the loss of farmland, forest land and access to the waterfront.

Land protection and conservation easements

The New England States have a long tradition of promoting the permanent protection of farmland for continued agricultural use and for future generations of family farmers through a combination of tax incentives, funding purchase of agricultural conservation easement programs (PACE) and land use policies. NEFU supports:

1. The sale and/or donation of a conservation easement by landowners to permanently protect farmland as a legitimate exercise of a property right;
2. The continued dedication of public funding for state PACE programs;
3. Local assessment of land protected by a conservation easement at a use-value rate for property tax purposes;
4. Administration of the federal Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP) in a manner that is respectful of the long history and experience of established state PACE programs;
5. Full funding for FRPP;
6. Congress making permanent the IRS tax deduction rules for the donation of a conservation easement included in the 2008 Farm Bill;
7. Exempting the proceeds of the sale of a conservation easement on farmland from the federal capital gains tax; and,
8. Allowing for the sale of a conservation easement on farmland land covered by the 2032A election of the federal Estate Tax to not trigger any recapture provisions therein.

Transfer of development rights

NEFU supports the Transfer of Development Rights as an effective land planning and farmland protection tool. The transfer or sale of one parcel of land's development rights to the owner of another parcel allows the development on one parcel while preventing development of the other, by placing a conservation easement or deed restriction on the parcel transferring its development rights. Transfer of Development Rights protects farmland and other natural areas permanently, and it keeps land private and on the tax rolls. It provides farmers with a financially competitive alternative to development and helps keep farmland affordable.

Eminent domain

NEFU is concerned by the U.S. Supreme Court decision, *Kelo v. New London, Connecticut*, that allows governments to take private land for the purposes of private development. Fair and balanced eminent domain guidelines should protect the rights of individual property owners as well as promote the public good. NEFU opposes allowing private businesses to condemn public land.

NEFU needs to discuss:

Local zoning

NEFU supports:

- 1. The planning and zoning of land uses at the local level;*
- 2. The preservation of farm units in any rezoning efforts;*
- 3. Any state and federal legislation should recognize that agricultural land must be preserved for the future.*
- 4. Family farmers should be represented in all relevant zoning deliberations;*
- 5. Farmland near areas already converted to urban or other uses, which may be appreciating in speculative value, being taxed as agricultural land as long as the land continues to be farmed by a family farmer;*
- 6. Requiring economic and environmental studies to determine the direct and indirect effects on agriculture of changing land-use designations from agriculture to some other use;*
- 7. Federal and state funds for flood control projects to protect communities and agricultural lands. We favor zoning laws prohibiting development of areas that flood frequently; and,*
- 8. Legislation to strengthen the rights of local government units to protect the health, safety and welfare interests of their residents, including improved governance provisions for regulating concentrated feeding operations and future land use requirements.*

Water quality protection

The protection of our surface and ground water resources is critical not only to continuing farm operations, but as a source of drinking water for the vast majority of rural residents. NEFU supports:

1. The creation of a national database on the extent of water quality problems, including nationwide voluntary well-testing programs that include cost sharing for landowners;
2. Legislation or regulations affecting surface and ground water balancing these interests in an effort to keep surface and ground water from becoming contaminated in the first place, and to move quickly to clean up already contaminated sources of drinking water;
3. Continued implementation of the Safe Drinking Water Act;
4. The uniform administration of Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) policies throughout the nation. Adding to the list of contaminants that municipalities and rural water districts are required to test for, as mandated by EPA, must be backed by science. We encourage EPA to stop its practice of targeting specific regions with stricter standards than applied in non-targeted regions. Failure to curb this practice will likely result in an exodus of sensitive industries including family farms, thereby jeopardizing the level of economic activity within the targeted region;
5. Requiring inspectors be public employees, rather than employees of the companies who are being regulated;
6. Information and education concerning the present condition of our surface and ground water supplies and what we can and should do to prevent any further contamination;

7. Efforts in research that clarify the issue of point source pollution and non-point source pollution;
8. Programs to protect and improve the quality of surface waters and urge that all who use the resource, such as boaters and fishermen, be included in the effort;
9. The creation of water quality credit trading programs;
10. State tax incentives, grants and loans to encourage the application and installation of water quality improvement and conservation projects on family farms;
11. Producers participating in the State Watershed Assessment Program (SWAP);
12. Requiring CAFOs to post the appropriate bonds to cover the cost of cleaning up any contamination of land and water resources. When posting these bonds, CAFOs should also be required to develop and submit waste storage closure plans;
13. National minimum guidelines, or standards, that give primacy for implementation and flexibility in regional planning to the states. A national policy should discourage polluters from “shopping” among the states for the lowest environmental standards and encourage states and localities to establish standards beyond the federal minimums;
14. Cost-share provisions targeted to small and medium-sized farmers. Responsibility for submitting a waste management plan and complying with the waste management provisions should be shared by the owner of the livestock and the operator of the facility;
15. Increasing funding for the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP), which provides federal cost-share and technical assistance to enable farmers to comply with environmental requirements;
16. Family farmers being appointed to serve as advisers to any federal agency when a national waste standard is developed; and
17. Targeting water subsidies to family-sized farm operations to conserve water and taxpayer dollars.

Pesticide Regulations

NEFU supports pesticide and herbicide regulations that include:

1. An exemption from liability through EPA for groundwater cleanup for farmers who applied pesticides according to label directions;
2. Greater cooperation between EPA and USDA to help ensure that pesticide regulations and disposal do not unnecessarily interfere with normal farming practices and land transfers. When a buffer strip is necessary it should come off the land of the farmer from whom the pesticide or genetic problem originates and not from the land of an innocent neighbor;
3. Legislation designed to eliminate U.S. production of pesticides not registered for use in the United States, or for which a pesticide residue tolerance has not been set;
4. Restrictions on the import of food products produced with such pesticides, with more frequent inspections at borders to protect consumers from unsafe pesticide use;

5. Cooperation among farmers, chemical companies and governmental agencies to reduce pollution hazards of pesticides
6. The creation and implementation of safety standards protecting children from exposure to pesticides;
7. Continued prudent use of approved chemicals for crops, including expedited registrations for minor use pesticides and requiring EPA to use peer-reviewed science in their registration review process;
8. Chemical manufacturers increasing the use of reusable, pre-measured, water-soluble and bulk containers;
9. Federal assistance for recycling containers and in establishing central locations for disposal of chemical containers;
10. Full funding for the IR-4 minor crop pesticide registration program;
11. Harmonization of pesticide maximum residue levels between the US and foreign countries through the Codex Alimentarius Commission and/or the European Union to allow for the uninterrupted export of agricultural products

Fertilizer Regulations

The future of agricultural producers worldwide depends to a great extent on developing and implementing the best use of chemical fertilizers. NEFU supports:

1. No hazardous waste being included in fertilizers;
2. Manufacturers labeling all ingredients in fertilizers and providing notification to buyers.

Truth in labeling

Country of origin labeling (COOL)

NEFU supports the COOL requirements as mandated in the 2008 Farm Bill and urges its expansion to the labeling of all food products distributed and sold in the U.S., including dairy products.

Organic food products

NEFU supports proper labeling of organic food products.

Cloned animals

NEFU supports the use of milk or meat products from cloned animals when those products are labeled as such at the retail level.

Bovine growth hormone

NEFU supports the continuation of standards for labeling milk and dairy products, enabling farmers and consumers to have the opportunity to choose whether or not to use or consume synthetic BGH. We support labeling laws to allow milk to be labeled r-BST free.

Irradiated food labeling

Food products that have been irradiated must be labeled as such and appropriate educational materials should be made available to consumers.

NEFU needs to discuss:

Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs)

NEFU supports the use of GMOs only when those products are labeled as such at the retail level. We support the current moratorium on alfalfa GMOs. (there is no longer a ban)

Urban Agriculture

NEFU supports programs that promote urban agriculture. These programs revitalize city land and make it productive and fertile. In support of these programs, NEFU recommends:

1. Creating zoning and in city governments to increase access to land to be communally gardened.
2. Enacting zoning and policy measures that allow for scale-appropriate livestock husbandry within city limits.
3. Creating support systems for urban residents to connect with one another, learn and teach about cultivating the land and preserving food, and fulfill their vision for beautifying their own neighborhoods.
4. Creating community or city services that assist with compost deliveries, bulk buying of seeds and plants, and other amendments.
5. Facilitating the creation of farmers markets where local gardeners can sell what they produce.
6. Creating programs that include youth, elderly, and marginalized populations in gardening and that seek out knowledge and expertise from urban immigrant groups, who have direct knowledge and experience of agriculture.

International Trade

NEFU Priorities:

1. NEFU supports a U.S. ban on all imports of dairy, livestock and poultry, including any products containing hides or feathers, from any nations with documented Foot and Mouth Disease.
2. Imported food or feed must have been produced, processed and packaged under standards consistent with U.S. standards.

NEFU Supports

1. Elimination of unilateral sanctions on agricultural and medical products.

2. Coordination of efforts internationally to reduce the anti-competitive results of increased concentration in agriculture.
3. Preservation of U.S. rights and policy flexibility to provide economic safety net assistance to agricultural producers including Trade Adjustment Assistance for agriculture.
4. Support for international cooperation to achieve improved commodity prices by balancing supply and demand.
5. Commitment to an ongoing process to address implementation and compliance issues.

V. ENERGY

We support energy policies that promote domestic, regionally produced energy sources. Clean, efficient energy should be affordable to all, with adequate supplies to meet the needs of region. U.S. energy sources should be diverse and developed as close to points of use as possible rather than depending upon long distance and vulnerable transmission and transportation networks.

NEFU believes that farmers are part of the solution, rather than the problem, in establishing a clean, independent energy policy. We support the community-based development of localized, decentralized alternative energy and encourage tax credits and incentives for the proliferation of on-farm or community-based energy sources.

NEFU supports the research and development of the various types of renewable energy in the region to provide a stronger market for New England farmers, a local supply of byproduct feedstuffs for dairy and livestock producers, and a safer additive for gasoline and diesel fuel that will also decrease our dependence on foreign oil.

NEFU supports measures that increase conservation as well as the use of renewable fuels. Both measures are needed to ensure a clean and diversified energy economy.

We support research and initiatives to explore ways for farmers to produce energy that does not contribute to global warming.

NEFU Priorities:

1. Carbon trading: Carbon sequestration is an innovative way to enhance income for producers and protect our environment. Therefore, the trading of carbon should be encouraged. A carbon trading program can be a cost effective way to reduce overall greenhouse gas emissions, but only if two conditions are met:
 - a. The sequestration practices must improve the status quo by reducing *current* pollution levels and generate *additional* reductions in greenhouse gas emissions that would not have occurred otherwise. ; and,
 - b. The reductions in pollution must be permanent. The carbon stored in the soil has to stay safely in the bank for the long-term, otherwise no real slowing of climate change will be achieved.

Therefore, NEFU advocates a national mandatory carbon emission cap and trade system to reduce non-farm greenhouse gas emissions that:

1. Grants USDA control, verification and administration of the agriculture offset program, rather than EPA;
 2. Does not place an artificial cap on domestic offset allowance;
 3. Bases carbon sequestration rates upon science;
 4. Recognizes early actors;
 5. Allows producers to stack credits; and
 6. Does not cap agricultural carbon emissions.
 7. Creates a 3rd party verified soil carbon standards for the measurement of soil carbon sequestration or loss.
2. In addition, NEFU advocates an aggressive and ambitious cellulosic ethanol research, development and production program geared to rapidly develop the necessary technology to compliment traditional ethanol supplies of motor fuels.

NEFU supports:

1. Biomass: The future of New England bioenergy production will depend on development of regionally appropriate crops and varieties. NEFU supports sustainably harvested biomass fuel combustion for transportation, co-generation and district heating, and supports the manufacture of pelletized solid fuels for heating rural areas.

NEFU supports incentives to use the cleanest combustion technology available. NEFU supports the aggressive development of regionally appropriate high yielding biomass crops (including algae) and associated infrastructure recognizing that food and fuel production and ecosystem services are not mutually exclusive in well-balanced agricultural production systems. In addition to yield, biofuel crop development should take into account possible by-products and effects on soil health, biodiversity, invasive potential, water requirements and other local environmental, social and economic factors. Local variety development, testing and distribution should be supported and administered through land grant colleges, research stations and conservation districts. NEFU supports federal guaranteed loans for biomass projects deployed through 3rd party lenders managed in a similar manner to Small Business Administration loan programs.

3. **Models and programs that convert farm methane to farm energy.** NEFU supports research to make manure digesters a profitable venture for smaller livestock operations. We further support funding and development assistance for community manure digesters.

4. A price for carbon sequestered in the soil that is greater than the traded price for sequestered atmospheric carbon. If carbon pricing is not implemented, support the continued development and refinement of the Biomass Crop Assistance Program; Certified agricultural production practices for biofuels are recommended for a renewable fuel standard

5. Biodiesel: Expand the distribution network for biodiesel fuel throughout New England by instituting tax incentives for wholesale and retail distributors. Encourage use of biodiesel fuel through the development of informational and educational materials and programs. Adopt a definition of biodiesel that conforms to ASTM D6751, the most current federal standard. Establish local testing labs and enforcement resources for biodiesel fuel. Continue federal subsidies for biodiesel production until the biodiesel industry becomes established at a self-sufficient level. 6. Ethanol: The ethanol industry is vitally important to the U.S.'s independence from reliance on foreign oil and to the local agricultural economy. NEFU supports biomass production of ethanol and federal investment in that production, provided that any impact on livestock grain prices is mitigated. Continue the ethanol import tariff. Biofuels should not be exported or imported until energy independence is achieved.

7. Gassification/biochar production: NEFU supports increases in biochar research including field trials, production techniques, and biogeochemical and economic analysis. NEFU supports greater commercialization assistance for currently available biomass gassification and pyrolysis technology at both centralized and distributed scales. NEFU supports research and development to reduce the scale of syngas processing for liquid fuels and the development of cost effective distributed co-generation and gas refining technology. NEFU supports incentives in conjunction with soil based carbon sequestration policies to encourage the sustainable production of biochar from crop residues and wood waste as a soil amendment and to use the gas by-product for on-farm heating.

8. District heating, cooling and cogeneration: NEFU supports incentives to encourage co-generation heat use at all legacy power plants, and that co-generation be used in the design and location for all new projects. NEFU also encourages the adoption of district heating loops for industrial, farm or residential use.

9. Low carbon fuel standards: NEFU supports low carbon fuel standards if they are developed with accurate lifecycle assessments that do not take into account indirect land use change, unless all fuels, including petroleum fuels are subject to the same standards. NEFU supports the concept of certified production practices and the development of soil carbon standards to improve lifecycle analysis of production practices.

10. Wind and solar energy: NEFU supports development and distribution of electric generation from wind. We call for federal legislation to require all utilities to allow community-based wind projects access to the electric grid by actively pursuing power purchase agreements. In order to help expand the use of smaller wind energy systems, we support net metering for systems up to 100kW. We support billing small wind generators on an annual basis. Net metering allows bidirectional metering of electricity, measured by one meter, where there is no discrimination between electricity produced and electricity consumed by the small electricity consumer-generator. NEFU supports uniform wind siting standards. We support Federal production tax credit for wind energy be made more applicable to farmers by extending the Federal production tax credit to offset schedule F income. NEFU supports a comprehensive policy that protects landowners from speculation and unfair contracts in the development of natural resources such as wind development. NEFU supports the production of wind and solar energy on farms protected with conservation easements to the extent that such development does not undermine the original purpose of the conservation easement.

11. Electric transmission lines: The right of property owners to deny public utilities eminent domain for transmission lines.

12. Stray voltage: NEFU supports legislation that defines objectionable current flow on grounding rods and

prohibits utilities from returning current through the earth.

NEFU needs to discuss:

1. *The establishment of a national petroleum reserve to ensure an emergency supply for agriculture and other essential industries.*
2. *The establishment of a Low Carbon Fuel Standard (LCFS). An LCFS calls for a reduction in carbon emissions from transportation fuels, based on the carbon content of all fuels and transformations in the market over an extended period of time. This standard should take into consideration the energy production potential of each state, instead of being based on other states' LCFS, such as California.*
3. *The national 25 x 25 program, which calls for renewable energy to comprise 25 percent of the U.S. energy supply by 2025.*
4. *The Public Utilities Commission (PUC) has been placing roadblocks in granting power purchase agreements (PPA) for new biomass power plants. The PUC should have a mandated PPA for power produced by farm and biomass plants; **(Is the correct federal entity here the PUC or should it be FERC?)***

5. *ENERGY RESERVES/RESOURCES LANDOWNERS' RIGHTS*

1. *Prohibition of non-disclosure or secrecy clauses in leases. Non-disclosure clauses serve only to protect the interests of the contractor/developer. Landowners should be allowed to review leases with attorneys, lenders and other holders of leases to ascertain the relative value of a lease offer;*
2. *Establishment of a registry of current standard energy leases made accessible to the public. A registry allows landowners to compare offered leases with standard leases and better ascertain the relative value of a lease offer. It also allows landowners to compare other lease terms with standard leases;*
3. *Prohibit mandatory arbitration clauses. Mandatory arbitration requirements are becoming more common in contracts. Prohibiting such clauses in contracts will ensure the right of civil litigation for landowners in lease disputes and help balance the legal interests of landowners and developers;*
4. *Limiting length of lease options. Limiting the term of lease options will prevent companies from tying up large tracts of land for extended periods, thus encouraging the use of lease options for actual development instead of speculation;*
5. *Authorize collective bargaining of leases. Allowing landowners to bargain collectively for standard lease terms throughout a region or development project would encourage fairness in the application of lease terms among multiple landowners;*
6. *Bonding and reclamation protections. This would encourage responsible energy development and transmission at outset of the lease by providing funds up front for reclamation of land after project life has expired;*
7. *Prohibit prior investment as a condition of lease or option of fulfillment. This discourages the use of option development to coerce investment by landowners;*
8. *Prohibit rights of first refusal by developers. Developers should not be able to obtain the right of first refusal in lease options/contracts. Right of first refusal allows a developer to tie up land, and/or reduce marketability of landowner's land without purchasing an option;*
9. *In the event that the land considered for energy development is protected by a conservation easement such development must not undermine the original purpose of the conservation easement.*
10. *Disclosure of actual lease payments in contracts. This requires that actual lease payments, potential premiums and formula used determine said premiums be established and disclosed as a condition of a final lease agreement during negotiation of a contract;*

11. *Five-working day cooling-off period after a lease agreement is signed. This allows a landowner a window to reconsider if, for example, his attorney has an objection to the contract language; and*
12. *Prohibition of severability of surface rights and wind. Land ownership should not be severed from natural resources associated with the surface.*
6. *Extensive research on usage and marketing of dry distillers' grain for feed and other value-added uses.*
7. *Development of infrastructure to improve pipeline distribution and accessibility to filling station/pumps of biofuels across the U.S.*

VI. INTERNATIONAL TRADE

We favor international trade agreements that would (1) not adversely affect family farm profitability and would maintain domestic farm and food policies, including inventory management programs; (2) seek to improve harmonization of health, consumer and worker safety, human rights, and environmental standards using scientific criteria, without limiting the ability of nations to establish higher domestic standards in cases where scientific questions remain or important domestic concerns exist; and (3) promote policies that balance currency exchange rates for fairness to family farmers throughout the world.

NEFU is opposed to fast track authority for future trade agreements.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE STANDARDS

NEFU will aggressively seek the inclusion of the following provisions and objectives in U.S. trade policy, international trade negotiations and agreements to be contained in any international trade negotiations and agreements:

6. Acceptance of the multi-functionality of production agriculture.
7. Require all commodities be fully negotiated and no preferential treatment be granted to specific commodities.
8. Initiation of a commodity-by-commodity study on the impact of an agreement on exports and imports, which should be made public.
9. Development of an effective mechanism to offset the negative impact of differences in exchange rates.
10. Harmonization of environmental regulations and enforcement to achieve ultimately the standards applied in the U.S.
11. Establishment of enforceable labor standards and workers' rights in line with the International Labor Organization.
12. Retention of Domestic Trade Remedy Authority.
13. Elimination of unilateral sanctions on agricultural and medical products.
14. Coordination of efforts internationally to reduce the anti-competitive results of increased concentration in agriculture.
15. Preservation of U.S. rights and policy flexibility to provide economic safety net assistance to agricultural producers including Trade Adjustment Assistance for agriculture.
16. Support for international cooperation to achieve improved commodity prices by balancing supply and demand.
17. Commitment to an ongoing process to address implementation and compliance issues.
18. Imported food or feed must have been produced, processed and packaged under standards consistent with U.S. standards.
19. NEFU supports a U.S. ban on all imports of dairy, livestock and poultry, including any products containing hides or feathers, from any nations with documented Foot and Mouth Disease.

WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

NEFU recognizes that international trade in a global economy is a fact of life; however, current trading practices seem to advantage transnational corporations rather than workers and producers in affected countries. These practices have recently contributed to the failure of world trade talks. We urge the region's governors and legislators to conduct an open forum addressing state policies on world trade. Participants in such a forum should include representatives of farm organizations, labor groups, churches, government and businesses to discuss state policies and standards governing international trade. These standards will include adequate compensation for and availability of labor, fair payment for agricultural commodities, adequate food safety and uniform safeguards for the environment.

INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION

NEFU supports and encourages collaboration among co-operatives and their members across international boundaries.

FAIR TRADE

NEFU recognizes the role of the international Fair Trade movement in linking consumers with farming communities in the developing world and raising awareness of the need for more just, equitable and sustainable systems of trade for family farmers. Farmer co-operatives play an essential role in the Fair Trade system, empowering producers and their communities, and NEFU encourages expansion of such efforts on the global and domestic levels.

VII. CO-OPERATIVES

History shows that co-ops are a powerful means by which people — and farmers and producers in particular — can further their own well being in our market economy. As unique business organizations, co-operatives comprise an important segment of the American economy and are active across industries. As member-owned enterprises, co-operatives are rooted in the communities they serve, creating economic infrastructure that reaches across generations and supports community resilience.

While NEFU emphasizes the unique benefits that co-operative enterprise offers to farmers, fishers and other producers, we also recognize the important role of co-ops across the economy including food co-ops, credit unions, worker co-ops, and co-ops involved in housing, insurance, energy, utilities and other services. We support the development of co-operative business as a mechanism for the development of a more stable regional economy and food system through ownership and control that is rooted in our communities, the development of local skills and assets, and a focus on service and meeting member needs.

NEFU Priorities:

1. Defense of the Capper–Volstead Act of 1922, which establishes the legal framework for producer co-ops and is therefore of particular concern for NEFU.
 - a. The rights of agricultural producers to act together to handle, process and market agricultural products through co-operative activity, as guaranteed under the Capper–Volstead Act of 1922, must be continued. These same rights should be formally extended under law to farm supply and consumer co-operatives.
 - b. The rights of co-operative members to organize and operate regional and interregional co-operatives (marketing agencies in common) or to merge with other co-operative associations, should not be restricted by law or government regulation. However, we are not in favor of regional co-operatives absorbing local co-ops until other options of maintaining local control have been exhausted, including merger or joint venture with a nearby co-operative. When necessary for a regional to absorb a local co-operative, we strongly urge every effort would be made by the local members or a nearby co-operative to purchase the co-operative back when it is feasible. We demand that regional co-operative boards work together, and with local co-operatives, to help them continue operating for the benefit of the members.
 - c. The responsibilities of administering the Capper–Volstead Act should remain with the U.S. Department of Agriculture.
 - d. Because co-operative businesses are member-owned and controlled, we oppose any governmental regulation that would infringe upon the rights of co-operative members to determine the policies or operation of their co-operative.

- e. Value-added co-operatives maintaining co-operative principles of member-ownership and control should be supported by NEFU (see Background).
 - f. NEFU opposes modification of any state laws that will have the effect of eliminating requirements and definitions that establish the essential co-operative characteristics of ownership and control by member/patron users, financing by member/patron users, and distribution of benefits to patrons based on their participation in the co-operative business. We encourage vigilance against such actions and support renewed educational efforts to preserve the critical co-operative principles that have served American farmers and others in rural America for more than two centuries.
 - g. NEFU opposes co-ops joining legal defense fund schemes to avoid full equity payment to co-op patrons. NEFU encourages co-ops to follow the Capper Volstead Act, which requires co-ops pay back a minimum of 20 percent of earnings as cash to members for a given fiscal year.
2. Revitalize USDA Co-operative Services. The Cooperative Marketing Act of 1926 provides for a USDA program of research, technical assistance and educational programs on the co-operative form of business. Since this program has been subject to vastly reduced human resources and redirection, NEFU supports revitalization of co-operative services programs in USDA, restoration of agency status, and support for co-operative specialists in rural development state offices for support of co-operative enterprise across sectors and industries.
 3. Defend State Co-op Statutes. Oppose modification of any state laws or additional state laws that will have the effect of eliminating requirements and definitions that establish the essential co-operative characteristics of member ownership and democratic control by member/patron users, financing by member/patron users, and distribution of benefits to patrons based on their participation in the co-operative business, or that establish mechanisms of control for external investors.
 4. Protect & Promote the Co-operative Identity. Enforce and develop state laws that prohibit use of the word “co-op”, co-operative” or “cooperative” to identify any business that is not incorporated under co-operative statutes or does not fulfill accepted characteristics of a co-operative as defined by bodies such as the International Co-operative Alliance.
 5. Support Co-operative Financing:
 - a. NEFU supports the current 50% membership criteria for CoBank borrowers.
 - b. We support US Treasury funding of Community Development

Financial Institutions (CDFIs), such as the Cooperative Fund of New England, and encourage these organizations to focus on providing financing and other support for co-operative enterprise in the region.

- c. We urge the government to initiate federal funding programs along the lines of the original REA program to assist farmers in forming value-added co-operatives.

NEFU Supports:

1. Co-operative Development. NEFU supports the promotion and development of the co-operative model as an effective means of increasing producers' bargaining power in the economy and food system, and for the securing of infrastructure necessary for production, processing, marketing and distribution of food and other products.
2. Expansion of Agricultural Co-ops. NEFU supports the growth and development of marketing, supply and service co-operatives on local, regional and national levels. We recommend that farmer-owned and -controlled co-operatives work together whenever and wherever possible to obtain more marketing and bargaining power for farmers. We encourage marketing co-operatives, especially in dairying, to continue their efforts toward the creation of marketing agencies in common for the purpose of improving marketing efficiency and producer prices.
3. Repeal of "block voting" provisions in co-ops. Because the "one person, one vote" principle upon which the individual democratic rights of this country was founded has been eroded by permitting block voting by co-operatives on behalf of their farmer-members, NEFU strongly supports efforts to repeal "block voting" provisions wherever they exist in co-operative America. Individual farmers need to be afforded an opportunity to disagree with their marketing co-operatives whose interest may differ from that of the farmer.
4. Promotion of Co-operative Education. NEFU supports co-operatives in setting aside the full amount of educational funds permitted by law in order to fulfill the principle of education, training and information for members, elected representatives, managers, and employees so they can contribute effectively to the development of their co-operatives, and efforts to inform the general public — particularly young people and opinion leaders — about the nature and benefits of co-operation.
5. Food Co-op Development. NEFU recognizes the unique role that food co-

ops have played in our region in developing markets for organic, fairly traded and locally sourced foods, and partnering with producers to strengthen rural communities. NEFU supports the growth and development of food co-ops as member-owned grocery stores, and encourages collaboration among food co-ops, producers, and producer co-operatives in advancing a shared vision of a vibrant and resilient regional economy and New England better able to “feed and fuel itself.”

6. Credit Unions. NEFU encourages the organization and growth of credit unions, recognizing the role that these member-owned financial institutions play in the economic lives of local communities. We oppose any effort to impose a tax on member-owned non-profit credit unions. We support maintaining the National Credit Union Share Insurance Fund as a separate and independent agency from other federal deposit insurance systems. We support the right of all Americans to choose how and where they deposit their earnings and transact their personal financial business. We encourage efforts by credit unions to develop their ability to provide financial services to local businesses and co-ops in their areas of operation.
7. Cross Sector Co-op Collaboration. We support collaboration among co-ops across sectors and particularly in the regional food system as a means of sustaining our communities and securing economic infrastructure in the long term.

NEFU Opposes:

1. All joint ventures or mergers between co-operatives and multinational corporations.
2. Outsourcing of Product by Producer Co-ops: Some regional co-operatives have begun buying or selling goods from outside interests that are normally sourced from members. Such examples include 1) buying extra-territorial and sometimes distressed milk at price levels well below prices paid to members, 2) selling unbranded fuels to nonmember companies at lower prices than typically negotiated with member co-ops, and 3) purchasing commodities from outside the U.S. for prices lower than those paid its members selling the same commodities. These practices, though perceived as benign, are often detrimental to co-op members and local co-ops. Such practices often result in undercutting members' and local co-ops' prices, and eroding their position in the marketplace. NEFU strongly urges such co-operatives to curtail such practices and develop compensation formulas to ensure that those harmed by such initiatives be promptly compensated. Prompt compensation might involve co-

operatives holding any additional income derived from such practices in escrow, and disbursing payments to its members within the same fiscal year.

NEFU Needs to Discuss:

1. Taking up positions on co-op legislation at the state level is a crucial role for NEFU because this is where co-op statutes primarily reside. The only relevant federal policies have to do with budgetary support (e.g. USDA), tax law (e.g. subchapter T), and acts such as Capper Volstead (1922) and the Cooperative Marketing Act (1926). Otherwise, most of the action – such as the VT bill on Limited Co-operative Associations – will be at the state level. It is here that co-ops in our region need and value NEFU's support and advocacy.

BACKGROUND

Co-operatives are based on the fundamental principles of ownership and democratic control by member/patron users, financing by member/patron users, with distribution of benefits to patrons based on their participation in the co-operative business. Experience has clearly demonstrated that any substantial deviation from these fundamental principles has always proven fatal to co-operatives and detrimental to their farmer members. Further, co-operative incorporation statutes of the various States as well as the Capper-Volstead Act of 1922, the Cooperative Marketing Act of 1926, federal income taxation rules, and many other laws recognize fundamental co-operative principles. These statutes allow substantial flexibility for innovative co-operative business practices and structural adaptation to contemporary needs and challenges.

The promotion and encouragement of farm, fishery and forestry co-ops should be emphasized as an effective means to increase producers' bargaining power in the economy and food system. We acknowledge and encourage the promotion of the role of co-operative enterprise in securing for our region the infrastructure necessary for production, processing, marketing and distribution of food and other products.

We reaffirm our belief in and commitment to the co-operative identity and principles as identified by the International Co-operative Alliance:

1. Voluntary and Open Membership. Co-operatives are voluntary organizations, open to all persons able to use their services and willing to accept the responsibilities of membership, without gender, social, racial, political or religious discrimination.
2. Democratic Member Control. Co-operatives are democratic organizations controlled by their members, who actively participate in setting their policies and making decisions. Men and women serving as elected representatives are accountable to the membership. In primary co-operatives members have equal voting rights (one member, one vote) and co-operatives at other levels are also organized in a democratic manner.
3. Member Economic Participation. Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of their co-operative. At least part of that capital is usually the common property of the co-operative. Members usually receive limited compensation, if any, on capital subscribed as a condition of membership. Members allocate surpluses for any or all of the following purposes: developing their co-operative, possibly by setting up reserves, part of which at least would be indivisible; benefiting members in proportion to their transactions with the co-operative; and supporting other activities approved by the membership.
4. Autonomy and Independence. Co-operatives are autonomous, self-help organizations controlled by their members. If they enter to agreements with other organizations, including governments, or raise capital from external sources, they do so on terms that ensure democratic control by their members and maintain their co-operative autonomy.

5. Education, Training and Information. Co-operatives provide education and training for their members, elected representatives, managers, and employees so they can contribute effectively to the development of their co-operatives. They inform the general public - particularly young people and opinion leaders - about the nature and benefits of co-operation.
6. Cooperation among Co-operatives. Co-operatives serve their members most effectively and strengthen the co-operative movement by working together through local, national, regional and international structures.
7. Concern for Community. Co-operatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies approved by their members.

In addition, NEFU affirms the following principles that have been recognized as being of particular importance to farmer and producer co-operatives:

1. One-member, one-vote
2. Continuing education
3. Open membership
4. Patronage refund
5. Competitive prices
6. Limited return on investment
7. Continuous expansion
8. Political & religious neutrality

IX. LAND TENURE

LAND ACCESS AND TENURE

National policy objectives for agricultural land tenure should serve as a framework for USDA agencies and offices, programs, rules, and resource allocation. NEFU supports an emphasis on access to land focused on affordability, land preservation and succession.

NEFU's priorities:

1. Conduct a new Agricultural Economics and Land Ownership Survey (AELOS) or enhance the Agricultural Resource Management Survey (ARMS) to gather contemporary data on farmland ownership and tenure.
2. Models and programs that provide more secure tenure, make land more available, address land and farmer housing affordability, and help seekers and owners connect.
3. Programs that support beginning farmers and farm entry with attention to training, credit, land access, and non-traditional populations.
4. Promote advancements in farmland protection tools.

NEFU supports:

1. Farming and ranching on public lands. Remove barriers to secure tenure on public land, including increased length of leases and ownership of improvements. Provide information, models, and technical assistance to public land managers to encourage agricultural uses.
2. **Share-lease models and regionally appropriate fee formulas. Provision of information, education and technical assistance to landowners and tenants to enter into longer term agreements of at least five years duration.**
3. Tenure arrangements that help new farmers build equity (e.g. share-milking).

NEFU needs to discuss:

1. *Increased and appropriate use of loan programs. Improved outreach to enhance use of FSA loan programs in New England. Insistence on and enforcement of borrower training for beginning farmers seeking ownership loans. Encouragement of Aggie Bond program in New England where it is underutilized.*
2. *Educate and reward non-farming landowners. Promote and provide resources for educational programming, outreach, and assistance, particularly for absentee landlords. Encourage greater involvement and investment and more secure tenure agreements through tax incentives or disincentives and/or other measures.*

FARM TRANSFER AND SUCCESSION

NEFU priorities:

1. Reward or prioritize farm operators with succession plans who are applying to programs such as public and

private purchase of development rights or farm viability programs.

2. Develop and promote better estate planning tools and models. Find alternatives to the heavy reliance on farmland sales to fund retirement (e.g., pension programs to encourage exiting farmers to transfer sooner.) The USDA Commission on Small Farms recommended that the “USDA’s Economic Research Service, legal experts, and financial experts should work together to design alternative methods for transferring farms from retiring to beginning farmers” (USDA 1998).
3. Examine tax laws for barriers to farm transfers and amend federal and state tax codes to remove them.

NEFU supports:

1. The federal government’s active role in helping farmers plan for succession.

NEFU needs to discuss:

1. Examine tax laws for barriers to intergenerational farm transfers and amend federal and state tax codes to remove them.-

X. NUTRITION

SCHOOL MILK

Studies show a large percentage of children in the United States are calcium deficient. Nine out of ten teenage girls and seven out of ten teenage boys do not get enough calcium in their diet. Less than half of all children age six to eleven consume the recommended amount of milk.

USDA must retain cow's milk as the beverage qualifying for reimbursable school meal programs. NEFU supports efforts to make school milk r-BST free. We support the installation of milk vending machines in all schools.

UNIVERSAL BREAKFAST PROGRAM

Studies prove that a student that eats breakfast performs better academically and has better behavior. NEFU supports a Universal Breakfast Program. USDA commodities must be provided for school breakfast programs.

AFTERNOON MILK PROGRAM

NEFU urges the USDA to provide an afternoon reimbursable program that shall include dairy products.

GOVERNMENT NUTRITION PROGRAMS

NEFU calls upon state and federal lawmakers to fully fund programs that provide locally produced foods to school cafeterias and government nutrition programs including state institutions.

In addition, NEFU supports full reinstatement of the dairy portion of the Women, Infants and Children program (WIC).

SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAM

NEFU calls upon the USDA to make funds available and programs requirements re-written to support the procurement, preparation and service of local foods, allowing for nutritious meals that also support local and regional farmers and processors.

NEFU calls upon the USDA to mandate that all foods and commodities used in the School Lunch Program (and other federally-subsidized school nutrition programs) contain only products and ingredients certified as safe under FDA's safety program, GRAS (Generally Recognized As Safe).

NEFU supports having the availability of a soy beverage to all school children who are lactose intolerant.

FAST FOOD INDUSTRY

While NEFU appreciates the efforts of the fast food industry to offer nutritious meals to their customers, we call upon the industry to provide higher quality, nutritionally packed meal items. Nutritionally deprived diets lead to higher levels of obesity. Further, we call upon the fast food industry to purchase raw commodities from local producers.

NEFU needs to discuss:

Local milk?

FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICES

NEFU priorities:

- 1. Programs which allow food stamp users to purchase food directly from farmers' markets / farm stands and local producers**
- 2. Adoption of Double Value benefits for SNAP at farmers markets/farm stands**

NEFU supports:

3. The Food Stamp Act of 1964;
4. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP);
5. Outreach efforts to extend services to the increasing number of hungry people who should be served, particularly in rural areas where access is a problem;
6. Exclusion of farm loans as income in determining eligibility for food stamps;
7. Continued development of the Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) Program;
8. Prohibiting efforts to substitute cash payment for food stamps;
9. Adoption of Double Value benefits for SNAP at farmers markets;
10. Exploration of models that would specify certain SNAP dollars be used at markets, just like WIC;
11. Commodity distribution programs such as the Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) and child feeding programs;
12. USDA making healthy surplus foods readily available to food banks and emergency kitchens, bearing the cost of transportation and storage; and,
13. Federal law that requires commodities distributed for nutrition programs be domestically produced.

XI. ECONOMICS AND THE FAMILY FARM

Areas of interest include Farm Credit System, Health and Medical Savings Accounts, Tax deductibility for health insurance, and farm savings accounts.

NEFU Priorities:

1. The Farm Credit System (FCS) remain as a viable source of agricultural credit and recommit itself to assisting family agriculture by restructuring loans, lowering interest rates and debt mediation procedures. The farm credit system should remain faithful to its original mission of serving the credit needs of the agricultural community.
2. FCS must continue to be owned by American agriculture and not be subject to foreign or non-agricultural ownership.
3. Farm Service Agency (FSA) should truly become a “lender of last resort” and effectively address beginning farmers’ credit needs.
4. The IRS allows farmers to use their health insurance as a deduction on their schedule F form, rather than a tax credit on the 1040 form.

NEFU supports:

1. Affordable and available health insurance for all individuals regardless of age, gender, ethnicity or preexisting conditions.
2. Insurance policies of community rating where all individuals share in the cost and risks of health insurance.
3. Farm savings accounts to manage financial risks associated with farming. Government subsidized farm savings accounts are based upon the idea of providing farmers with financial incentives to set aside funds in high income years for use in low income years. Like revenue insurance products, most farm savings account proposals rely upon tax records to determine eligibility for contributions and withdrawals from the accounts. Unlike revenue insurance products, the producer does not pay a premium, but rather places funds in a deposit account. These funds remain the property of the producer. Additionally, deposits to the account may be tax deferred, and/or matched by a deposit from the government.
4. An overhaul of Health Savings Accounts (HSAs) as currently designed, because they provide an incentive for those who are younger and healthier to ‘opt out’ of traditional health insurance pools thereby raising health insurance rates for those remaining in the pool.
5. ~~NEFU opposes HSAs as an adequate solution to reforming the health care system.~~