

ROCKY MOUNTAIN FARMERS UNION POLICY 2010

NATIONAL
COLORADO
NEW MEXICO
WYOMING

As determined by delegate discussion and vote at the 2009 Rocky Mountain Farmers Union
Annual Convention—November 20, 2009, in Lakewood, Colorado

- Incentives to encourage production of/and investment by family farmers and community-based organizations in processing and distribution of renewable energy systems;
- Regulations that establish and maintain fair, open and competitive markets with a transparent price discovery system;
- Implementation and safeguarding of food safety measures and enforcement of those measures already in place;
- Increased food safety and security with additional testing especially of foreign-produced products;
- Enforcement of existing food safety regulations on handlers and processors.

E. Farm Program Recommendations

1. Parity

We support the concept of parity (equal purchasing power) of commodity prices to provide equality of income for farm families comparable to incomes of families in other segments of the economy.

a. The Concept of Parity

Parity (farm price index) measures the percentage change in prices received by farmers for the products they sell in relation to the prices paid by farmers for goods and services used in production, interest on capital, taxes and wages, compared with the base period of 1910-1914. A ratio of 100 percent implies the same relationship that existed in the base period. A 75 percent parity ratio indicates that the farmer's purchasing power was down to $\frac{3}{4}$ of what it would buy in the base period. Congress deemed the 1910-1914 base period as one in which there was a balanced relationship between farm and non-farm prices.

b. Parity as a Measurement

We reaffirm our basic commitment to the parity formula (using the base year 1910-1914) established by law as the standard by which to determine prices for all agricultural commodities.

c. The Goal of Parity

Price supports for agricultural commodities are meant to achieve parity for family farmers and ranchers. The levels of support of farm prices should be adjusted regularly in order to reflect changes in costs to farmers of producing farm commodities and for family living.

2. Future Farm Programs – Parity of Income

RMFU supports the development of a future farm program that enables farmers to achieve parity income on par with other sectors of the economy at an income level that covers costs of production plus a reasonable return.

RMFU urges future farm programs to include an income support mechanism.

RMFU urges future farm programs to include farmer-owned commodity loans on a limited amount of production for an individual operator. The loan rate should be set at 80 percent of the national average of cost-of-production, indexed annually for inflation. This program would provide farmers a tool to empower themselves, on a voluntary basis, to influence market prices. The proposed income support should link closely with the government's risk management programs, insuring against crop losses.

RMFU urges future farm programs to be linked directly to participation in conservation programs, such as the Conservation Security Program, that are an integral part of production practices, providing producers with appropriate compensation for participation.

RMFU urges future farm programs to provide incentives to encourage producer participation directly in the development, ownership, processing and distribution of renewable energy and fuels. Such farm programs will be flexible, will limit government financial exposure, keep the government out of the storage business, and provide farmers with income support at a time of low market prices, along with the tools to empower farmers to improve market prices and manage their risks during natural disasters.

We urge the establishment of A.P.H. yield floors to protect the producer in the event of successive crop failure.

We support establishing limits on farm program payments.

3. Research and Development into Alternative Crops and Production Methods

We support alternatives to energy and chemical intensive methods of production. These include organic, free range, natural and integrated pest management alternatives.

We urge Congress and the USDA to re-commit and fully fund research into alternative crops and uses for crops. These crops would include, but are not limited to, canola, buckwheat, lupins, field peas, **industrial hemp**, millet, and straw. To facilitate this resolution, we urge the USDA to finalize the funding for the greenhouse complex at the USDA Agricultural Research Service (ARS) Central Great Plains Research Center at Akron, Colorado.

We further urge Congress and the USDA to implement a program to assist producers in obtaining and establishing profitable markets for these crops.

We support the USDA, ARS, and land grant and community colleges to increase publicly funded independent research to benefit all producers.

We support the adoption of sustainable agricultural practices that satisfy human food and fiber needs, enhance environmental quality, make the most efficient use of nonrenewable resources and on-farm resources, sustain the economic viability of farm operations, enhance the quality of life for farmers and society as a whole and where appropriate, integrate natural biological cycles and controls to protect the resource base on which agriculture depends.

4. Organics/Natural Foods

We support those farmers who wish to pursue the production of food and fiber through organic and sustainable methods of farming. We urge close monitoring of the implementation of the Organic Foods Protection Act to protect the interests of the family farmers and consumers and the integrity of the Act.

RMFU urges the USDA National Organic Program to adhere to the intent and integrity of the National Organic Standards, and that the National Organic Standards Board continues to have full authority over materials allowed or prohibited in the organic production and handling.

We support developing national definitions and standards for naturally-labeled foods.

5. Risk Management

a. Federal Crop Insurance

We support efforts to improve the federal crop insurance program that

K. Energy

1. Research and Development

We recommend the development and implementation of a comprehensive national energy policy which will make the United States energy independent and promote conservation.

We support continued research and development of natural, non-polluting, renewable energy sources, including but not limited to cellulosic ethanol.

We urge individuals and companies to make their homes and businesses more energy efficient.

We oppose efforts to initiate commercial leasing of federal shale resources before effectiveness of and impacts from research, development and demonstration technologies are known.

We support public utilities and rural electricians exploring other energy sources for generation.

2. Alternative and Renewable Energy

RMFU supports a balanced energy policy that conserves and protects our nation's environment and recognizes the special energy needs of America's agricultural sector.

We support the development of renewable sources of energy as our top priority in reducing dependence on fossil fuels.

We recommend the extension of federal energy tax credits to individuals for all forms of alternative and renewable energy in a form that encourages community farm and ranch owned production.

We support farmer and rancher ownership and involvement in alternative energies.

We support a nationwide renewable energy standard and renewable fuels standard.

We support the establishment of a wide variety of renewable energy sources that include but are not limited to wind, solar, bio-mass, hydro, hydrogen and any other available source. It is important to encourage the land grant and community colleges to focus their research on those cropping systems that provide renewable energy. Federal and state funds should be targeted to encourage diversified community based energy systems that create jobs and new wealth in rural areas of the country.

RMFU offers full support and endorsement of the national campaign, 25X25. This initiative urges that programs and incentives be established at the state and national levels to enable the United States to produce 25 percent of its own energy from renewable sources by 2025.

We support renewable energy developmental rights remain with surface owners.

We support maximum opportunities for wind development through cooperative wind associations.

We support a tradable federal production tax credit for locally-owned projects.

We urge all states to require bonding for removal and reclamation for all renewable energy projects.

We strongly support increased federal investment in transmission capacity, including merchant lines. We support agriculture being unregulated in any climate change legislation.

3. Legislation

We support legislation to increase the use of bio-based fuels.

We demand antitrust legislation be enforced to control monopolies in energy production and distribution, and investigation of large corporate interests that control our current energy sources.

4. Nuclear

We support the use of nuclear power with safe and proper methods of waste disposal and transportation.

5. Petroleum

We oppose EPA's classification of crankcase oil and other lubricants as hazardous waste.

RMFU supports Corporate Average Fuel Efficiency (CAFE) standards as it has wide-ranging benefits resulting from less fuel consumption.

6. Coal Gasification

We support the development of Integrated Gasification Combined Cycle (IGCC) technologies in coal-fired power generation.

L. Greenhouse Gas Mitigation

We support the trading of carbon credits and the potential for inclusion of carbon sequestration and methane capture as agricultural conservation practices.

RMFU supports carbon sequestration research. This should encompass all practices, including grazing lands, energy feedstock production, organic cropping, wood lots, CRP, no till, and other proven conservation methods.

We support the use of the USDA or their entities to manage the inspection/verification of carbon credits on agricultural lands, as opposed to the EPA.

We demand verification and regulation by the USDA, not the EPA, of any agriculture regulation related to climate change legislation.

RMFU supports state and national greenhouse gas reduction targets that use a voluntary incentive-based approach to continue the economic viability of farms and ranches.

M. Alternative Fuels

We support assistance to family farms, ranches, and cooperatives in obtaining grants and financial aid in developing bio-fuel plants.

We support the increase of federal tax credits on all alternative fuels.

We encourage the utilization of oxygenated fuel, such as ethanol, to achieve improved air quality and reduce dependence on foreign energy imports.

We support increasing the blend of domestically produced ethanol in all gasoline sold in the United States.

We encourage the use of biodiesel to decrease our dependency on foreign fuel.

We support mandating a federal bio-fuels standard.

N. Alternative Crops

We support the decoupling of industrial hemp from the definition of marijuana under the Controlled Substances Act of 1970.

We demand the President and the Attorney General direct the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) to differentiate between industrial

hemp and marijuana and adopt a policy to allow American farmers to grow industrial hemp under state law without requiring DEA licenses.

We support assistance to family farms, ranches, and cooperatives in obtaining grants and financial aid in developing of bio-fuel crops.

We support research and development of less-water-intensive crops.

We urge land grant universities to maintain agricultural extension and research programs which focus on alternative crop production for renewable energy and other uses for those crops.

O. Regulatory Agencies

We urge Congress to enact a federal sunset law, relative to federal regulations and a federal regulatory agency.

We oppose administrative agencies prohibiting the use of agricultural chemicals without extensive research that prove their detrimental effects.

We support periodic review of regulations set forth by federal agencies.

We support adequate worker safety standards but urge the EPA's policy be reopened and rewritten to ease the financial and regulatory burden upon agricultural producers.

We recommend federal resource management agencies work together to form a single definition for wetlands and/or riparian zones.

We oppose regulatory actions that infringe on private property rights and do not provide compensation for affected landowners.

We demand compliance and enforcement of current anti-pollution laws.

We oppose administrative agencies regulating agricultural practices without extensive research proving their detrimental effects.

P. Transportation

1. Railroads

We support the publication of existing freight rates.

We urge railroads, elevators, and terminals to work together to provide hopper cars in sufficient quantities in a timely manner to alleviate harvest delays.

We oppose additional mergers and abandonment of service, and demand breakup of existing railroad monopolies.

We urge the expansion of the national passenger railway service.

We urge railroads paint or put reflecting tape on the sides of all railroad cars, making them visible at night.

We urge the addition of warning lights and dropping arms at all major railroad crossings.

We urge continued research on railroad crossing technology and safety.

We recommend that railroads be required to maintain safe tracks and auto crossings.

We urge railroads to put a rotating light on all lead engines to distinguish from car lights.

We urge railroads to abide by Federal Railroad Administration guidelines not to impede grade crossings.

2. Highways

We urge passage of laws mandating washout requirements for all carriers prior to hauling food-grade loads.

We support the completion of the "Port to Plains" highway system.

We oppose the proposed construction of the North American Free Trade Agreement Superhighway system.

We support additional federal highway funds for rural transportation, planning, development, and maintenance of roads and bridges.

We insist that all foreign trucks on U.S. highways meet the same standards as U.S. carriers.

We recommend a nationwide standardization of the axle weights and lengths on all interstate highways: 36,000 lbs. per tandem and 20,000 lbs. per single axle.

We recommend a maximum width standard of 8' -6" and a length standard of 57' -4" maximum for semi trailers.

We urge the Federal Highway Administration consider standardizing the maximum width, length and weight for Longer Combination Vehicles (LVC) to help equalize state to state commerce. This should include input from agricultural representation from each state.

We support requiring mud flaps on vehicles over 6,000 pounds of unladen weight.

We support compliance with child restraint and seat belt laws in motor vehicles.

3. Mass Transit

We urge development of mass transit systems.

Q. Waste Disposal

1. Toxic Waste

We oppose the practice of land filling with hazardous waste.

We demand the detoxification or neutralization of hazardous waste as opposed to reconcentrating the waste in another locality. No purchase, construction, or use of proposed toxic waste sites shall be allowed before approval by county and state health officials, EPA and county commissioners in the county where disposal is to take place.

2. Non-Toxic Waste

We support efforts in the legislature to require industry be accountable for the wastes they generate.

3. Recycling

We support recycling of all crankcase oil and other lubricants.

We favor recycling and re-use of all products.

We encourage development of recycling and composting industries in rural areas.

We encourage the creation of incentives to increase the use of recyclable materials.

4. Pollution Prevention

We support policies that create incentives to avoid production of waste rather than policies to remediate the production of waste.

R. Rural Revitalization

We support rural development that expands our present agricultural economic base and focuses on value-added processing for agricultural crops, livestock and renewable energy.

a location that will cause the least impact to agriculture and the rural environment.

- State agencies should assist local entities in minimizing the impact and use of prime agricultural land for such development through feasibility studies in order to determine the full impact of selected sites and development.
- We support a definitive procedure ensuring public information with respect to such proposed land development.
- We support a provision to encourage rural towns and communities, if desired, to acquire lands for industrial parks. These parks would be used as a method of controlling the scope and development of industry, which would aid in stabilizing local economies.

We urge our state government to offer incentives for these new industries to locate in rural areas.

We support present eminent domain laws that encourage the placing of power lines and gas pipelines on private, rather than public land. The eminent domain laws should be changed to give equal protection to private landowners.

F. Animal Welfare

We support teaching animal welfare, as opposed to animal rights, through educational programs and agricultural organizations.

We support humane treatment of all domesticated animals, and their right to have proper food, shelter and water for survival.

We oppose the discontinuation of funding and ban on USDA supervised inspections in processing plants for horses in the United States.

We oppose the regulation of domestic livestock and animal husbandry by ballot initiative.

We support USDA inspected slaughter and processing of horses for meat markets.

G. Alternative Crops

We urge land grant universities to maintain agricultural extension and research programs which focus on alternative crop production for renewable energy and other uses for such crops.

We urge the Colorado legislature to legalize the production of industrial hemp as an alternative crop for agricultural producers.

Article VIII. Education and Social Policy

A. Medical Care

We support access to affordable medical, dental, vision and mental health services, as well as to long-term care and hospice care for all citizens.

We support a workable and affordable national universal health care plan to provide equal opportunity for adequate health care for all people. We support Universal Health Insurance for Colorado. We support a single-payer health system.

We support ending discrimination in insurance based on pre-existing condition or gender. We also support the elimination of medical payment caps. We support the deductibility of premiums for small businesses and the self-employed.

We support the Colorado Commission on Family Medicine and their efforts to place general practitioners in rural and under-served areas in the state.

We also support providing incentives for medical students who agree to serve in medically under-served areas after graduation.

We urge expanded use of physician assistants and/or nurse practitioners in areas whose populations cannot support a medical doctor.

We support federal and/or state funding for rural health clinics and emergency medical services in rural counties that have no medical services.

We urge local medical facilities and hospitals to provide medical care for the indigent and working poor who do not qualify for Medicare or Medicaid or do not have their own health insurance.

We support lowering health costs through nutritional education, disease prevention and wellness promotion.

We encourage changing the Medicare Part A hospice benefit so that it is dependant upon physician certification rather than a specific time limit.

We oppose the takeover of locally owned hospitals by large corporations.

We oppose the practice of rate banding by healthcare companies, either by age or health status of employees.

We support the creation of regional healthcare co-ops – based on the model of electrical co-ops – to spread the burden of healthcare costs.

We support capital investment by the state in building and sustaining the infrastructure for tele-medicine.

B. Education

We support adequate public funding of K-12 education and state supported post-secondary education systems of Colorado.

We support additional investment in secondary vocational education programs in Colorado.

We support public funding for Colorado Experiment Stations and the Extension Service.

We support increased state funding for the school districts be earmarked for academic purposes.

We support educational programs and distribution of education curricula to the public and all pre-K-16 schools that promotes American family farms' commitment to food quality and safety, ethical farm practices, a safe and healthful environment, land and water stewardship, and sustainability of food supplies.

We encourage developing alternatives to education funding systems that would reduce the reliance on property taxes.

We oppose the consolidation of rural school districts, and support the re-establishment of rural schools.

We oppose the consolidation of any community colleges within the state of Colorado.

We support adequate opportunities for local preschool child care and encourage common-sense approaches to solving any shortage.

We support the development of broadband capacity internet to be equitable to urban areas.

C. Senior Citizens

We support a property tax exemption for senior citizens. The amount of income allowable to senior citizens for property tax relief should be adjusted periodically to account for inflation.

We believe that these programs have nothing to do with health and security.

H. Alternative Crops

We strongly support research and development by private and public efforts to create industrial uses and markets for products produced on our farms, and ethanol blended and bio-diesel fuels, medicines, protein supplements and cosmetics, as well as other innovative uses needed by industry.

We support the reintroduction of industrial hemp (defined as *Cannabis Sativa*), having one percent or less tetrahydrocannabinol (THC).

We support research into the viability and economic potential of industrial hemp produced in the United States.

Article IV. Government and Agencies

A. Agricultural Services

We urge New Mexico Department of Agriculture to conduct a study of agricultural services in New Mexico with regard to the needs of rural people, the services available, and responsiveness of service agencies.

We urge that appropriate testing be made available for local areas for soil, crops, etc.

We oppose any efforts by the Farm Service Agency (FSA) and the Risk Management Agency (RMA) to force ditch irrigators to sign up their farms as dryland acres during an irrigation water shortage. Furthermore, we believe that producers should not have their irrigated base taken away due to unnatural lake, river and stream conditions.

We oppose the burden of record keeping for hay and grain producers for bio-terrorism on hay when other safe-guards are already in place.

B. Secretary of Agriculture

We favor a system where the governor, rather than the Board of Regents, appoints the secretary of agriculture.

We support moving the state office from Las Cruces to Santa Fe.

C. Gun Control

We support all firearm education safety courses and safe and legal use of firearms.

We oppose gun confiscation laws imposed upon U.S. citizens by any local, state or federal agency. We oppose the ban on semiautomatic weapons.

We support strict enforcement of existing laws.

D. Right to Work

We believe the right-to-work laws should be a state prerogative.

We oppose any common situs picketing bill.

We demand that employers be able to recover the cost of defending themselves when being falsely accused by employees of practices such as but not limited to harassment, discrimination, race, age, sex, etc.

E. State Education

We support a fair and equitable formula for distributing state education funds.

We support agriculture education, home economics, vocational-technical training programs, and other occupational preparation courses as an integral part of our free, public educational system.

We oppose the implementation of school vouchers.

We support continuance of the Perkins Act.

We oppose diversion of principal from the permanent state fund for education.

F. Utilities

We oppose any utility deregulation or regulation that results in higher cost to consumers.

G. International Relations

We oppose the construction of the "Border Fence" between Mexico and the United States.

H. Food Safety

We support increased food safety and security with additional testing especially of foreign-produced products.