

LWV



Agriculture Study

Context and information to prepare for the
LWVUS Agriculture Study

Scope of LWVUS Study:

The Agriculture update will focus narrowly on:

- 1) current technology issues in agriculture including genetically modified organisms (GMOs), herbicides, pesticides, agriculture water pollution, aquifer depletion, antibiotics in livestock, and accurate food labeling
- 2) current agriculture finance issues including consolidation in agriculture industries, crop subsidies and the federal agriculture regulatory process.

Our scope

- Recent farm bill legislation
- Crop subsidies
- Federal Regulatory Organizations
- Sustainable Agriculture
- GMOs
- Animal agriculture/CAFOs

LWVUS 1988 Agriculture Policy

Supported

- Sustainable agriculture
- Action to reduce use of toxic chemicals on farms
- Targeting research programs and technical assistance to mid-sized farms
- Farm credit at reasonable terms and conditions
- “Decoupling”- moving away from direct payments based on production
- Federally-provided farm credit with government as lender of last resort
- Conservation reserve program

Timeline

- 1933- Congress passed the Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA) as part of FDR's New Deal
- 1988- LWVUS last position on agriculture
- 2002- Farm Security and Rural Investment Act
- 2008- Food Conservation and Energy Act
- 2012- Agriculture Reform, Food and Jobs Act

Agriculture Reform, Food, and Jobs Act

- price supports and/or crop insurance for commodity crops
- conservation programs that affect land, water and soil use
- agricultural exports and food aid, including humanitarian assistance to other nations
- food assistance programs for poor Americans
- direct and guaranteed loans to farmers and ranchers
- forestry programs managed by the U.S. Forest Service
- programs promoting renewable fuels such as ethanol
- crop insurance and disaster assistance
- the cost over 10 years will be about \$969 billion

Agriculture Reform, Food, and Jobs Act

U.S. House Farm Bill

- After an original attempt failed in June, the U.S. House of Representatives passed a farm bill in June without any nutrition provisions. A separate nutrition bill was passed by the House in September.

U.S. Senate Farm Bill

- The Senate Agriculture Committee moved a farm bill through committee in late spring and the Senate passed their version of the farm bill in June.

Types of Subsidies

- **Direct payments** are paid at a set rate every year regardless of conditions.
- **Counter-cyclical payments** are triggered when market prices fall below certain thresholds.
- A new **revenue assurance program** provides for overall profitability for a given crop.
- **Marketing loans** offer very favorable terms whereby farmers can realize tremendous gains through loan deficiency payments (LDPs) and commodity certificates.
- **Disaster payments** recoup large losses due to natural phenomena. And the government subsidizes crop insurance to further insulate farmers from risk.
- **Crop insurance**

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)

Mission Areas

- Farm and Foreign Agriculture Services
- Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services
- Food Safety
- Marketing and Regulatory Programs
- Natural Resources and Environment
- Research Education and Economics
- Rural Development

http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?navid=USDA_MISSION_AREAS

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Services (APHIS)

- A USDA Office that falls under the mission area of Marketing and Regulatory Programs
- Mission area that includes protecting and promoting U.S. agricultural health, regulating genetically engineered organisms, administering the Animal Welfare Act and carrying out wildlife damage management activities.
- In the event that a pest or disease of concern is detected, implements emergency protocols and partners with affected States to quickly manage or eradicate the outbreak.
- Develops and advances science-based standards with trading partners to ensure America's agricultural exports, worth more than \$50 billion annually.
- In response to needs expressed by the American people and Congress, APHIS' mission has expanded over the years to include such issues as wildlife damage and disease management; regulation of genetically engineered crops and animal welfare; and protection of public health and safety as well as natural resources that are vulnerable to invasive pests and pathogens.

http://www.aphis.usda.gov/about_aphis/

Michigan Farm Bureau

- Michigan Farm Bureau is the state's largest general farm organization. As a general farm organization we represent the diversity of Michigan's agriculture industry, from crops and livestock to fruits and vegetables, greenhouses, forestry and more. Likewise, we represent farms of all sizes — small, medium and large — and varying styles of production, such as conventional and organic and both indoor and outdoor animal management.

The Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry

- Comprised of 20 members. 11 members of the majority; 9 members of the minority. The Chairman and Ranking Member are selected at the start of each Congress, and members are assigned to the Committee thereafter.
- Jurisdiction includes proposed legislation, etc. relating to:
 - 1. Agricultural economics and research.
 - 2. Agricultural extension services and experiment stations.
 - 3. Agricultural production, marketing, and stabilization of prices.
 - 4. Agriculture and agricultural commodities.
 - 5. Animal industry and diseases.
 - 6. Crop insurance and soil conservation.
 - 7. Farm credit and farm security.
 - 8. Food from fresh waters.
 - 9. Food stamp programs.
 - 10. Forestry, and forest reserves and wilderness areas other than those created from the public domain.
 - 11. Home economics.
 - 12. Human nutrition.
 - 13. Inspection of livestock, meat, and agricultural products.
 - 14. Pests and pesticides.
 - 15. Plant industry, soils, and agricultural engineering.
 - 16. Rural development, rural electrification, and watersheds.
 - 17. School nutrition programs.

Features of Traditional Farms

- 1. Heavy use of fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides
- 2. Long term health impacts
- 3. High energy costs
- 4. High water usage
- 5. Soil erosion

Desirable Goals of Sustainable Agriculture

- 1. Provide abundant, safe and nutritious food
- 2. Reduce the harmful environmental impacts
- 3. Reduce energy usage
- 4. Foster soil fertility and reduce soil erosion
- 5. Enhance crop genetic diversity
- 6. Maintain the economic viability of farmers and rural communities
- 7. Protect biodiversity

Major Characteristics of Organic Farming

- 1. Focus on the health of crops, animals, farmers and the environment
- 2. Control of pests through crop rotation, support and enhancement of beneficial organisms and the use of resistant crop varieties
- 3. Fostering of soil fertility through the use of compost
- 4. Use of cover crops

CAFO

Definition of AFO and CAFO

Positive views of CAFOs

- a. Beef Documentary
Uploaded on Sep 21, 2011. Farmers discussing the science behind a cattle feedlot and the care involved in raising the cows. The environmental practices they observe and are constantly improving upon are showcased.
- b. Hog Production at Smithfield Farms

Problems with CAFOs

- 1. Animal Cruelty
 - a. Inhumane feed lot beef vs. Humane grass feed beef
 - b. Undercover at Smithfield Foods.
- 2. Antibiotics used
- 3. Waste disposal
 - a. Living Downstream from a Pig Farm
 - b. Michigan Farmer fights livestock factory farm pollution

Questions?

