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The National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) believes a strong animal production agriculture capacity is imperative in maintaining domestic and international consumer confidence in the safety of the United States meat supply.

Animal Identification

The National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) believes a national animal identification, if properly implemented in cooperation with the states and territories, could be beneficial in maintaining consumer confidence in meat from the United States, an invaluable tool in reducing and tracking future outbreaks of infectious disease, and serving as an important firewall against any attempted terrorist attack on the food production system in the United States.

Any future effort by USDA to develop a national animal identification program must be designed and implemented in full consultation with state legislatures to ensure proper attention to public interest and financial considerations. Any program must be designed and implemented in cooperation with the departments of agriculture of the states and territories. USDA must work to ensure that any animal identification system is compatible with the current inspection and enforcement systems of the state governments. Any applicable federal program should not be applied to animals involved in intrastate commerce without state consultation.

Equine Industry and USDA Inspection of Horse Meat

The processing of horses has become a controversial and emotional issue, resulting in the closure of the last horse processing facility in the United States. Without affordable and economic alternatives, unwanted horses are abandoned. The nation’s inadequate and overburdened horse rescue and adoption facilities cannot begin to handle the
influx. These additional unwanted horses will compete for adoption with wild horses that are currently fed and sheltered at a public expense. In the Western United States (US), the additional pressure on public lands from horses turned out to run wild is only intensifying the over-population, over-grazing, and ultimate destruction of the ecosystem.

**NCSL urges members of Congress to:**

- Recognize the need for humane horse processing facilities in the United States.
- Not to interfere with State efforts to establish facilities in the United States. State livestock programs that were once able to recoup the costs of caring and feeding for abandoned animals by marketing them, are now forced to greatly increase their budgets at the expense of taxpayers.
- Recognize the positive economic impact of willing market for the US horse industry. These, and ethnic markets inside the US would appreciate an additional source of high quality protein untainted by disease concerns of other species of livestock.
- Oppose legislation that would restrict the market, transport, processing, or export of horses. Horse processing in the United States is particularly tightly regulated, and the horse is the only animal whose transportation to processing is regulated. Horse processing facilities in the United States are required to have United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) veterinarians supervise the euthanasia, and the euthanasia method is humane, according the American Veterinary Medical Association and the United States Department of Agriculture.
- Oppose limitations under federal appropriations law prohibiting the use of federal dollars to be spent on the salaries of inspectors for ante-and post mortem inspections.

**Interstate Sale of State-Inspected Meat and Poultry**

NCSL encourages USDA to continue the Cooperative Interstate Shipment Program in qualifying states as the program levels the economic playing field for small businesses,
spurs more competition in the marketplace, create a more uniform inspection system, and enhances consumer confidence in the food supply – all of which benefit farmers, ranchers, processors, small business, and consumers.
The National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) believes that maintaining a strong production agriculture capacity is critical to our nation’s strength and is a matter of national security. NCSL recognizes that decisions affecting American agriculture must reflect a working partnership of the federal government with the states in both the formulation and implementation of policy.

Agricultural Fiscal Policy

NCSL urges federal efforts designed to enhance farm income while increasing agricultural exports. Monetary policies must be implemented which promote low interest rates and maintain dollar exchange rates which enhance the potential for sale of this nation's commodities in international markets. The federal government must also maintain a stable financial network capable of supplying adequate amounts of affordable credit to the agricultural industry. The government must also continue to search for innovative financing tools which enhance the ability of agricultural producers to manage risk and stabilize income. In addition, any domestic farm program must work in conjunction with a strong, aggressive export program which protects and expands our export markets.

State legislators should be represented on any working or study group for the purpose of addressing long term agriculture lending and payment needs established by Congress or the executive branch. NCSL urges Congress to review the existing payment limitations for individual farmers and program eligibility requirements to ensure that they provide support to economically efficient farming operations and promote the preservation of the family farm. In addition, the Conference recommends that all federal agricultural adjustment payments, price-support program loans, payments and other benefits not related to soil conservation efforts be limited to citizens of this country or
Secondary Market for Long-Term Loans: NCSL urges the federal government to work with states to assure that the provisions of the Agricultural Credit Act of 1987 continue to be fully implemented.

Bankruptcy law: NCSL supports federal legislation to permanently extend allowing farm operations to declare Chapter 12 bankruptcy.

Farm Credit System (FCS): NCSL encourages farm credit institutions to work with farmer-borrowers to restructure debt. NCSL urges that any disposition of land and assets held by the System or its units be conducted in an orderly fashion so that such disposition does not adversely affect the value of those assets or of other property within the community. NCSL also urges that FCS institutions continue to work with producers to provide necessary financing for changes in payments and crops resulting from adjustments to federal programs.

Commercial Lending Institutions: NCSL believes that as federal financial assistance is provided to member institutions of the FCS, assistance should also be provided to commercial lending institutions that provide credit to agriculture. Furthermore, Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) policies and federal bank regulation procedures must be reviewed to ensure that the maximum assistance is being provided to troubled borrowers, without compromising the safety and soundness of the institution or the assets of the FDIC.

Agricultural Bonds: NCSL supports exempting agricultural bonds from the federal volume cap placed on industrial revenue bonds in each state. Furthermore, NCSL recommends that the President and U.S. Congress amend the federal Internal Revenue Code to make the use of agricultural bonds more attractive to banks and other financial institutions. NCSL also recommends that the federal government permit deductibility for loans financed by issuers that are not necessarily small issuers as defined by the
Crop Insurance: NCSL supports a state-federal partnership to develop a fair and affordable crop insurance program that complements other risk management tools available in the marketplace for all crops. NCSL supports an efficient program that promotes informed production and management decisions. NCSL also supports federal efforts to encourage private-sector development of innovative risk management tools. However, any plan for crop insurance must not adversely impact a state’s ability to levy premium taxes, regulate the business of private insurance or set solvency standards for private crop insurers.

Marketing
NCSL seeks a federal policy that will sustain a vibrant agricultural marketplace and strong farm economy while providing for competition and fair practices. The federal government should cooperate fully with states’ efforts to supplement private sector marketing programs by providing comprehensive marketing, promotion and market development activities. These should include, at a minimum, sustained commitments to the provision of data on market trends and consumer demands, technical assistance, financial assistance and public education campaigns.

Special emphasis must be placed upon the development of new markets through the creation of demand for new crops or products or additional sources of demand for existing commodities and products; the improvement of linkages between buyers and sellers; a shift toward the sale of processed, not raw, commodities and high value cash crops; and the identification and analysis of potential markets. All parties, both public and private sector, must work together to develop effective strategies to exploit those opportunities fully and to maintain an ongoing ability to respond to changing consumer demands.

Direct Marketing Arrangements: NCSL recommends that Congress review the Packers and Stockyards Act as a mechanism for addressing unfair practices that may
occur under direct marketing arrangements, monitor activities in this area, and enact appropriate and timely legislation to safeguard the welfare of producers. NCSL urges Congress and USDA to strengthen and diligently enforce the provisions of the Packers and Stockyards Act in concert with the clear intent of the Act to curb monopolistic abuses in the concentrated meatpacking sector.

**Competition**

Family farmers ultimately derive their income from the agricultural marketplace. Congress must set rules to improve the competitive environment of agriculture so that farmers are able to retain a greater portion of their income.

**Natural Resource Conservation**

All federal government actions affecting natural resources should be conducted in close cooperation and only after consultation and coordination with the states. A strong commitment to conduct research, in the area of improved methods of natural resource conservation and protection, must be maintained. The federal government should work with state and local governments to develop agricultural land use policies, but should leave the responsibility for establishment of these policies to the state and local governments. NCSL favors a block grant approach that gives states maximum flexibility. NCSL supports the use of science, technology and effective practices to reduce nutrient losses to water, including nitrogen and phosphorus, from point and nonpoint sources.

We encourage significant federal investment in state-supported projects -- with an emphasis on watershed-based public-private partnerships -- that provide for accountability and transparency, as evidenced by the establishment of goals, timelines, milestones, monitoring, measurement and regular public reporting documenting improvements in the quality of water in public waterways. Fundamentally, NCSL believes that states must be given a much stronger voice in ensuring that federal wetlands, endangered species, and land management policies respect the rights of local landowners and states.
Wetlands and Endangered Species
The federal government should delegate authority to states for the development, administration, and enforcement of wetlands protection and endangered species programs. The national government, acting through USDA, should set broad national goals and standards for wetlands protection and preservation of endangered species, but states should have the flexibility to meet those goals. The federal government, furthermore, should provide financial and technical assistance as incentives to encourage states to assume primacy over wetlands and endangered species programs.

Pollinator Health
NCSL recognizes the importance of pollinators and stresses the negative ramifications of continued pollinator loss, while supporting federal efforts to protect pollinators. We also recognize the key roles that the federal government plays as a landowner and manager, regulator of pesticide products, and financial and technical assistance provider to farmers and other private landowners. As such NCSL supports and calls upon the federal government to:

- develop best management practices and enhance pollinator habitat on federally owned or managed lands;
- incorporate pollinator health as a component of all future federal restoration and reclamation projects;
- revise guidance documents for designed landscapes and public buildings in order to incorporate pollinator-friendly practices;
- increase both the acreage and forage value of pollinator habitat in the Conservation Reserve Program and other federal conservation programs;
- provide technical assistance in collaboration with land-grant university-based cooperative extension services to federal departments and agencies, state, local, and tribal governments, and other entities and individuals including farmers and ranchers;
- assist states and state wildlife organizations, as appropriate, in identifying and implementing projects to conserve pollinators through the revision and
implementation of State Wildlife Action Plans;
• assess the effects of systemic pesticides and parasites on bee and other pollinator health and take corresponding action, as appropriate, to protect pollinators from pesticides and parasites;
• take immediate measures to support pollinators with proper habitat and nutrition during the current growing season and thereafter, including planting pollinator-friendly vegetation, increasing flower diversity in plantings, limiting mowing practices, and reduce or avoid, when necessary, the use of pesticides in sensitive pollinator habitats through the use of integrated vegetation, pest and colony management practices; and
• work closely with the states to align pollinator protection efforts and share best practices.

NCSL and the states identify as willing partners in the federal government’s pollinator protection efforts and will closely monitor federal actions and progress on these, and related efforts of utmost importance to the states and our nation’s food supply, urban and rural agriculture economies, environment and natural resources.

**Land Management**

Devolution of authority to states should also be a goal of federal land management policies. Demonstration projects should be established to determine if state administration of national forests, grasslands, parks and other federal property will result in cost savings to taxpayers and greater sensitivity to the concerns of local citizens and property owners. NCSL, moreover, encourages Congress and federal agencies to hold hearings and public meetings in order to hear the concerns of state and local officials and of ordinary citizens and property holders regarding the impact of federal landownership and regulation.

**Soil Conservation**

NCSL supports an ongoing education program to make certain that producers are fully
aware of the need for proper soil conservation practices and of the best methods to use
in their implementation. Diligent efforts must be made by the federal government to
ensure that proper soil conservation practices are adopted and that fragile, erodible land
is protected.

NCSL supports requiring that each farm have and follow an approved soil and water
conservation plan in order to obtain government assistance. Benefits may be denied if a
crop is grown in violation of this requirement. Further, NCSL supports continued
extension of the Conservation Reserve Program and federal efforts to protect
pollinators, including those that are vital to American food production.

**Cover Crop Research**

NCSL supports federal efforts to further the development of and proliferation and use of
cover crops given the growing concerns about water quality, soil fertility, weed control,
nematode control, water retention and biodiversity. NCSL recognizes that cover crops
have proven to increase yields in university studies as well as in replicated farm
research; are an increasingly popular way to keep soil healthy; helps reduce the need
for Nitrogen and other nutrients, and create a healthier soil environment that resists
disease and pests; inhibit weed growth by shading them out, by preventing emergence,
and by compounds exuded by the roots; are shown to reduce populations of pathogenic
nematodes and encourage populations of beneficial ones; break up soil compaction
whether it is naturally occurring or a result of heavy cultivation and tillage; add diversity
to the natural biological life in heavily farmed soils, often working in synergy with cash
crops for bottom line benefits; add diversity to the natural biological life in heavily farmed
soils, often working in synergy with cash crops for bottom line benefits.

**Research and Development**

NCSL supports the state-federal partnership in agricultural research at state
universities. Furthermore, funds must be made available to support research and
development of innovative products. Funds should also be used for dissemination of
information about research discoveries both domestically and abroad. It is particularly
important that the land grant universities maintain their commitment to agricultural research and development and that the federal government provide sufficient research dollars to support this vital effort.

NCSL urges the federal government to maintain a strong research program for the development of adequate, cost-effective and environmentally sound control measures to ensure the eradication of all insect and plant pests and animal diseases, which should be done in close cooperation with the states. Using existing mechanisms and institutions, the federal government should work with the states in providing the basic training and retraining opportunities necessary for the successful operation of an agricultural enterprise and for the continuing adjustment of producers to changing conditions in agriculture.

**Intellectual Property Rights in Publicly Funded Research**

NCSL calls on Congress to review the Bayh-Dole Act of 1980 and subsequent amendments for its impact on encouraging concentration and vertical integration within the agricultural sector, and for its consistency with the mission and purpose of the Land Grant College system. Further, Congress should increase federal support for agricultural research, and retain through grant and contract provisions greater portions of technology arising from such research within the public domain. Congress should also affirm as objectives of the Land Grant Colleges’ agricultural research mission to achieve broad dissemination and producer access to crop technology, and preserve and enhance the income and economic opportunities of producers.

**Beginning Farmer Programs**

NCSL supports a state-federal partnership to confront challenges faced by farmers and beginning farmers, including the use of federal tax incentives to support state-based development and loan programs. NCSL supports changes to the federal Internal Revenue code that reduce borrowing costs for qualifying farmers and strengthen state beginning farmer programs. NCSL is particularly supportive of beginning farmer and other training programs that provide assistance for military veterans and limited-
resource farmers. Furthermore, NCSL supports raising the total volume of state bonding authority to free resources for beginner farmer programs if achieved in a manner consistent with a balanced federal budget.

In collaboration with state governments, as well as public and private local partners, NCSL supports investment in joint research, demonstration and development of food systems that provide opportunity to young and beginning farmers with limited assets, to produce and deliver affordable, healthy, fresh, nutritious food to consumers within the local and regional markets where the producers operate, toward a goal of national food self-sufficiency and optimal health.

Agriculture Biofuels
NCSL believes that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) should be the lead federal agency to examine regulatory issues as they develop for the algaculture (Farming Algae) industry.

Support State Regulation of Agricultural Biotechnology
NCSL supports the responsible use of the beneficial qualities of agricultural biotechnology such as in improved crop production techniques, pharmaceuticals, anti-immune disease control, biodegradable plastics, and other potential benefits to people in their states, the nation, the world and the global environment. NCSL supports the continued regulation of agricultural biotechnology through state and territorial governments working in close collaboration and partnership with the Coordinated Framework for Regulation of Biotechnology administered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), USDA, and U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

Industrial Hemp Farming
NCSL supports federal legislation to define industrial hemp as a distinct agricultural crop (1% or less THC content) and allow states to regulate commercial hemp farming. Currently 33 states have laws allowing hemp research or farming. NCSL believes that hemp has a long history as a sustainable and a profitable crop, and has great potential
as a new crop for American agriculture and industry. According to Vote Hemp, an
estimated $687 million worth of hemp products were sold in the U.S. in 2016, including
foods, body care products, clothing, auto parts, building materials, and paper. Most of
these products were made from imported hemp due to federal policy that prohibits
commercial hemp farming. NCSL believes that federal policies that obstruct industrial
hemp farming are outdated and must be changed.

Avian Flu Response

The highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) represents a significant threat to U.S.
agriculture and the ability of our farmers to feed a growing world population. The federal
government plays a key role in harnessing resources and providing assistance to
farmers, states, and others affected by the virus. NCSL fully supports:

- federal efforts to protect poultry production and the nation’s food supply by
  aggressively working to contain and remediate outbreaks when they occur;
- federal efforts to serve as technical advisors and the clearinghouse of information
  for all sectors and employing time sensitive approaches to sharing information;
- federal agencies working closely with the states to align HPAI efforts and share
  best practices; and
- increasing federal funding necessary for state and federal agencies to continue
  development of biosecurity containment strategies; more aggressive research
  into the causes of avian influenza; why some fowl are more susceptible; and
  prevention measures, including the development of vaccines that can be taken.

Wildfire Funding

Due to the significant increases in suppression costs in the last decade, funding
transfers have depleted resources from vital fire prevention and mitigation programs.
Further, increased fire activity can have substantially negative impacts on air quality,
water quality, greenhouse gas emissions as well as the reduction of downstream water
storage as sediment runoff lowers the effective level of dams and reservoirs;
Additionally, reduced restoration and mitigation funding makes it easier for invasive
pests and diseases to infest vulnerable forests; and the anticipated changes in climate
will also cause fire risk to escalate in drought-ridden regions, further increasing wildfire
suppression costs. Therefore, NCSL urges the federal government to:

- Maintain budget mechanisms for wildfire suppression in order to fund catastrophic
  fires as natural disasters adopted as part of the Fiscal Year 2018 budget
  agreement that minimizes the risk of fire transfers from prevention and mitigation
  programs.
- Manage wildfires on a regional basis, understanding that increased risk for
  wildfires on federal lands ultimately will lead to increased costs for state wildfire
  programs; and
- Support policies that continue to reduce the legislative and regulatory barriers
  when performing vegetation management, both inside and outside the rights-of-
  ways (ROWs); developing and deploying new technologies, including from our
  national labs, that can enhance wildfire detection and response; and address
  liability concerns for public and private entities.
WHEREAS, farmers and ranchers, due to the nature of their work and a shortage of resources for rural mental health, suffer higher rates of depression and suicide than other professions – as described by the American Psychological Association’s Journal of Rural Mental Health; and

WHEREAS, difficult economic conditions are placing additional strain on our nation’s farmers and ranchers and their families. The United States Department of Agriculture projects that net farm income will fall once again in 2018, continuing a sustained downward trend that began in 2014; and

WHEREAS, the federal government can play a vital role in addressing this crisis by providing the states with additional resources for rural mental health services that are tailored to the unique needs of farmers, ranchers, and their families

NOW, THEREFORE, IT BE RESOLVED, that the National Conference of State Legislatures urges Congress to include in pending legislation, funding for states to address this urgent need and assist our nation’s farmers, ranchers, and their family members during this time of great financial stress in American agriculture.
WHEREAS, the Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers, Association of Global Automakers, Edison Electric Institute (EEI), and the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association submitted comments to the Environmental Protection Administration (EPA) and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) regarding the recent Notice of Proposed Rulemaking for Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) and Greenhouse Gas Emissions (GHG) Programs; and

WHEREAS, in those comments, the above-mentioned trade organizations expressed support for “important flexibilities” and “continue to support increases in the stringency of fuel economy and GHG standards year-over-year that also incorporate policies from California and other ZEV (Zero Emission Vehicle) states to ensure that ‘One National Program’ is maintained”; and

WHEREAS, the federal GHG Emissions Standards, the CAFE Standards, and the waiver allowing California vehicle emissions standards to be more stringent than those of the federal government have saved tens of thousands of American lives, reduced U.S. carbon emissions by millions of tons of CO2, and saved American motorists billions of dollars in fuel costs; and

WHEREAS, these programs and the waiver authority are under the jurisdiction of the federal Clean Air Act and have contributed to a modern automobile that lasts longer, requires far fewer tune-ups, pollutes the air considerably less, and requires less fuel to operate; and
WHEREAS, twelve states and the District of Columbia have joined in adopting California vehicle emissions standards; and

WHEREAS, if fuel efficiency had not improved from 2005 through 2015, including as a result of the current standards adopted in 2012, households would have spent 25 percent more on fuel; and

WHEREAS, even with the slightly higher purchase price attributable to incorporating the technology required to comply with the 2012 standards, the average new vehicle buyer starts saving during the first month of ownership; and

WHEREAS, the International Council on Clean Transportation recently found that, due to technological improvements and innovation, compliance costs for model years 2022–2025 will be 34 percent to 40 percent lower than originally projected; and

WHEREAS, auto manufacturers are already complying with the 2012 standards, and more than one-half of the new vehicles introduced in 2017 already meet the 2020 level of the standards, and 32 percent comply with the 2025 level; and

WHEREAS, Synapse Energy Economics has reported that the 2022 and 2025 standards will create more than 100,000 U.S. jobs in the auto industry by 2025 and more than 250,000 by 2035; and

WHEREAS, the American Lung Association recently released a poll showing that voters overwhelmingly support the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) current fuel efficiency standards for cars, SUVs, and light trucks in model years 2022 to 2025, and the poll also found that nearly seven in 10 voters want the EPA to leave current fuel efficiency standards in place.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) supports increased flexibility in the current GHG emissions
standards or CAFE Standards Programs while maintaining these emission and efficiency standards: and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Section 209 emissions waiver granted to California under the Clean Air Act be maintained within One National Program; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, NCSL send a copy of this resolution to the EPA Administrator, NHTSA Administrator, and the United States Congress.