

Policy of the



Adopted by members of NEFU

December, 2010

Revisions proposed by NEFU Board of Directors

October 2011

1 The New England Farmers Union (NEFU) was formed and recognized in November,
2 2006. Six states comprise its membership: Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire,
3 Vermont, Connecticut and Rhode Island. Since its founding, NEFU and the National
4 Farmers Union have worked closely with the Cape Cod Cranberry Growers' Association,
5 the Cape Cod Commercial Hook Fishermen's Association, Organic Valley dairy
6 cooperative, Neighboring Food Co-operatives Association, the Northeast Organic Dairy
7 Producers Alliance, and others to bring agricultural and fisheries issues to members of
8 Congress and other leaders in Washington, DC.
9

10 New England Farmers Union's mission:

- 11 • to increase the economic viability of family farms and fishing operations;
- 12 • to foster the development of increased food production in New England; and
- 13 • to invest in nutrition education and increase connections between farmers and
14 consumers.

15
16 We also support the development of renewable energy resources for farm use, and from farm and
17 forest sources. NEFU's goals for the next three years are to bring together policy makers in
18 Washington with leaders and consumers in six states to fashion a food policy and a Farm Bill
19 that benefits the farmers, foresters and fishermen in this diverse and resourceful region.
20

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1 **I. PREAMBLE**

2
3 We, the members of the New England Farmers Union (NEFU), in the following policy
4 statement, strive to articulate the fundamental principles for a food, fiber and energy policy that
5 will be essential to our region’s long-term sustainability. These issues transcend every social,
6 economic, environmental and geographic boundary of our region. We are interconnected, and we
7 are still dependent on the soil underneath our feet and the waters off our shores. We believe that
8 in order to maximize New England’s strengths and take advantage of numerous opportunities,
9 we must develop a regional voice for a wide range of issues. This policy is our contribution to
10 that mission.

11
12 Our vision of the New England Farmers Union is that we can help New England preserve and
13 grow its capacity to feed and fuel itself. Climate change, peak oil, growing populations, unstable
14 markets, the paradox of increased obesity and persistent hunger – all of these factors and more
15 will change New England in the next several decades. Farmers, fishermen and other producers of
16 food, fiber, plants and forest products will be leaders, innovators, and catalysts for a world in
17 which we will be forced to be more self-reliant and resilient.

18
19 But farmers, fishermen and others can’t do it alone. They need an army of citizen advocates who
20 will engage with policy and who will become active at state and federal levels. They need a
21 network of professionals to help them test and improve production and processing methods.
22 They deserve government officials who understand the complexities of harvesting from the land
23 and sea, who bring the latest technologies to bear on every issue, and who fight for New
24 England’s concerns in Washington, DC.

25
26 New England Farmers Union is part of a larger Farmers Union family. Over 150,000 members –
27 farmers and non-farmers – participate in activities of the 26 state and regional chapters. The
28 National Farmers Union (NFU), founded in Texas in 1902, has a long history of progressive,
29 even populist, policies. The Farmers Union symbol, a triangle with “education” at its base and
30 “cooperation” and “legislation” on each side, symbolizes that FU is dedicated to the
31 advancement of the profession of family farm agriculture and fisheries and to providing an
32 enhanced quality of life for people everywhere.

33
34 We, the members of New England Farmers Union, hold these policies as fundamental and
35 pertinent to New England agriculture, forestry and fisheries, and to their relationships with the
36 residents of the region. To us, adherence to these policies will cause a substantial number of
37 independent families to continue farming and fishing our lands and seas, and these policies, as a
38 result, will give support to our interdependent communities – rural and urban. We reaffirm our
39 dedication to the preservation and strengthening of family farmers and fishermen in New
40 England and adopt the following policy to serve as a guideline in accomplishing our goals.

1
2 **VISION STATEMENT**

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

5
6 **MISSION STATEMENT**

7 New England Farmers Union, a membership organization, enhances the quality of life for
8 family farmers, fishermen, nurserymen, and their customers through educational
9 opportunities, co-operative endeavors and civic engagement.

10
11 **NEFU VALUES**

12
13 **1. DIVERSIFIED AND VALUE-ADDED AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES**

14 New England's diversified agriculture and fisheries provide many opportunities for regional
15 economic development. NEFU supports efforts to grow, process and distribute agricultural and
16 fish products for local and regional consumption, which may include community-supported
17 agriculture, community supported fisheries, local feed supplies and farmers markets, co-
18 operative processing, as well as medium-scale value-chains that support producer-consumer
19 relationships.

20
21 **2. PRACTICES THAT SUSTAIN NEW ENGLAND AGRICULTURE**

22 NEFU encourages the growing interest among farmers, consumers and environmentalists in
23 adopting and promoting practices that protect the soil, reduce the need for chemical and
24 petroleum based pesticides and fertilizers, and manage fish stocks in our oceans. We support
25 increased research at the land grant universities in New England with a higher priority placed in
26 interdisciplinary research on the social, economic and environmental effects of agricultural and
27 fisheries policies and technologies.

28
29 **3. FAIR TRADE**

30 Fair trade encourages collaboration among farmers, consumers, workers and advocacy
31 organizations by acknowledging the role of all stakeholders in agriculture and their common
32 interests in a more healthy, just food system.

33
34 **HOW TO USE THIS BOOK**

- 35 1. NEFU priorities: These are policy represent areas where NEFU will focus its attention
36 and resources for the year in which the policy is adopted.
37 2. NEFU supports: These are policy statements that NEFU members support, but are not
38 necessarily areas where resources will be focused for the year in which the policy is
39 adopted.

40
41
42 Follow this link on New England Farmers Union website to read the policy book electronically.
43 At bottom of page, see NEFU Policy Book.

44 <http://www.newenglandfarmersunion.org/legislation.html>

1 **II. AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS**

2
3 **SPECIALTY CROPS: FRUITS, VEGETABLES AND HORTICULTURE**

4
5 Specialty crops include fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, nursery crops, floriculture and horticulture including
6 turf grass, sod and herbal crops.

7
8 NEFU priorities:

- 9 1. Mandatory federal funding for a safety net program to allow producers to earn the cost of production plus a
- 10 reasonable profit from the marketplace;
- 11 2. Federal and state policies to increase investment in research, marketing and risk management targeted
- 12 toward specialty crop production with a focus on sustainable practices and local and regional distribution
- 13 systems;
- 14 3. USDA’s promotion of buying local and regional agricultural products as a means to provide new and larger
- 15 markets for smaller specialty crop farmers. Local products may be defined as being produced within the
- 16 immediate area, state, or within 100 miles, while the region may be defined as within the six New England
- 17 states, New York and adjacent areas of Canada;
- 18 4. Promotion of farm-to-school and farm-to-institution programs;
- 19 5. Promotion of farmers’ markets and community-supported agriculture (CSA) to allow consumers greater
- 20 access to fresh produce and to allow smaller-scale farmers opportunities to market directly to consumers;
- 21 6. Language to ensure farmer-friendly and transparent means for certified organic farmers to simultaneously
- 22 qualify for higher tier Conservation Stewardship Program opportunities;
- 23 7. Removal of barriers and provide incentives so that farmers markets and farm stands can redeem food
- 24 stamps (SNAP), WIC coupons and other federal nutrition program vouchers;
- 25 8. Adoption of double value benefits for SNAP at farmers markets;
- 26 9. Preservation or expansion of all programs in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program, including
- 27 Farmers’ Market Nutrition Programs, and the Farmers’ Market Women Infant and Children (WIC) coupon
- 28 program. These programs are mutually beneficial for specialty crop producers by providing a market
- 29 opportunity and low-income consumers who receive high-quality, locally produced farm fresh products;
- 30 10. Development of community-based enterprises (i.e., Community Food Projects program) and farmer-owned
- 31 co-operatives for marketing, processing, aggregation and distribution; and
- 32 11. Mandatory funding for the Specialty Crop Act. Specialty crop block grants that are provided to states
- 33 should be provided to producers and qualified service providers (for example, state and regional “Buy
- 34 Local” organizations and efforts) and not replace state budgets.

35
36 NEFU supports:

- 37 1. Collaboration with consumer, culinary and other food groups to promote U.S. specialty crops;
- 38 2. Protection for specialty crop producers from competitive markets during the primary harvest season for
- 39 perishable crops (window of harvest);
- 40 3. Geographically Disadvantaged provisions for U.S. areas not included in main farm programs, including
- 41 Alaska, Hawaii and Puerto Rico;
- 42 4. The purchase of surplus fruits and vegetables through Section 32 and bonus buy programs for distribution
- 43 through federal food aid programs;
- 44 5. Flexibility in USDA crop commodity programs to allow occasional fruit and vegetables production and
- 45 maintain full program eligibility; and
- 46 6. Removal of the restrictions for purchase of organic products under the WIC program if that can be
- 47 accomplished without reducing the number of WIC recipient.

48
49 **DAIRY**

50
51 NEFU supports policies at the federal and state levels that preserve and protect the New England region’s dairy
52 industry, assure a nationwide supply of milk from a diverse number of dairy operations and that assure milk
53 producers a fair return on their labor and investment. NEFU recognizes that the present structure for the processing,
54 packaging, marketing and pricing of farm milk is causing growing harm to New England dairy families and
55 threatens the future supply of fresh, high-quality, locally produced milk and dairy products for the region’s
56 consumers.

1 NEFU priorities:

- 2 1. Continuation of the efficient and effective Milk Income Loss Contract (MILC) program that has provided
3 significant benefits to small and medium sized farms and for that program to be based on an all-milk
4 income/feed cost margin trigger;
- 5 2. Require full transparency in the calculation of producer pay prices by co-operatives, proprietary handlers
6 and other entities purchasing and marketing farm milk;
- 7 3. Assure all domestic and imported dairy products comply fully with U.S. standards for identity, food safety
8 and country-of-origin labeling;
- 9 4. Enforce antitrust laws to prevent predatory and anticompetitive behavior by processors and marketers of
10 dairy products;
- 11 5. Encourage growth of markets for farm milk through research and development of new products and
12 through expansion of exports. Support regional “buy local” efforts;
- 13 6. Support states’ rights to legalize sales of raw milk to consumers, in conjunction with rigorous milk-
14 handling inspections and consumer education. Oversight of raw milk sales should be the jurisdiction of
15 state departments of agriculture;
- 16 7. Implementation of the existing provision in the Federal Milk Marketing Order (FMMO) which utilizes
17 regional pricing based on cost of production;
- 18 8. The merging of the Livestock Gross Margin Program (LGM) with the Adjusted Gross Margin Revenue
19 Lite (AGR Lite) Program and make the program more consumer friendly and more applicable to small
20 scale dairy operations; and
- 21 9. NEFU supports the restriction of dairy descriptors, including terms such as milk, cheese, yogurt, butter, for
22 use on products made from milk derived from mammals other than cows.

23
24 NEFU supports:

- 25 1. Establish a national supply management program that balances milk supply with demand and allow the
26 farmer to choose their production base from any three month consecutive period in the previous 12 months.
27 Such a system should be designed to align production with market demand, prevent the extreme peaks and
28 valleys of farm milk prices that characterize the dairy industry currently, and allow sufficient flexibility to
29 permit entry of new producers and to keep up with growing population and changing production
30 technology;
- 31 2. Base pricing formulas on surveys of competitive milk prices actually paid to dairy farmers from cheese
32 manufacturers from across the country rather than on voluntary limited reporting on opaque, thinly traded
33 wholesale commodity exchanges;
- 34 3. Recommend a national 400,000 Somatic Cell Count to increase the quality of milk and farm profitability;
- 35 4. Assure adequate supplies of milk and dairy products are always available for school lunch, food relief and
36 other nutrition and humanitarian programs especially by fully utilizing the Emergency Food Assistance
37 Program (TEFAP) that distribute dairy product to food banks and local food distribution agencies;
- 38 5. Increase demand and supply disappearance in the short term with milk fortification program;
- 39 6. Require both mandatory and voluntary deduct programs such as milk promotion, beef check-off and CWT
40 to demonstrate actual enhancement of producer income;
- 41 7. Provide grants to encourage dairy farmers to employ sound environmental and conservation practices and
42 provide resources to assist them in achieving sustainable stewardship goals. Increase counter cyclical
43 payment for environmental practices that address the social, economic and environmental benefits of dairy
44 farm to some communities;
- 45 8. Acknowledge the impact of non-market influence and artificially inflated costs of input for New England
46 Dairy Farmers including ethanol mandate and subsidies, air and water regulations, ‘freedom to farm’ within
47 and increasing urban environment, labor costs, and lack of infrastructure;
- 48 9. Grant based incentives directed specifically at ‘at risk’ small operations that lack resources to:
49
 - 50 • Lower inputs (energy, fuel).
 - 51 • Change production practices to enable long term lower cost production.
 - 52 • Initiate value-added programs.
 - 53 • Allow for whole herd buyout for herds under 200 cows with lifetime prohibition on returning to
54 dairy and a 10 year agricultural restriction on development.
 - 55 • Allow for one-time payment to herds under 200 cows to permanently limit production to current
56 levels or a stable pay price fixed to costs of production as defined by USDA tied to a fixed quota
of milk entering commerce; and

- 1 10. Maintain high levels of quality and food safety in the entire dairy industry through effective regulation by
2 USDA, FDA and counterpart state agencies.

3
4 **HAY AND PASTURE**

5
6 NEFU believes that hay, forage crops for hay, cover crops and managed pasture should be considered program crops
7 for purposes of government payments. Farmers who grow forage crops for hay or pasture get little direct financial
8 assistance from farm programs, and USDA assistance for the land used for these important crops is extremely
9 limited, even though the crops are very sustainable and well-suited in conservation plans. Their use should be
10 encouraged, not penalized, as is presently done. NEFU values these crops and believes they should be guaranteed
11 financial assistance comparable to other crops that can be grown on the same land. States should fund grazing
12 specialist positions.

13
14 NEFU priorities:

- 15 1. Increased funding for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) program as it is invaluable to
16 graziers;
17 2. Funding for state agricultural agencies and extension services to research and develop localized varieties of
18 forage and hay crops appropriate to each state's climate and soils; and
19 3. Creation of more intensive dairy grazing research facilities in active and retired research facilities. Forage
20 research should include the research needs of small to medium size rotational grazing as well as larger
21 farms that focus more on stored forages.

22
23 **LIVESTOCK**

24
25 NEFU believes that livestock agriculture, which has been a strong part of the culture, heritage and economy of
26 agriculture in New England, continues to play a significant role and must be supported. As such, NEFU supports
27 producers' right to own and raise livestock and have livestock recognized as personal property.

28
29 Livestock health is critical to production agriculture and our nation's ability to provide a safe food supply.
30 Achieving the necessary means to ensure livestock health and welfare is a priority for NEFU.

31
32 Further, NEFU believes that the unrestricted importation of livestock and livestock products is causing serious
33 damage to American domestic livestock production. Additionally, a lack of meat import inspection poses an
34 increased potential of contaminated food reaching tables in the U.S. We recommend that Congress take appropriate
35 steps to protect U.S. livestock producers from unfair trading practices.

36
37 NEFU priorities:

- 38 1. Support the promotion of animal welfare, as opposed to animal rights initiatives which would limit
39 production agriculture by imposing mandatory restrictions on traditional methods of agricultural animal
40 production;
41 2. Opposes a ban on the slaughter of horses. We oppose the criminalization of individuals processing,
42 shipping, transporting, purchasing, selling, delivering, or receiving any horse, horse flesh, or carcass for the
43 purpose of harvest;
44 3. Supports a call for the reinstatement of facilities to provide for the humane disposal of horses;
45 4. Continue to allow FDA to permit the use of therapeutic antibiotics approved for use in livestock unless
46 valid scientific evidence proves the product is unsafe, and support producers' right to treat his or her
47 animals with antibiotics to maintain herd health while opposing the constant sub-therapeutic use of
48 antibiotics;
49 5. Require more vigorous inspection of imported meats to ensure foreign standards are equal to U.S.
50 standards;
51 6. In order to maintain consumer confidence in the safety and wholesomeness of meat and poultry products,
52 New England Farmers Union urges USDA to ensure that continuous meat inspection systems remain in
53 effect and do not move toward a risk-based system
54 7. Require conspicuous labeling throughout the processing chain identifying:
55 a. point of origin,
56 b. date of kill,

- c. whether meat was frozen, and
 - d. the date/dates the meat was subsequently refrozen; and
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. United States government's ability to impose trade sanctions against foreign countries based on USTR assessments;
5. Re-establish the importation law to replace 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:
 - a. Increasing federal and international research to understand and prevent BSE;
 - b. 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;
 - c. 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;
 - d. Continuing ban on animal and meat imports from countries with BSE outbreaks until the disease is controlled and/or eradicated;
 - e. Banning all meat and feed imports from countries that have not implemented and enforced a ruminant-to-ruminant feed ban,
 - f. Prohibiting the importation of animal protein products from countries that cannot certify BSE- and transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSE)-free products;
 - g. Prohibiting TSE-positive materials in non-ruminant feeds, and
 - h. 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;
22. 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

- 1 detect, monitor and eradicate infected animals. Vaccination compensation for mandatory culling should be
2 directed toward producers with limited finances to prevent the driving out of small producers; and
3
4 23. Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs)
5 a. NEFU believes that state should develop regulations and an enforcement process for very large
6 livestock operations;
7 b. NEFU supports the use of anaerobic digester and biomass combustion technology for CAFO
8 Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans;
9 c. NEFU supports the study of anaerobic digester and biomass combustion technology and
10 associated nutrient byproducts (such as ash and digestate) for air and water quality effects at
11 CAFO sites, and the development of improved best management practices that retain nutrients and
12 reduce pathogens from animal waste on agricultural lands; and
13 d. NEFU supports continued enforcement of Clean Air Act and Clean Water Act rules at CAFO
14 sites, and research on the removal of nutrients from animal wastes.
15

16 **FISHERIES**

17 Small boat fishermen and women in New England are facing the same challenges as farmers – an aging population,
18 consolidation of fishing fleets, loss of fishing licenses, reduced fish stocks, and the high cost of
19 production/fuel/licenses making it hard for beginning fishermen and women to enter the industry. Consumers in the
20 five New England states with coastal waters value their working waterfronts and want viable fishing businesses to
21 grow. NEFU policies for fisheries are evolving as our fishing membership grows.

22 NEFU Supports:

23 1. Fisheries trusts

24 NEFU supports the development of community-based initiatives such as fisheries trusts and permit banks.
25 These tools can help protect depleted fisheries resources, reinvigorate fishing businesses and revitalize coastal
26 fishing communities. These trusts will allow traditional fishing communities to work together to buy
27 permits that would be financially unavailable to their fleet otherwise and will offer financial incentives to
28 fishermen that are willing to adopt legally binding leasehold covenants regarding biological, social and
29 economic practices (e.g. limiting habitat impacts and minimizing by-catch; providing stable jobs for local
30 crew; and improving sustainable business practices).

31 2. Ecosystem based management

32 NEFU supports incorporating a holistic view into all future fisheries management where the cost/benefits to
33 the ecosystem are part of any decision. Ecosystem Based Management considers the dynamic interactions
34 between all components of the marine ecosystem, especially the specific interactions of forage and predator
35 populations.
36

37 3. Shoreside Infrastructure

38 As the number of fishermen using small ports throughout New England has decreased, attention paid to the
39 infrastructure they rely on has diminished. Simultaneously, the development value for many former working
40 waterfront spaces has skyrocketed in New England. If we are to have local, small boat fishing in New
41 England, we must work to ensure that docks, piers, moorings, dredging, and offloading facilities are
42 maintained and available for current and future generations of fishermen.
43

44 4. Selective harvesting practices

45 NEFU supports selective harvesting practices for fishermen that allow for healthy stocks to be targeted while
46 at-risk and depleted stocks are avoided. This would include both supporting current selective harvesting
47 practices and the development of new fishing gear or techniques.
48

49 5. Community and Cooperative Based Marketing and Branding Innovations

50 NEFU actively supports the development and support of new marketing and branding models that provide a
51 fair livelihood for fishing families, increased availability of healthy local food products for the consumer and
52 the sustainability of wild-harvest fisheries. NEFU supports extension of USDA Rural Development support
53 for these projects.
54
55

1
2 6. Forage Fish Protections

3 NEFU recognizes that, as crucial components of healthy ecosystems and fishery health, forage fish
4 populations are the essential foundation of the marine foodweb. Therefore, these stocks must be carefully
5 managed to avoid overharvest. Specifically, the role of these stocks as prey for other ecologically and
6 commercially important species must be considered when establishing conservative, science-based annual
7 catch levels and a risk-averse management strategy should be adopted.
8

9 7. Seafloor Habitat

10 NEFU actively supports the development of meaningful protections for sensitive seafloor habitat essential for
11 the needs of managed species. Such designations should be based on the best available science and should
12 prohibit those fishing gears and/or practices that are not conducive to protecting these important and
13 vulnerable areas. While a balance must be struck between fisheries access and habitat protections, we believe
14 that the long-term interests of both the ecosystem and our fisheries are best served by preserving those areas
15 which are most important to fish stocks and most vulnerable to fisheries-related damage.
16

17 **AQUACULTURE**

18
19 Aquaculture is an important means of providing healthy seafood. Every year the United States imports enormous
20 amounts of seafood into this country. In fact seafood is the third largest portion of our national deficit behind
21 petroleum and automobiles. In 2004 we imported over \$11 billion of seafood. New England aquaculture is the
22 leading supplier of fresh, locally grown seafood. These farmers are helping preserve working waterfronts and
23 communities linked to the sea. Our water farmers make their living on and literally in the water every day. Healthy
24 ecosystems with high water quality and diverse habitats are a key ingredient in our sustainably grown healthy
25 seafood.

26 NOTE: A priority for NEFU is to work with aquaculture organizations to develop policies for our region. We have
27 identified 2012 as the year to expand this policy section.

28
29 **SEED BANKS/LOCAL VARIETALS**

30 NEFU Supports

- 31
- 32 1. Seed Banks: Seed is a critical foundation to crop agriculture and horticulture. As depositories of priceless
33 plant genetics, seed banks represent future food security. Seed banks must contain the greatest genetic
34 diversity possible, must organize, catalog and preserve those resources competently and completely, and
35 must allow clear use and access to seed breeders, farmers, serious agriculturalists and other professionals.
36 The nature of the seed bank mission – maintaining the broadest diversity of genetic resources possible for
37 future potential uses – is a significant benefit to society in general and agriculture in particular. As a
38 strategic public asset, NEFU supports funding for seed banks, akin to funding for public libraries. Funding
39 for classical plant and animal breeding should be a priority area within the Agriculture and Food Research
40 Initiatives (AFRI) process and the Agriculture Research Service (ARS).
 - 41 2. Locally Adapted Seed: Agriculture is diverse so it follows that seed resources also should be diverse to
42 meet the varying needs of local agriculture. The world has an incredible diversity of climates, soils,
43 growing seasons, elevations and crop production challenges. Successful crop production requires seed that
44 is locally adapted to regional conditions and plants that display resiliency and elasticity in the face of
45 sometimes difficult growing conditions. NEFU supports local seed producers who produce locally adapted
46 seed and in doing so create new market opportunities and contribute significantly to regionally self-reliant,
47 successful agriculture.
48

49 **HONEY/POLLINATION**

50
51 Pollinators are vital to agriculture and in particular the production of fruits and vegetables. Bee pollinated forage and
52 hay crops such as clover and alfalfa are also used to feed livestock and dairy animals.
53

54 NEFU priorities:

- 55 1. Agricultural research and education to encourage innovative approaches to protecting honeybee health and
56 improve genetic stocks of honeybees;

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

10 **MAPLE SYRUP**

11 NEFU priorities:

- 12 1. Testing and penalties for adulteration of products sold as “pure maple syrup”;
- 13 2. Eligibility of maple syrup under the USDA SNAP and other farmers market coupon programs;
- 14 3. Research and development of energy-saving technology in the maple syrup industry;
- 15 4. Policies that allow for responsible tapping of maple trees on public land;
- 16 5. Voluntary grading systems for maple syrup;
- 17 6. Classification of maple syrup as a ‘specialty crop’ under USDA guidelines; and
- 18 7. The formation of producer and marketing co-ops to support the viability of small land holders and sugaring
- 19 operations.
- 20
- 21
- 22

23 **TREE FARMS AND FORESTRY**

24 The economic well-being, as well as the independent existence of family-sized tree farmers, is threatened by

25 regulatory uncertainty, over-regulation of wetlands, and restraining buffer zones. NEFU supports the family-sized

26 tree farmers who share problems similar to other agriculture producers.

27

28 NEFU encourages private landowners to adopt collaborative sustainable forest management practices, including but

29 not limited to completion and implementation of forest stewardship management plans as recognized by USDA’s

30 Forest Service.

31

32 NEFU encourages public-land managers to support and facilitate the formation of locally owned co-operatives and

33 businesses to harvest and process forest products. Sustainable forestry and forestry practices should meet the needs

34 of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs by practicing a land

35 stewardship ethic that integrates reforestation and the managing, growing, nurturing and harvesting of trees for

36 useful products and ecosystem services such as the conservation of soil, air and water quality, carbon, biological

37 diversity, wildlife and aquatic habitats, recreation, and aesthetics.

38

39 NEFU priorities:

- 40 1. The implementation of sustainable forestry by ensuring long-term forest productivity and yield based on
- 41 the use of the best scientific information available;
- 42 2. Long-term forest productivity, carbon storage and conservation of forest resources through prompt
- 43 reforestation, soil conservation, afforestation and other measures;
- 44 3. Developing and implementing stand- and landscape-level measures that promote habitat diversity and the
- 45 conservation of forest plants and animals, including aquatic species;
- 46 4. Encouraging forest landowners to utilize the services of forest management and harvesting professionals;
- 47 5. The use of best management practices to protect water quality;
- 48 6. Conserving biological diversity, biodiversity hotspots and high-biodiversity wilderness areas;
- 49 7. Avoiding illegal logging;
- 50 8. Research, science, and technology, upon which sustainable forest management decisions are based;
- 51 9. The implementation of sustainable forestry practices through appropriate training and education programs;
- 52 and
- 53 10. The formation and support of forestry co-ops as a mechanism for sustaining small, locally owned woodlots
- 54 and landholders.
- 55

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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.

1 **III. MANAGEMENT PRACTICES**

2
3 Change and diversity of agricultural practices have been essential to the success and prosperity of agriculture in the
4 United States. As advances continue to occur in all areas, including conventional, organic, biotechnology, and other
5 farm practices, NEFU calls on all people affected by agriculture to be mindful of their neighbors and show mutual
6 respect toward their farming practices and production choices.

7
8 NEFU Priorities:

- 9
10 1. Continued research of agricultural practices such as biotechnology, Integrated Pest Management (IPM),
11 biological pest controls, reduced tillage, sustainable agriculture and water quality management to achieve
12 positive impacts on the environment and quality of life. We recognize that agricultural research is often a
13 long-term process requiring scientific and economic risk benefit analysis when assessing new technologies.
14 2. Encouraging Cooperative Extension at our region’s land-grant universities to take a more proactive
15 approach to research programs that examine alternative farm practices and new possibilities in agriculture
16 recognizing that Extension remains an essential conduit between academic research and practical
17 application in the field.
18 3. Adherence by all producers, organic or conventional, in following state pesticide regulations regarding
19 training, licensing, and record keeping for regulated crop protection materials.
20

21 **ORGANIC AGRICULTURE PROGRAMS AND STANDARDS**

22
23 NEFU recognizes the importance of organic farming. It is not merely based on a list of acceptable or prohibited
24 materials or practices. Organic farming is a management-intensive approach designed to emulate natural systems as
25 much as possible in producing crops and livestock, and should be maintained as a distinct market.
26

27 NEFU priorities:

- 28 1. Requiring USDA to maintain the role of the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) as the official
29 source of developing policies and procedures to interpret and implement the federal organic standards.
30 Adequate staffing must be provided to enable the NOSB to fulfill its obligation to organic producers.
31 Farmer or self-employed members of the NOSB should be given financial compensation for loss of
32 earning, increased costs or other specific costs associated with serving on the Board to ensure that they are
33 able to apply for and serve on this volunteer Board;
34 2. Maintaining organic livestock and poultry production standards that are uniform for growers at all scales
35 and account for feeding and animal health care practices for continuous or transitional organic
36 management;
37 3. Maintaining and protecting the integrity of organic labeling;
38 4. The clear definition, strict enforcement and monitoring of the USDA National Organic Program (NOP).
39

40 NEFU Supports:

- 41 1. Ensuring accreditation and certification costs do not discriminate against small producers;
42 2. Organic standards that prohibit the use of irradiation, genetically modified organisms, biosolids, or sewage
43 sludge that contains heavy metals.
44 3. Labeling standards encouraging the sale of organic products while not limiting opportunities to market
45 other clearly defined natural or sustainably produced food products, or those adhering to Fair Trade
46 principles and standards;
47 4. Adequate and a comparable percentage to non-organic funding for collection of organic data. As the
48 organic industry matures and grows at a rapid rate, the lack of national data for the production, pricing, and
49 marketing of organic products has been an impediment to further development of the industry and to the
50 effective functioning of many organic programs within USDA;
51 5. Close scrutiny of organic certifiers qualifications and performance by NOP with mandatory training and
52 licensing of organic inspectors; and
53 6. Sufficient funding for the NOP to administer and enforce the standards of the organic industry.
54

1
2 **GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISMS AND BIOTECHNOLOGY**
3

4 Although genetically modified organisms (GMOs) have the potential to up crop yields, increase nutritional value,
5 and generally improve farming practices while reducing synthetic chemical use, they remain controversial. GMOs
6 have created ethical, environmental, food safety, legal, market and structural issues that impact everyone in the food
7 chain. Consumer and producer concerns need to be addressed. NEFU acknowledges concerns that biotechnology is
8 being used as a trade barrier. NEFU respects all nations' sovereignty and food policies and thus urges open dialogue,
9 cooperation and understanding in trade negotiations relating to biotechnology.

10
11 NEFU priorities:

- 12 1. Mandatory labeling for all food which has been genetically altered so as to inform the consumer. Food
13 products from cloned animals should be labeled at the retail level;
- 14 2. Mandatory labeling of all GMO seeds;
- 15 3. We support the development of new GMO traits when issues of cross-pollination, liability, commodity and
16 seed stock segregation and market acceptance are objectively addressed and fairly resolved for the
17 protection of all producers and consumers. While biotech traits are under patent, the patent holder should
18 be prepared to indemnify its trait users against financial burdens caused by claims. Research conducted in
19 an environmentally secure indoor facility should be exempt from the above requirements. Research
20 conducted in open fields production should be subject to mandatory public disclosure of persons or entities
21 initiating the research, location of the sites, specific species and traits involved and the characteristics of the
22 intended resultant genetically modified plant to be created. U.S. government agencies, particularly the
23 USDA and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) should continue to serve their respective roles in
24 providing unbiased, scientifically-based evaluations concerning the human and animal safety and
25 wholesomeness, as well as the environmental impacts of biotechnology-enhanced commodities.
- 26 4. Biotechnology regulation should come from the FDA and USDA and not state or local regulation.
- 27 5. Legislation to prohibit the patenting of heritage seed, animal and biological genetics and individual plant
28 traits;
- 29 6. Legislation to prohibit the development and selling of seed that is sterile;
- 30 7. Legislation requiring that patent holders or owners of GMO technology be held strictly liable for damages
31 caused by genetic trespass including safety, health, economic and environmental effects. Farmers are not to
32 be held liable for food safety, human health or environmental problems, including cross pollination, related
33 to the use of GMOs as long as generally accepted crop production practices are followed.

34
35 NEFU Supports:

- 36 1. Legislation to exempt farmers from paying royalties on patented farm animals and technical fees on seeds
37 which have been genetically modified;
- 38 2. Legislation to prohibit the use of tax dollars in developing terminator technology, e.g., a gene to insure that
39 seed will not reproduce;
- 40 3. The right of farmers to save and plant seed derived from proprietary organisms on their own land;
- 41 4. New products involving GMOs be certified as safe by the FDA in testing done independently of the patent
42 holder, before being allowed on the market. Such testing is to be done at the expense of the specific patent
43 holders seeking to market such products;
- 44 5. Congressional action to regulate the biotech industry's technology agreements. Farmers should not have to
45 sign away their fundamental rights, including, but not limited to a jury of their peers in court, in exchange
46 for the privilege of growing biotech crops. Grievances should be settled in the home state of the farmer, not
47 the state of the biotech corporation;
- 48 6. Any damages caused to farmers through lower prices, lost markets or contamination shall be fully
49 reimbursed to farmers, including legal fees, by the company producing the genetically modified product;
- 50 7. All data used in the analysis of the health and environmental effects of GMOs should be public record, and
51 that criminal penalties be established for the willful withholding or altering of such data;
- 52 8. Prohibiting government regulatory agencies from licensing genetically modified products that are not
53 acceptable for both human consumption and animal feed;
- 54 9. Until USDA and FDA improve oversight and regulation of pharma crops, NEFU cannot endorse or support
55 pharma farming based on economic, environmental, food safety and liability risks to producers and
56 consumers;
- 57 10. Requiring government regulatory agencies and input suppliers to ensure that farmers are informed of all

- 1 potential market risks and segregation requirements associated with planting any licensed genetically
2 modified crop;
- 3 11. Government regulatory agencies shall consider domestic and foreign consumer acceptance of the product
4 when licensing;
 - 5 12. Development of a paper verification system and a storage and marketing plan to aid farmers with non-
6 GMO grains;
 - 7 13. Identity-preserved systems and insist they receive protection from cross contamination;
 - 8 14. The position that GMO contamination of organic seed constitutes irreparable harm to the organic seed
9 industry and undermines the integrity of organic seed. Any detectable level is unacceptable;
 - 10 15. GMO seeds and crops be adequately labeled and stored, so that they do not interfere with the export or
11 import of crops and commodities into countries that have concerns about them.

12 **ANTIBIOTIC USE**

13
14
15 Livestock producers who choose to use antibiotics in animal husbandry are responsible for the correct use of those
16 products including adequate record keeping and withdrawal before slaughter or use of milk or eggs. NEFU does not
17 support the extensive use of antibiotics to compensate for inadequate animal husbandry, environment or genetics. In
18 order to ensure human health and consumer confidence, NEFU supports policies that require independent
19 monitoring of data on the use of antibiotics at food and feed companies, and encourages USDA to increase testing
20 for pathogens in processing plants.
21

22 **ANIMAL WELFARE / HUSBANDRY / WELL-BEING**

23
24 NEFU is a steadfast advocate for responsible farming in which a family manages their land base, cropping systems,
25 and livestock as an integrated system. We believe that family farmers in New England should have control over the
26 handling of their animals and that they should comply with each state's policies for animal husbandry practices.
27

28
29 NEFU supports:

- 30 1. Educational programs to inform the public on the true nature of animal care on the family farm. Family
31 farms base their survival on the personal and humane care to their animals. We further believe that those who violate
32 the law should be prosecuted to the full extent of the law.

33 **APPROPRIATE TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT**

34
35 NEFU supports

- 36 1. Efforts to fill the gap between traditional technologies and affordable, appropriately-sized, commercially
37 available equipment with good quality tools and equipment that are affordable and suited to the scale of operations
38 of the small farmers.
39

40 **LOW ENERGY, LOW INPUT BIOLOGICAL SYSTEMS**

41
42 NEFU supports:

- 43 1. Research and education on low-energy, low-input agriculture. These management techniques focus on
44 reducing the level of chemical inputs into soil and the amount of fossil fuels used in the course of managing crops.
45 Integrated pest management, the use of cover crops to improve fertility, and practices that improve soil health such
46 as nutrient management are all examples of these practices that NEFU supports.
47

48 **INVASIVE SPECIES**

49
50 The spread of invasive plants and animals is a serious environmental problem threatening New England's natural
51 ecosystems. Given the collective threat these species pose, any programs to remediate or eradicate invasive species
52 should not be at the burden or expense of the landowner.
53
54

1 NEFU supports:
2

- 3 1. In cases where remediation or eradication efforts result in a loss of income generating crops or value of
4 land for a farmer, NEFU supports programs designed to reimburse farmers for their loss;
- 5 2. Collaborative efforts between public and private agencies and organizations to develop and implement
6 control plans for states and municipalities threatened by invasive species;
- 7 3. Training of staff and volunteers in control methods; and
- 8 4. Public education.

9
10 **NUTRIENT DENSITY**

11 Where appropriate, NEFU encourages the practice of nutrient density farming, which employs biological practices
12 designed to ensure that harvested crops have a measurably larger quantity of a broad spectrum of different minerals,
13 vitamins, phytonutrients, and antioxidants than crops raised using other methods.
14

15
16 **THE ENVIRONMENT AND THE FAMILY FARM**

17 NEFU supports:
18

- 19 1. A rational, nationwide environmental policy. We believe that family farmers are great contributors toward
20 preserving the environment and that society is interested in rewarding their contributions. New England
21 farmers work hard and take great pride in providing a safe and healthy product while contributing to the health
22 of our region through their care of the land. We support environmental programs that encourage farmers to
23 adopt conservation and environmentally friendly practices, and that reward them for their contributions to a
24 healthy environment.
- 25 2. Programs that recognize farms as multifunctional and rewards farmers for their contribution to land
26 stewardship, protecting clean air and water, open spaces, and wildlife, supporting rural heritage, supporting
27 small town and rural economies and tourism.
- 28 3. The adoption and promotion of agricultural practices that protect the soil and reduce the need for pesticides
29 and fertilizers.
- 30 4. Increased emphasis on public interest research at the region's land-grant universities with a higher priority
31 placed in interdisciplinary research on the social, economic and environmental effects of agricultural policies,
32 technologies, chemicals, and biotechnologies. We encourage the universities to establish policies to expand
33 the availability of public information and disclosure of all research projects, whether publicly or privately
34 funded.

1 **IV. GOVERNMENT ROLE IN AGRICULTURE**

2
3 **GOVERNMENT SUPPORT**

4
5 NEFU acknowledges the science of global climate change and the influence of human-based activities on
6 atmospheric CO2 levels. Farmers and agricultural practices can play a key role in large scale carbon sequestration
7 and renewable energy production, and NEFU urges policymakers to prioritize programs which reward farmers for
8 sequestering carbon, and prioritize climate change mitigation and adaptation research that focuses on soil based
9 carbon sequestration and sustainable biofuel production.

10
11 New England farmers provide important environmental benefits for the region's 14 million residents, including clean
12 air, clean water, wildlife habitat and carbon sequestration. NEFU encourages development of state and federal
13 programs that recognize and reward farmers for the environmental stewardship and benefits they provide. NEFU
14 also encourages USDA to speed development of protocols for private ecosystem markets as authorized in the 2008
15 Farm Bill.

16
17 **Payment program eligibility and limitations**

18 NEFU priorities:

- 19
20 1. NEFU supports the region's Conservation Districts and continued funding for their programs and services,
21 and opposes any further consolidation of Conservation Districts in the region.
22 2. NEFU supports full funding of conservation programs as critically important to the wide diversity of crops
23 produced in the region, as well as to the region's forest resources. State USDA-NRCS offices should be
24 given wide latitude to develop state practices to address specific resource concerns identified by the State
25 Technical Committee.
26 3. Regional equity has been critically important to producers in New England, providing additional funding
27 for USDA conservation programs. This funding mechanism recognizes the specific challenges faced by
28 New England farmers, including farming in a densely populated region, high land values and high costs of
29 conservation practices. NEFU strongly supports the continuation of regional equity at the \$15 million level.
30 4. Regional Equity should provide a provision for equal transfers of funds between states to assure that all
31 program funds are available where needed within the region;
32 5. NEFU supports restoring annual appropriations for the USDA's NRCS technical assistance at the field
office level.

33
34 NEFU supports:

- 35 1. An upper income cap on government farm payment program eligibility on the basis of net farm income,
36 which would provide additional funds for programs to support beginning and limited income farmers.
37 2. Full funding of USDA programs that encourage permanent protection of working farm and forest lands;
38 3. Full funding for USDA programs that provide funding for pasture and wetlands restoration.

39
40 **Federal crop insurance**

41 NEFU supports:

- 42 1. The continuation and improvement of the federal crop insurance program. We advocate for strong
43 educational campaigns to help farmers make informed decisions about crop insurance options.
44 2. The expansion of federal crop insurance programs to support the diversity of crops that can be grown and
45 recognize the changing infrastructure and markets available to farmers and producers in New England.

46
47 **Farm viability programs**

48 NEFU supports

- 49 1. The continuation and expansion of state farm viability programs to provide business planning assistance
50 and grant funds to support new farm business opportunities and ventures, and direct-marketing and value-
51 added strategies on existing farms.
52 2. The placement of a term "easement" on the affected land as a requirement of receipt of a grant award under
53 such programs and the availability of such programs to farms previously protected by conservation
54 easements.
55

1 Farm and fisheries profitability

2 NEFU supports:

- 3 1. USDA Rural Development programs that benefit farming and fishing in New England. The direction of RD
4 initiatives should sustain and increase viability of family farms, family owned fisheries and rural businesses
5 that will result in prosperous communities. Rural development is economic development for New England.
6 2. NEFU supports research that examines the flow of money within all the region's agriculture sectors; the
7 positive and negative impacts of federal agriculture policies; potential state actions to enhance the
8 profitability of the region's farmers, foresters, fishermen/women, aquaculturalists and processors; and
9 recommendations for policy changes that would enhance the viability of the region's agriculture, fisheries
10 and aquaculture operations.

11 Agricultural statistics

12 NEFU supports:

- 13 1. All farmers participating in all surveys of the USDA NASS and the Census of Agriculture, which should be
14 conducted every five years;
15 2. Opposition to efforts to increase the minimum financial criteria for classifying agricultural operations;
16 3. Continued collection of information on direct marketing of agricultural products, the production and sale of
17 organic agricultural products, value-added agricultural products and non-traditional farming operations and
18 ownership;
19 4. Continued collection of needed data relating to corporate involvement in agriculture and coordination with
20 information collected on foreign involvement in the purchase of farmland and agricultural enterprises to
21 more clearly reflect the pattern of ownership and management of United States agriculture; and
22 5. Opposition to USDA using information obtained in the census in a manner that is detrimental to family
23 farmers and ranchers.
24

25 USDA marketing programs

26 NEFU priorities:

- 27 1. Programs that provide coupons for consumers at farmers markets and on-farm sales not limited to farmers'
28 markets. New England leads the country in number of farmers markets. We also support allocating 10% of
29 federal funds to be used for Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) systems that can read SNAP cards at
30 farmers markets;
31 2. Programs that allow senior citizens access to farmers market coupons.
32 3. Loan programs for local food distribution and marketing enterprises that serve markets in-state or within
33 400 miles of production site. These loans can fund slaughterhouses, small food distributors, dairy
34 processing, warehouses, mills, kitchen incubators, and can extend funds to urban as well as rural regions;
35 4. Farm to school and farm to institution programs that support the distribution and consumption of New
36 England-grown and -processed food, lumber, and fish in New England institutions; and
37 5. Local preferences programs that allow local schools to establish purchasing preferences for locally
38 produced dairy, as well as fruits, vegetables and meats for school meals.
39

40 Community supported farming and fisheries

41 NEFU supports:

- 42 1. NEFU supports initiatives that promote the development of community supported enterprises. New England
43 farmers and fishermen, nurserymen and flower growers are establishing community supported enterprises from
44 which consumers/members purchase shares in the enterprise in advance of the season. This gives producers
45 cash at the start of each season, and includes the customers in the risks inherent in farming, fishing, and
46 horticultural operations.
47

48 Value-added agriculture and processing

49 NEFU supports:

- 50 1. All USDA programs that provide funding for value-added processing to help farmers and fishermen develop
51 value-added businesses with an emphasis on local and regional food systems. Adding value to food and fiber
52 means capturing a greater portion of the market value, and New England farmers, forest owners and fishermen
53 have found this to be an effective means for keeping their businesses viable;
54 2. The formation of member owned co-operatives and other structures to facilitate the processing, marketing
55 and distribution of value-added products.
56

1
2 Interstate Sale of State Inspected Meat

3 Maine and Vermont have implemented state meat inspection programs. New Hampshire and Massachusetts are
4 considering such legislation. These state meat inspection programs are, as required by law, at least equal to federal
5 standards. These programs provide additional access and value-added opportunities for producers. The 2008 Farm
6 Bill required USDA to develop rules to allow the sale of state-inspected meats across state lines. The rules as they
7 have been developed actually provide disincentives and added levels of unnecessary bureaucracy to the interstate
8 sale of state-inspected meats.

9
10
11 NEFU priorities:

- 12 1. The interstate sale of state-inspected meat;
13 2. Acceleration of the rulemaking process for the interstate sale of state inspected meat to allow individual
14 processors, by virtue of state inspection, to sell meat across state lines as was implied in the 2008 farm bill
15 language; and

16 NEFU supports:

- 17 1. State efforts to create MOUs to allow a state to deem another state inspection program adequate for its
18 state's sales.
19

20 Agri-Tourism

21 NEFU supports:

- 22 1. The inclusion of agri-tourism as part of the definition of agriculture;
23 2. USDA programs that recognize the value of agri-tourism in small, diversified farms and communities
24 throughout the U.S. and programs that adopt agri-tourism allowances for funding.
25 3. USDA programs that educate producers about liabilities associated with agri-tourism operations;
26 4. Limits on the maximum liability exposure, thus making liability insurance protection more attainable and
27 affordable.

28
29 Agriculture education

30 NEFU supports:

- 31 1. Legislation to allow certain agriculture courses, as approved by the states departments of education, to
32 count as science credits to be applied to state requirements for high school graduation;
33 2. Efforts to continue and expand educational programs supportive of family farm agriculture and rural
34 communities. We encourage educators to consider innovative approaches to family agriculture, including
35 organic, value-added and sustainable agriculture.

36
37 Training New Farmers

38 NEFU supports:

- 39 1. State and federal policies – such as low interest loans, grants and tax incentives – that provide adequate
40 financing to help maintain New England's family farm tradition and provide special assistance to beginning
41 family farmers and minority farmers;
42 2. College and university schools of agriculture, technical high schools with agricultural curricula, and other
43 similar programs;
44 3. NEFU supports the maintenance and expansion of technical assistance for New England farmers through
45 university extension programs, state agricultural agencies, community based organizations and private
46 consultants.

47
48 Land grant universities & institutions of higher learning

49 Research education in New England's land grant universities should be balance and recognize the interests of family
50 farms (conventional and organic) and co-operatives. University educational curricula must not support the interests
51 of agribusiness at the expense of family farmers.

52
53 NEFU notes the near total lack of course content and curricula on co-operative enterprise, co-operative history and
54 management in our region's educational institutions, and particularly in secondary schools. This is in clear contrast
55 to the contribution made by co-operatives to the economy and food system in New England. We applaud the efforts
56 of some colleges and universities to address this problem and call for support and investment in courses, certificates,

1 advanced degrees and other educational programs that will support the next generation of co-operative leaders in our
2 communities. NEFU supports the continued contribution of cooperative extension to the region’s farmers, youth and
3 communities.

4
5 NEFU priorities:

- 6 1. Increased funding in cooperative extension personnel and services related to direct, on-farm assistance and
7 programs;
- 8 2. Formula funding for land grant universities, which creates a stable base of funding for continuation of
9 services in small states;
- 10 3. Increase funding to better enable land grant institutions in New England to be able to develop viable state
11 and county agricultural research stations; and
- 12 4. Increase cooperative extension funding for outreach and dissemination and distribution of crops and
13 cropping methods, and to facilitate feedback for success and failures.

14
15 NEFU supports:

- 16 1. Development of a public seed bank of varieties developed and continually refined at the research stations;
17 and
- 18 2. Increased funding for Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) for on-farm field
19 trials.

20
21 Federal estate tax

22 NEFU supports:

- 23 1. Estate tax relief for family-owned farms in order to facilitate the transfer of those enterprises to the next
24 generation;
- 25 2. A federal estate tax exemption per estate that is set at \$3.5 million, indexed annually, with a top tax rate of
26 45%;
- 27 3. Simplified exemption qualification rules and requirements, along with the implementation of graduated tax
28 rates;
- 29 4. Section 2032A applications based on the use of the land for agriculture and not on the owner, thus allowing
30 land covered by 2032A to be rented to another for farming purposes;
- 31 5. Allow property that has been valued using 2032A to be freely transferred without triggering recapture as
32 long as it is maintained in its qualified use;
- 33 6. Eliminate the cap on the amount by which an estate’s value may be reduced through the use of Section
34 2032A; and
- 35 7. Sale of a conservation easement on land subject to Section 2032A should not trigger a re-capture of the
36 avoided estate tax.

37 NEFU opposes:

- 38 1. Shifting tax liability from the estate tax to the capital gains tax through the elimination of the “step-up” in
39 basis provisions.

40
41 Broadband access

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

44
45 Libraries

46 NEFU supports adequate funding for rural libraries. It is through a well-informed public that democracy is best
47 served. Libraries provide access to information for all.

48 NEFU opposes any efforts to cut funds for libraries, including materials and services for the blind and visually
49 impaired.

50
51 Postal service

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

54

1
2 **GOVERNMENT REGULATION**
3

4 **Right to farm**

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

9
10 **Local Agricultural Regulations (also see land use planning)**

11 NEFU supports

- 12
- 13 1. Public processes that engage a wide range of stakeholders in discussions and policy setting regarding the
14 development, propagation and enforcement of regulations that deal with seeds, chemicals, and fertilizers.
15 Such regulations should not be used to limit, restrict or prescribe the types of management practices
16 employed by farmers;
 - 17 2. Local boards of health, sanitation, and other agencies and officials that interact with agricultural enterprises
18 should be offered training and education so that they are fully aware of the need for regulations that foster
19 agriculture in their communities.

20 **Food Security and Reserves**

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

25
26 The concentration of farm ownership also tends to disenfranchise many at the benefit of few, causing financial and
27 social turmoil over time. We support establishing a revolving two-year, farmer-owned reserve of commodities to
28 provide an adequate supply of raw materials for use as emergency food or renewable energy.

29
30 **Food Safety**

31 NEFU believes that a successful agricultural sector requires food safety regulations and policies that protect
32 the public from foodborne illnesses and educate farmers about how to handle their products safely.
33 Regulations should be clearly and consistently enforced, with an emphasis on technical assistance and
34 training, rather than a reliance on punitive action following violations. NEFU does not believe that one-size-
35 fits all regulations, like Good Agricultural Practices (GAP), are appropriate for the types of farms we have in
36 New England.

37
38 NEFU priorities:

- 39
- 40 1. Regulations pertaining to on-farm processing of foods must be sensitive to issues of scale, recognizing that
41 guidance for small-scale, low-volume operations must be different. In particular, the cost in time and
42 money of government mandated safety inspections and testing must not be overly burdensome for small
43 producers;
 - 44 2. Regulations should govern product safety, rather than process, with an understanding that there are many
45 ways to produce a safe food item and that producers should be allowed the flexibility to choose processes
46 that are appropriate for their particular situation;
 - 47 3. Regulations that allow for the interstate shipment of meat and poultry and their products from small state-
48 inspected packing and processing establishments.

49 NEFU supports:

- 50
- 51 1. Building, plumbing, electrical, sanitation and other codes, as applied to farming and on-farm processing of
52 agricultural products, should be appropriate for agricultural facilities as distinguished from commercial
53 facilities. A facility is any place where raw agricultural products are prepared for wholesale or retail sale.

1
2 Value-added and local processing

3 NEFU supports:

- 4 1. Policies that facilitate the development and operation of on-farm, local and regional facilities to process
5 raw agricultural and fisheries products for wholesale and retail food sales.
6 2. Public facilities that are accessible to a wide range of growers, producers and fishermen. Safety regulations
7 for these facilities should be appropriate to their scale and use and not be unnecessarily burdensome on
8 operators. Regulations should allow on-farm and fisherman-owned facilities to provide services to other
9 farmers and fishermen.
10 3. Programs that offer educational services to growers, producers and fishermen around business management
11 and marketing.
12 4. Efforts to document the existing value-added producers and their contribution to New England's agriculture
13 and fisheries economy.
14 5. Research that develops alternative processing methods for small scale processing of farm and fishery
15 products and explores alternative products from the region's commodities.
16 6. An examination of the feasibility of changing regulations and zoning ordinances that inhibit small scale
17 production and sale of finished food and fisheries products.

18
19 Food biosecurity

20 NEFU supports:

- 21 1. The increase of inspections of imported agricultural products, a limit on the number of ports where foreign
22 foods enter the U.S., and sufficient federal funds to protect our agriculture supply and our ports from
23 bioterrorism.
24 2. Enforcement of importing food products from nations with USDA-comparable food inspection/sanitation
25 standards, including milk protein concentrates.
26 3. Disallowing imports of agricultural products from nations that have experienced outbreaks of diseases that
27 could contaminate the food supply until those nations' agricultural exports have been deemed safe.

28
29 National Animal Identification / Premises Registration

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

40
41 NEFU supports:

- 42 1. A voluntary national animal I.D. program and a voluntary premises registration program coordinated
43 with appropriate agencies at the federal and state level to prevent and contain animal disease outbreaks in
44 the United States.

45 The following conditions apply:

- 46 a. Agencies that promote such programs and deem them necessary to fulfill their missions should
47 provide the full funding necessary to create and maintain the databases and provide compensation to
48 producers for their costs of implementing the program;
49 b. Use of the proprietary information should include clear limits to ensure protection under the Freedom
50 of Information Act (FOIA). Access to producer information should be available only in times of
51 animal disease outbreaks or bioterrorism attacks;
52 c. Animal identification programs must not be used as a means for packers and processors to transfer
53 liability to the original owner of the animal; instead, trace-back information should mitigate producer
54 liability for contaminated food products; and
55 d. Databases need to remain under the control of the government. Confidentiality of all information must
56 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

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 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 or sale of one parcel of land's development rights to the owner of another parcel. This 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.

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 all residents of New England states.

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 that 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 Confined Animal Feeding Operations (CAFO) 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 conservation program which provide 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; and
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

1 agricultural products.

2
3 Fertilizer Regulations

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

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

8
9 Truth in labeling

10 NEFU supports

- 11 1. The country of origin labeling (COOL) requirements as mandated in the 2008 Farm Bill and urges its
12 expansion to the labeling of all food products distributed and sold in the U.S., including dairy products;
13 2. Proper labeling of organic food products;
14 3. The use of milk or meat products from cloned animals when those products are labeled as such at the retail
15 level;
16 4. The continuation of standards for labeling milk and dairy products, enabling farmers and consumers to
17 have the opportunity to choose whether or not to use or consume synthetic bovine growth hormone (BGH).
18 We support labeling laws to allow milk to be labeled r-BST free;
19 5. The sale of food products that have been irradiated, as long as they are labeled as such and appropriate
20 educational materials are made available to consumers;
21 6. Labelling of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) in food products at the wholesale and retail levels.

22
23 Urban Agriculture

24 NEFU supports:

- 25 1. Zoning to increase access to land to be communally gardened;
26 2. Zoning and policy measures that allow for scale-appropriate livestock husbandry within city limits.
27 3. Support systems for urban residents to connect with one another, learn and teach about cultivating the land
28 and preserving food, and fulfill their vision for beautifying their own neighborhoods;
29 4. Community or city services that assist with compost deliveries, bulk buying of seeds and plants, and other
30 amendments;
31 5. Farmers markets where local gardeners can sell what they produce;
32 6. Programs that include youth, elderly, and marginalized populations in gardening and that seek out
33 knowledge and expertise from urban immigrant groups, who have direct knowledge and experience of
34 agriculture.

35
36 Farm Labor

37 NEFU priorities:

- 38 1. Funds for programs that improve the supply, stability and training of the agricultural labor force.
39 2. Extend the National Labor Relations Act to cover farms which employ enough hired help to be subject
40 to the federal minimum wage provisions applicable to agricultural workers.

41
42 NEFU supports:

- 43 1. Worker protection standards regarding wage rates, health, safety and housing conditions for migrant,
44 seasonal, minority and other farm laborers and for education of their children;
45 2. Rights of workers to bargain collectively for fair wages;
46 3. Alivable minimum wage;
47 4. Rights of entitlement program recipients, such as those on Social Security, to have their benefits reflect
48 increases in the costs of living.

49
50 Immigration Policy

51 NEFU supports:

- 52 1. The enforcement of U.S. immigration law.
53 2. Development of a blue card worker program for immigrants who work on farms and ranches.
54 3. Policies that consider the inclusion of guest workers in state and federal tax structures and that respect
55 the human rights of these guest workers.

1 International Trade

2 NEFU priorities:

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

7
8 NEFU supports:

- 9 1. Elimination of unilateral sanctions on agricultural and medical products;
10 2. Coordination of efforts internationally to reduce the anti-competitive results of increased concentration in
11 agriculture;
12 3. Preservation of U.S. rights and policy flexibility to provide economic safety net assistance to agricultural
13 producers;
14 4. Support for international cooperation to achieve improved commodity prices by balancing supply and
15 demand; and
16 5. Commitment to an ongoing process to address implementation and compliance issues.
17

1 **V. ENERGY**

2 NEFU supports energy policies that promote domestic, regionally produced energy sources. Clean, efficient energy
3 should be affordable to all, with adequate supplies to meet the needs of region. U.S. energy sources should be
4 diverse and developed as close to points of use as possible rather than depending upon long distance and vulnerable
5 transmission and transportation networks.
6

7 NEFU believes that farmers are part of the solution, to achieve an independent energy economy. NEFU believes that
8 if New England is to be energy independent, our renewable energy will come from the productivity of the land,
9 therefore our regions success at achieving energy independence rests on farmers and our rural economy’s ability to
10 sustainably manage and improve the productive capacity of that land to develop and manage distributed energy
11 systems based on the produce of the land. We support the community-based development of localized, decentralized
12 alternative energy and encourage tax credits and incentives for the proliferation of on-farm or community-based
13 energy sources. NEFU believes that the best way to pay for improved efficiency and renewable energy infrastructure
14 is through putting a price on non-renewable carbon consumption.
15

16 NEFU supports fundamental and especially applied research and development of renewable energy in the region to
17 provide greater energy and food production from our land base, while reducing atmospheric carbon, improved
18 environmental services, and strengthening our rural communities.
19

20 NEFU supports measures that both increase energy efficiency as well as the use of sustainably produced renewable
21 energy, while reducing use of imported petroleum products.
22

23 NEFU Priorities:

24
25 Carbon Pricing: Carbon sequestration is an innovative way to enhance income for producers and improve domestic
26 food and energy security by storing carbon where it is agriculturally productive in the soil. Therefore, the pricing of
27 carbon should be encouraged. A carbon pricing program can be a cost effective, market based approach to reduce
28 overall greenhouse gas emissions, and improve agricultural soils. NEFU believes that pricing carbon is the best way
29 to encourage market choices that favor efficient energy use, and foster creative solutions to achieve energy
30 independence.

31 Therefore, NEFU advocates a carbon pricing system that:

- 32 1. Grants USDA control, verification and administration of any agriculture payment program,
- 33 2. Does not place an artificial cap on domestic offset allowance;
- 34 3. Bases carbon sequestration rates upon science;
- 35 4. Recognizes early actors;
- 36 5. Allows agricultural producers to stack carbon credits;
- 37 6. Does not cap agricultural carbon emissions; and
- 38 7. Creates a 3rd party verified soil carbon standards for the measurement of soil carbon sequestration or loss.

39 NEFU supports carbon pricing systems that meet these objectives, including but not limited to pricing systems that
40 include fee & dividend models as well as cap and trade, or other carbon tax systems. In addition, NEFU advocates
41 an aggressive and ambitious cellulosic ethanol research, development and production program geared to rapidly
42 develop the necessary technology to compliment traditional ethanol supplies of motor fuels.
43

44 If carbon pricing is not implemented, NEFU supports the continued development certified agricultural production
45 practices for biofuels are recommended for a renewable fuel standard, and a price for carbon sequestered in the soil
46 that is greater than the traded price for sequestered atmospheric carbon.
47

48 NEFU Supports:

49
50 Biomass. The future of New England bioenergy production will depend on development of regionally appropriate
51 crops and varieties. NEFU supports sustainably harvested biomass fuel combustion for transportation, co-generation
52 and district heating, and supports the manufacture of pelletized solid fuels for heating rural areas. NEFU supports
53 incentives to use the cleanest combustion technology available. NEFU supports the aggressive development of
54 regionally appropriate high yielding biomass crops and associated infrastructure recognizing that food and fuel
55 production and ecosystem services are not mutually exclusive in well-balanced agricultural production systems. In
56 addition to yield, biofuel crop development should take into account possible bi-products and effects on soil health,

1 biodiversity, invasive potential, water requirements and other local and regional environmental, social and economic
2 factors. Local variety development, testing and distribution should be supported and administered through land grant
3 colleges, research stations and conservation districts. NEFU supports federal guaranteed loans for biomass projects
4 deployed through 3rd party lenders managed in a similar manner to Small Business Administration loan programs.

5
6 Models and programs that convert farm methane to farm energy. NEFU supports research to make manure digesters
7 a profitable venture for smaller livestock operations. We further support funding and development assistance for
8 community manure digesters.

9
10 Biodiesel. Expand the distribution network for biodiesel fuel throughout New England by instituting tax incentives
11 for wholesale and retail distributors. Encourage use of biodiesel fuel through the development of informational and
12 educational materials and programs. Adopt a definition of biodiesel that conforms to ASTM D6751, the most current
13 federal standard. Establish local testing labs and enforcement resources for biodiesel fuel. Continue federal subsidies
14 for biodiesel production until the biodiesel industry becomes established at a self-sufficient level.

15
16 Ethanol. The ethanol industry is vitally important to the U.S.'s independence from reliance on foreign oil. NEFU
17 supports biomass production of ethanol and federal investment in that production. Continue the ethanol import tariff.
18 Biofuels should not be exported or imported until energy independence is achieved.

19
20 Gassification/biochar production. NEFU supports increases in biochar research including field trials, production
21 techniques, and biogeochemical and economic analysis. NEFU supports greater commercialization assistance for
22 currently available biomass gassification and pyrolysis technology at both centralized and distributed scales. NEFU
23 supports research and development to reduce the scale of syngas processing for liquid fuels and the development of
24 cost effective distributed co-generation and gas refining technology. NEFU supports incentives in conjunction with
25 soil based carbon sequestration policies to encourage the sustainable production of biochar from crop residues and
26 wood waste as a soil amendment.

27
28 District heating, cooling and cogeneration. NEFU supports incentives to encourage co-generation heat use at all
29 legacy power plants, and that co-generation be used in the design and location for all new projects. NEFU also
30 encourages the adoption of district heating loops for industrial, farm or residential use.

31
32 Low carbon fuel standards. NEFU supports low carbon fuel standards if they are developed with accurate lifecycle
33 assessments that do not take into account indirect land use change, unless all fuels, including petroleum fuels are
34 subject to the same standards. NEFU supports the concept of certified production practices and the development of
35 soil carbon standards to improve lifecycle analysis of production practices.

36
37 Wind and solar energy. NEFU supports development and distribution of electric generation from wind. We call for
38 federal legislation to require all utilities to allow community-based wind projects access to the electric grid by
39 actively pursuing power purchase agreements. In order to help expand the use of smaller wind energy systems, we
40 support net metering for systems up to 100kW. We support billing small wind generators on an annual basis. Net
41 metering allows bidirectional metering of electricity, measured by one meter, where there is no discrimination
42 between electricity produced and electricity consumed by the small electricity consumer-generator. NEFU supports
43 uniform wind siting standards. We support federal production tax credits for wind energy be made more applicable
44 to farmers by extending the federal production tax credit to offset schedule F income. NEFU supports a
45 comprehensive policy that protects landowners from speculation and unfair contracts in the development of natural
46 resources such as wind development. NEFU supports the production of wind and solar energy on farms protected
47 with conservation easements to the extent that such development does not undermine the original purpose of the
48 conservation easement. Electric transmission lines: The right of property owners to deny public utilities eminent
49 domain for transmission lines.

1 **VI. CO-OPERATIVES**

2
3 History shows that co-ops are a powerful means by which people — and farmers and producers in particular — can
4 further their own well being in our market economy. As unique business organizations, co-operatives comprise an
5 important segment of the American economy and are active across industries. As member-owned enterprises, co-
6 operatives are rooted in the communities they serve, creating economic infrastructure that reaches across generations
7 and supports community resilience.

8
9 While NEFU emphasizes the unique benefits that co-operative enterprise offers to farmers, fishers and other
10 producers, we also recognize the important role of co-ops across the economy including food co-ops, credit unions,
11 worker co-ops, and co-ops involved in housing, insurance, finance, energy, utilities and other services. We support
12 the development of co-operative businesses as mechanisms for the development of a stable regional economy and
13 food system through ownership and control that is rooted in our communities, the development of local skills and
14 assets, and a focus on service and meeting member needs.

15
16 NEFU priorities:

- 17 1. Join with the Neighboring Food Co-op Association, the National Cooperative Business Association, the
18 International Co-operative Alliance and other organizations in supporting and celebrating the year 2012 as
19 the International Year of Co-operatives. Throughout 2012, recognize and promote the vital role of co-ops
20 in the economic and social well-being of communities in our region, across the United States and around
21 the world. Celebrate the International Year of Co-operatives by engaging in efforts to raise the profile of
22 co-operative enterprise, to demonstrate the benefits of co-ops in building local ownership and wealth, and
23 to apply the co-operative model to new challenges and opportunities in our communities. Encourage other
24 Farmers Union chapters, agricultural co-operatives, and allied organizations to become involved in efforts
25 to support, celebrate and promote the International Year of Co-operatives.
- 26 2. Protect and promote the co-operative identity. Oppose modification of any state laws or additional state
27 laws that will have the effect of eliminating requirements and definitions that establish the essential co-
28 operative characteristics of member ownership and democratic control by member/patron users, financing
29 by member/patron users, and distribution of benefits to patrons based on their participation in the co-
30 operative business, or that establish mechanisms of control for external investors. Enforce and develop
31 state laws that prohibit use of the word “co-op”, “co-operative” or “cooperative” to identify any business or
32 entity that is not incorporated under co-operative statutes or does not fulfill accepted characteristics of a co-
33 operative as defined by bodies such as the International Co-operative Alliance.
- 34 3. Revitalize USDA co-operative services. The Cooperative Marketing Act of 1926 provides for a USDA
35 program of research, technical assistance and educational programs on the co-operative form of business.
36 Since this program has been subject to vastly reduced human resources and redirection, NEFU supports
37 revitalization of co-operative services programs in USDA, restoration of agency status, and support for co-
38 operative specialists in rural development state offices for support of co-operative enterprise across sectors
39 and industries.
- 40 4. Promotion of co-operative education. Support the inclusion of curricula on the history, management and
41 diversity of co-operative enterprise in colleges and universities in our region. Encourage co-operatives to
42 set aside the full amount of educational funds permitted by law in order to fulfill the principle of education,
43 training and information for members, elected representatives, managers, and employees so they can
44 contribute effectively to the development of their co-operatives, and efforts to inform the general public —
45 particularly young people and opinion leaders — about the nature and benefits of co-operation.

46
47 NEFU supports:

- 48 1. Promotion and development of the co-operative model as an effective means of increasing producers’
49 bargaining power. Provide for the infrastructure necessary for production, processing, marketing and
50 distribution of food and other products.
- 51 2. The growth and development of marketing, supply and service co-operatives on local, regional and national
52 levels. We recommend that farmer-owned and -controlled co-operatives work together whenever and
53 wherever possible to obtain more marketing and bargaining power for farmers. We encourage marketing
54 co-operatives, especially in dairying, to continue their efforts toward the creation of marketing agencies in
55 common for the purpose of improving marketing efficiency and producer prices.

- 1 3. The unique role that food co-ops play in developing markets for organic, fairly traded and locally and
2 regionally sourced foods, and partnering with producers to strengthen rural communities. NEFU supports
3 the growth and development of food co-ops as member-owned grocery stores, and encourages
4 collaboration among food co-ops, producers, and producer co-operatives in advancing a shared vision of a
5 vibrant and resilient regional economy and New England better able to “feed and fuel itself.”
- 6 4. The organization and growth of credit unions, recognizing the role that these member-owned financial
7 institutions play in the economic lives of local communities. We oppose any effort to impose a tax on
8 member-owned non-profit credit unions. We support maintaining the National Credit Union Share
9 Insurance Fund as a separate and independent agency from other federal deposit insurance systems. We
10 support the right of all Americans to choose how and where they deposit their earnings and transact their
11 personal financial business. We encourage efforts by credit unions to develop their ability to provide
12 financial services to local businesses and co-ops in their areas of operation.
- 13 5. Collaboration among co-ops across sectors and particularly in the regional food system as a means of
14 sustaining our communities and securing economic infrastructure in the long term.
- 15 6. Defense of the Capper-Volstead Act of 1922, which establishes the legal framework for producer co-ops.
16 a. The rights of agricultural producers to act together to handle, process and market agricultural products
17 through co-operative activity, as guaranteed under the Capper-Volstead Act of 1922, must be
18 continued. These same rights should be formally extended under law to farm supply and consumer co-
19 operatives.
20 b. The rights of co-operative members to organize and operate regional and interregional co-operatives
21 (marketing agencies in common) or to merge with other co-operative associations, should not be
22 restricted by law or government regulation. However, we are not in favor of regional co-operatives
23 absorbing local co-ops until other options of maintaining local control have been exhausted, including
24 merger or joint venture with a nearby co-operative. When necessary for a regional to absorb a local co-
25 operative, we strongly urge every effort would be made by the local members or a nearby co-operative
26 to purchase the co-operative back when it is feasible. We demand that regional co-operative boards
27 work together, and with local co-operatives, to help them continue operating for the benefit of the
28 members.
29 c. The responsibilities of administering the Capper-Volstead Act should remain with the U.S. Department
30 of Agriculture.
31 d. Because co-operative businesses are member-owned and controlled, we oppose any governmental
32 regulation that would infringe upon the rights of co-operative members to determine the policies or
33 operation of their co-operative.
34 e. Value-added co-operatives maintaining co-operative principles of member-ownership and control (see
35 Background below).
- 36 7. Co-operative Financing: NEFU supports the current 50% membership criteria for CoBank borrowers. We
37 support US Treasury funding of Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs), such as the
38 Cooperative Fund of New England, and encourage these organizations to focus on providing financing and
39 other support for co-operative enterprise in the region. We urge the government to initiate federal funding
40 programs along the lines of the original REA program to assist farmers in forming value-added co-
41 operatives.
- 42 8. Repeal of “block voting” provisions in co-ops. Because the “one person, one vote” principle upon which
43 the individual democratic rights of this country was founded has been eroded by permitting block voting by
44 co-operatives on behalf of their farmer-members, NEFU strongly supports efforts to repeal “block voting”
45 provisions wherever they exist in co-operative America. Individual farmers need to be afforded an
46 opportunity to disagree with their marketing co-operatives whose interest may differ from that of the
47 farmer.

48
49 NEFU opposes:

- 50 1. All joint ventures or mergers between co-operatives and multinational corporations.
- 51 2. Outsourcing of Product by Producer Co-ops: Some regional co-operatives have begun buying or selling
52 goods from outside interests that are normally sourced from members. Such examples include 1) buying
53 extra-territorial and sometimes distressed milk at price levels well below prices paid to members, 2) selling
54 unbranded fuels to nonmember companies at lower prices than typically negotiated with member co-ops,
55 and 3) purchasing commodities from outside the U.S. for prices lower than those paid its members selling
56 the same commodities. These practices, though perceived as benign, are often detrimental to co-op
57 members and local co-ops. Such practices often result in undercutting members’ and local co-ops’ prices,

1 and eroding their position in the marketplace. NEFU strongly urges such co-operatives to curtail such
2 practices and develop compensation formulas to ensure that those harmed by such initiatives be promptly
3 compensated. Prompt compensation might involve co-operatives holding any additional income derived
4 from such practices in escrow, and disbursing payments to its members within the same fiscal year.

- 5 3. Modification of any state laws that will have the effect of eliminating requirements and definitions that
6 establish the essential co-operative characteristics of ownership and control by member/patron users,
7 financing by member/patron users, and distribution of benefits to patrons based on their participation in the
8 co-operative business. We encourage vigilance against such actions and support renewed educational
9 efforts to preserve the critical co-operative principles that have served American farmers and others in rural
10 America for more than two centuries.
- 11 4. Co-ops joining legal defense fund schemes to avoid full equity payment to co-op patrons. NEFU
12 encourages co-ops to follow the Capper Volstead Act, which requires co-ops pay back a minimum of 20
13 percent of earnings as cash to members for a given fiscal year.

14 **BACKGROUND**

15 Co-operatives are based on the fundamental principles of ownership and democratic control by member/patron
16 users, financing by member/patron users, with distribution of benefits to patrons based on their participation in the
17 co-operative business. Experience has clearly demonstrated that any substantial deviation from these fundamental
18 principles has always proven fatal to co-operatives and detrimental to their farmer members. Further, co-operative
19 incorporation statutes of the various States as well as the Capper-Volstead Act of 1922, the Cooperative Marketing
20 Act of 1926, federal income taxation rules, and many other laws recognize fundamental co-operative principles.
21 These statutes allow substantial flexibility for innovative co-operative business practices and structural adaptation to
22 contemporary needs and challenges.
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25 The promotion and encouragement of farm, fishery and forestry co-ops should be emphasized as an effective means
26 to increase producers' bargaining power in the economy and food system. We acknowledge and encourage the
27 promotion of the role of co-operative enterprise in securing for our region the infrastructure necessary for
28 production, processing, marketing and distribution of food and other products.
29

30 We reaffirm our belief in and commitment to the co-operative identity and principles as identified by the
31 International Co-operative Alliance:
32

- 33 1. Voluntary and Open Membership. Co-operatives are voluntary organizations, open to all persons able to
34 use their services and willing to accept the responsibilities of membership, without gender, social, racial,
35 political or religious discrimination.
- 36 2. Democratic Member Control. Co-operatives are democratic organizations controlled by their members,
37 who actively participate in setting their policies and making decisions. Men and women serving as elected
38 representatives are accountable to the membership. In primary co-operatives members have equal voting
39 rights (one member, one vote) and co-operatives at other levels are also organized in a democratic manner.
- 40 3. Member Economic Participation. Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital
41 of their co-operative. At least part of that capital is usually the common property of the co-operative.
42 Members usually receive limited compensation, if any, on capital subscribed as a condition of membership.
43 Members allocate surpluses for any or all of the following purposes: developing their co-operative, possibly
44 by setting up reserves, part of which at least would be indivisible; benefiting members in proportion to their
45 transactions with the co-operative; and supporting other activities approved by the membership.
- 46 4. Autonomy and Independence. Co-operatives are autonomous, self-help organizations controlled by their
47 members. If they enter to agreements with other organizations, including governments, or raise capital from
48 external sources, they do so on terms that ensure democratic control by their members and maintain their
49 co-operative autonomy.
- 50 5. Education, Training and Information. Co-operatives provide education and training for their members,
51 elected representatives, managers, and employees so they can contribute effectively to the development of
52 their co-operatives. They inform the general public - particularly young people and opinion leaders - about
53 the nature and benefits of co-operation.
- 54 6. Cooperation among Co-operatives. Co-operatives serve their members most effectively and strengthen the
55 co-operative movement by working together through local, national, regional and international structures.
- 56 7. Concern for Community. Co-operatives work for the sustainable development of their communities

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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

1 **VII. LAND TENURE**

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3 **LAND ACCESS AND TENURE**

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

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9 NEFU Priorities:

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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. 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;
 5. Promote advancements in farmland protection tools; and
 6. 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.

25 NEFU Supports:

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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; and
 3. Tenure arrangements that help new farmers build equity (e.g. share-milking).

34 **FARM TRANSFER AND SUCCESSION**

35 NEFU priorities:

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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.

45 NEFU supports the federal government’s active role in helping farmers plan for succession.

1 **VIII. NUTRITION**

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3 **SCHOOL MILK**

4 Studies show a large percentage of children in the United States are calcium deficient. Nine out of ten teenage girls
5 and seven out of ten teenage boys do not get enough calcium in their diet. Less than half of all children age six to
6 eleven consume the recommended amount of milk. USDA must retain cow’s milk as the beverage qualifying for
7 reimbursable school meal programs.
8

9 NEFU supports:

- 10 1. Efforts to make school milk r-BST free.
11 2. Installation of milk vending machines in all schools.

12
13 **UNIVERSAL BREAKFAST PROGRAM**

14 Studies prove that a student who eats breakfast performs better academically and has better behavior.

15 NEFU supports:

- 16 1. A Universal Breakfast Program.
17 2. USDA commodities for school breakfast programs.

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19 **AFTERNOON MILK PROGRAM**

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

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22 **GOVERNMENT NUTRITION PROGRAMS**

23 NEFU supports:

- 24 1. Programs that provide locally produced foods, including locally produced milk, to school cafeterias and
25 government nutrition programs including state institutions.
26 2. Full reinstatement of the dairy portion of the Women, Infants and Children program (WIC).

27
28 **SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAM**

29 NEFU supports:

- 30 1. Make USDA funds available and rewrite programs requirements to support the procurement, preparation
31 and service of local foods, allowing for nutritious meals that also support local and regional farmers and
32 processors.
33 2. USDA mandate that all foods and commodities used in the School Lunch Program (and other federally-
34 subsidized school nutrition programs) contain only products and ingredients certified as safe under FDA’s
35 safety program, GRAS (Generally Recognized As Safe).
36 3. Make the available soy beverages to all school children who are lactose intolerant.

37
38 **FAST FOOD INDUSTRY**

39 NEFU calls upon the industry to increase efforts to provide higher quality and nutritional meal items. Nutritionally
40 deprived diets lead to higher levels of obesity. Further, we call upon institutional and wholesale buyers to purchase
41 raw commodities from local and regional producers.

42
43 **FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICES**

44 NEFU Priorities:

- 45 1. Programs which allow food stamp users to purchase food directly from farmers’ markets/farm stands and
46 local producers;
47 2. Adoption of double value benefits for SNAP at farmers markets/farm stands.

48
49 NEFU Supports:

- 50 1. The Food Stamp Act of 1964;
51 2. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP);
52 3. Providing local milk in all feeding programs and prioritizing the use of local milk in SNAP and WIC;
53 4. Outreach efforts to extend services to the increasing number of hungry people who should be served,
54 particularly in rural areas where access is a problem;

- 1 5. Exclusion of farm loans as income in determining eligibility for food stamps;
- 2 6. Continued development of the Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) program;
- 3 7. Prohibiting efforts to substitute cash payment for food stamps;
- 4 8. Exploration of models that would specify certain SNAP dollars be used at markets, just like WIC;
- 5 9. Commodity distribution programs and child feeding programs;
- 6 10. USDA making healthy surplus foods readily available to food banks and emergency kitchens, bearing the
- 7 cost of transportation and storage; and,
- 8 11. Federal law that requires commodities distributed for nutrition programs be domestically produced.

1 **IX. ECONOMICS AND THE FAMILY FARM**

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3 Areas of interest include Farm Credit system, Health and Medical Savings Accounts, tax deductibility for health
4 insurance, and farm savings accounts.

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6 NEFU priorities:

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8 1. The Farm Credit System (FCS) remains a viable source of agricultural credit and recommitts itself to
9 assisting family agriculture by restructuring loans, lowering interest rates and debt mediation procedures.
10 The farm credit system should remain faithful to its original mission of serving the credit needs of the
11 agricultural community;
12 2. FCS must continue to be owned by American agriculture and not be subject to foreign or non-agricultural
13 ownership;
14 3. Farm Service Agency (FSA) should truly become a “lender of last resort” and effectively address beginning
15 farmers’ credit needs; and
16 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.

17
18 NEFU Supports:

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