

Policy of the

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2014 Annual Meeting

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Revisions approved by vote of NEFU Membership on December 13, 2014.

1 New England Farmers Union (NEFU), a membership organization, is committed to
2 enhancing the quality of life for family farmers, fishermen, nurserymen and their
3 customers through educational opportunities, co-operative endeavors and civic
4 engagement.

5
6 NEFU was founded in November 2006 as a charter member of the National Farmers
7 Union (NFU) an agricultural advocacy organization founded in 1902 and based in
8 Washington, D.C. Six states comprise its membership: Maine, Massachusetts, New
9 Hampshire, Vermont, Connecticut and Rhode Island. Since its founding, NEFU and NFU
10 have worked closely with regional organizations such as the Cape Cod Cranberry
11 Growers' Association, the Cape Cod Commercial Hook Fishermen's Association,
12 Organic Valley dairy cooperative, Neighboring Food Co-op Association, and the
13 Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance to bring agricultural and fisheries issues to
14 members of Congress and other leaders in Washington, D.C.

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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, rural development, and
5 energy policy that will be essential to our region’s long-term sustainability. These issues
6 transcend every social, economic, environmental and geographic boundary of our region. We are
7 interconnected, and we are still dependent on the soil underneath our feet and the waters off our
8 shores. We believe that in order to maximize New England’s strengths and take advantage of
9 numerous opportunities, we must develop a regional voice for a wide range of issues. This policy
10 is our contribution to 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, increasing energy costs, growing
14 populations, unstable markets, the paradox of increased obesity and persistent hunger – all of
15 these factors and more will change New England in the next several decades. Farmers, fishermen
16 and other producers of food, fiber, plants and forest products will be leaders, innovators, and
17 catalysts for a world in 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, D.C.
25

26 New England Farmers Union is part of a larger Farmers Union family. Over 200,000 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 NFU 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.
41

1
2 **VISION STATEMENT**

3
4 NEFU, a financially self-sustaining organization, shall become the recognized leading voice to
5 promote a thriving and stable New England based agricultural economy and a leading resource
6 for food system policy.

7
8 **MISSION STATEMENT**

9
10 NEFU, an advocacy membership organization, enhances the quality of life for family farmers,
11 fishermen, nurserymen, and their communities through educational opportunities; co-operative
12 endeavors; policy development and engagement; and organizational partnerships in
13 Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Hampshire, Vermont, Maine, and Rhode Island.

14
15 **NEFU VALUES**

16
17 **1. DIVERSIFIED AND VALUE-ADDED AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES**

18 New England’s diversified agriculture and fisheries provide many opportunities for regional
19 economic development. NEFU supports efforts to grow, process and distribute agricultural and
20 fisheries and aquaculture products for local and regional consumption, which may include
21 community-supported agriculture, community-supported fisheries, local feed supplies and
22 farmers’ markets, co-operative processing, as well as value-chains that support producer-
23 consumer relationships.

24
25 **2. PRACTICES THAT SUSTAIN AND ENHANCE NEW ENGLAND AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES**

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

32
33 **3. FAIR TRADE**

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

37
38 **HOW TO USE THIS BOOK**

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

44
45
46 Follow this link on New England Farmers Union website to read the policy book electronically.
47 At bottom of page, see NEFU Policy Book.

48 <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,
6 including turf grass, sod and herbal crops.

7
8 NEFU priorities:

9
10 Food Safety:

- 11
12 • Produce safety regulation that is science based, and appropriate to our region and our scale of
13 agriculture.

14
15 Marketing, Production and Aggregation:

- 16
17 1. Robust market support for cranberries under the federal Section 32 Commodity Purchase Program;
18 2. USDA’s promotion of buying local and regional agricultural products as a means to provide new and
19 larger markets for smaller specialty crop farmers. Local products may be defined as being produced
20 within the immediate area, state, or within 100 miles, while the region may be defined as within the six
21 New England states, New York and adjacent areas;
22 3. Promotion of farmers markets and community-supported agriculture (CSA) to allow consumers
23 greater access to fresh produce and to allow smaller-scale farmers opportunities to market directly to
24 consumers;
25 4. Development of community-based enterprises (i.e., Community Food Projects program) and farmer-
26 owned co-operatives for marketing, processing, aggregation and distribution;
27 5. Mandatory funding for the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program. Specialty crop block grants that are
28 provided to states should be provided to producers and qualified service providers (for example, state
29 and regional “Buy Local” organizations and efforts) and not replace state budgets;
30 6. Promotion of farm-to-school and farm-to-institution programs;
31 7. Federal and state policies to increase investment in research, marketing and risk management targeted
32 toward specialty crop production with a focus on sustainable practices and local and regional distribution
33 systems;

34
35 Nutrition and Healthy Food Access:

- 36
37 1. Removal of barriers and provide inclusion of incentives so that farmers’ markets and farm stands can redeem
38 food stamps (SNAP), WIC coupons and other federal nutrition program vouchers;
39 2. Mandatory funding for programs providing cost share for organizations providing double value coupons for
40 the purchase of fresh fruits and vegetables at farmers’ markets;
41 3. Preservation or expansion of all programs in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program, including Farmers’
42 Market Nutrition Programs, and the Farmers’ Market Women Infant and Children (WIC) coupon program.
43 These programs are mutually beneficial for specialty crop producers by providing a market opportunity and
44 for low-income consumers who receive high-quality, locally produced farm fresh products;
45 4. Allow flexibility within the Department of Defense Fresh Program’s ordering and distribution system to
46 facilitate and increase the participation of local farmers and delivery of the freshest possible source-
47 identified fresh fruits and vegetables to schools;
48 5. Allow small rural schools the flexibility to purchase locally and regionally grown foods for school lunches in
49 lieu of federal commodity assistance.

50
51 NEFU supports:

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

- 1 Alaska, Hawaii and Puerto Rico;
- 2 4. The purchase of surplus fruits and vegetables through Section 32 and bonus buy programs for distribution
- 3 through federal food aid programs;
- 4 5. Flexibility in USDA crop commodity programs to allow occasional fruit and vegetables production and
- 5 maintain full program eligibility; and
- 6 6. Removal of the restrictions for purchase of organic products under the WIC program if that can be
- 7 accomplished without reducing the number of WIC recipients.
- 8

9 **DAIRY**

10 NEFU supports policies at the federal and state levels that preserve and protect the New England region's dairy
11 industry, assure a nationwide supply of milk from a diverse number of dairy operations and assure milk producers a
12 fair return on their labor and investment. NEFU recognizes that the present structure for the processing, packaging,
13 marketing and pricing of farm milk is causing growing harm to New England dairy families and threatens the future
14 supply of fresh, high-quality, locally produced milk and dairy products for the region's consumers. H.R. 3062, the
15 Dairy Security Act of 2011 (DSA), proposed for inclusion in the 2012 Farm Bill includes several provisions that will
16 help in that effort, including a step toward supply management. The DSA, however, must also 1) ensure that dairy
17 policy reforms will not result in further consolidation and vertical integration in the dairy industry and 2) provide a
18 safety net for smaller dairy producers.
19

- 20
- 21 1. NEFU priorities: Establish a national dairy margin insurance program with subsidized premiums
- 22 appropriate to small and mid-scale dairies, and that includes a market stabilization program. Such a
- 23 program should be designed to align production with market demand, prevent the extreme peaks and
- 24 valleys of farm milk prices that characterize the dairy industry currently, and allow sufficient flexibility to
- 25 permit entry of new producers and to keep up with growing population and changing production
- 26 technology;
- 27 2. Require full transparency in the calculation of producer pay prices by co-operatives, proprietary handlers
- 28 and other entities purchasing and marketing farm milk;
- 29 3. Assure all domestic and imported dairy products comply fully with U.S. standards for identity, food safety
- 30 and country-of-origin labeling;
- 31 4. Enforce antitrust laws to prevent predatory and anticompetitive behavior by processors and marketers of
- 32 dairy products;
- 33 5. Encourage growth of markets for farm milk through research and development of new products and
- 34 through expansion of exports. Support regional "buy local" efforts;
- 35 6. Implementation of the existing provision in the Federal Milk Marketing Order (FMMO) which utilizes
- 36 regional pricing based on cost of production;
- 37 7. The development of a whole farm revenue insurance program that includes products appropriate to mid-
- 38 scale and diversified farming operations including dairy.
- 39 8. Any review of the federal milk marketing order system should include a consideration of instituting a
- 40 separate milk marking order for organic milk; and
- 41 9. Restrict the use of dairy descriptors such as milk, butter, cheese and yogurt on labels to only those products
- 42 made from milk.
- 43

44 NEFU supports:

- 45 1. Continuation of the efficient and effective Milk Income Loss Contract (MILC) or similar program that
- 46 provides significant benefits to small and medium-sized farms and based on an all-milk income/feed; cost
- 47 margin trigger until such time as a margin insurance and market stabilization program are in place;
- 48 2. Support states' rights to regulate and legalize sales of raw milk to consumers, in conjunction with rigorous
- 49 milk-handling inspections and consumer education. Oversight of raw milk sales should be the jurisdiction
- 50 of state departments of agriculture;
- 51 3. We support rigorous milk handling inspections and consumer education for sales of milk through cow
- 52 shares and other alternative marketing tools;
- 53 4. Base pricing formulas on surveys of competitive milk prices actually paid to dairy farmers from cheese
- 54 manufacturers from across the country rather than on voluntary limited reporting on opaque, thinly traded
- 55 wholesale commodity exchanges;

5. Maintain a national 450,000 Somatic Cell Count to increase the quality of milk and farm profitability;
6. Assure adequate supplies of milk and dairy products are always available for school lunch, food relief and other nutrition and humanitarian programs especially by fully utilizing the Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) that distributes dairy products to food banks and local food distribution agencies;
7. Increase demand for milk with programs;
8. Require both mandatory and voluntary deduct programs such as milk promotion, beef check-off and CWT to demonstrate actual enhancement of producer income;
9. Provide grants to encourage dairy farmers to employ sound environmental and conservation practices and provide resources to assist them in achieving sustainable stewardship goals. Increase counter-cyclical payment for environmental practices that address the social, economic and environmental benefits of dairy farm to some communities;
10. Acknowledge the impact of non-market influence and artificially inflated costs of input for New England Dairy Farmers including ethanol mandate and subsidies, air and water regulations, ‘freedom to farm’ within an increasingly urban environment, labor costs, and lack of infrastructure;
11. Grant-based incentives directed specifically at ‘at risk’ small operations that lack resources to:
 - Lower inputs (energy, fuel)
 - Change production practices to enable long-term lower cost production
 - Initiate value-added programs
 - Allow for whole herd buyout for herds under 200 cows with lifetime prohibition on returning to dairy and a 10-year agricultural restriction on development
 - Allow for one-time payment to herds under 200 cows to permanently limit production to current levels or a stable pay price fixed to costs of production as defined by USDA tied to a fixed quota of milk entering commerce
 - Maintain high levels of quality and food safety in the entire dairy industry through effective regulation by USDA, FDA and counterpart state agencies.
12. States’ effort throughout New England to provide price and income support to dairy producers.

HAY AND PASTURE

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

NEFU priorities:

1. Increased funding for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), as it is invaluable to graziers;
2. Funding for state agricultural agencies and extension services for grazing specialist positions and to research and develop localized varieties of forage and hay crops appropriate to each state’s climate and soils;
3. Creation and support of more intensive grazing research facilities, including dairy. Forage research should include the research needs of small to medium size rotational grazing as well as larger farms that depend upon stored forages;
4. Adequately funded and farmer participatory research to improve pasture based systems; to evaluate the climate change and risk mitigation benefits of grass-based agriculture including carbon sequestration; to evaluate the health benefits of grass fed meat and dairy.

FORAGE CROPS, FOOD AND FEED GRAINS

We commend and support New England producers for their pioneering efforts in revitalizing agriculture in their local communities. Growth in livestock production, the efforts to produce a larger share of feed grains for our region, energy crops and the growing market for locally grown and milled grains for human consumption are all

1 contributing to the local and regional agricultural renaissance. We support policies and programs that encourage
2 the further growth in the development of these crops and markets.

3
4 NEFU Priorities:

- 5
- 6 1. Increased EQIP support for these enterprises and greater involvement of these producers in Local
7 Working Groups and other NRCS priority setting mechanisms;
- 8 2. Price, income and risk management assistance for these crops comparable to other crops.;
- 9 3. Increased support for extension specialists and programs in our region that assist producers to grow
10 and process, forages, and food and energy and feed grains;
- 11 4. Enhanced focus through animal and human consumption/new market opportunities;
- 12 5. Appropriate risk management policies for these crops that provide coverage at higher value of grains
13 produced and sold for human consumption;
- 14 6. Increased support for SARE, ATTRA and other programs that provide research and technical
15 assistance for these producers.

16 **LIVESTOCK**

17
18 Livestock production is an important component to diversified farming systems, adding nutrients, income
19 diversification and capital formation (in the form of offspring) that can contribute to soil health and farm viability.
20 While livestock production is growing in our region, there are key obstacles to its continued growth. The barriers
21 include access to key production inputs and slaughter and processing facilities. Food safety regulation of meat and
22 poultry slaughter and processing facilities, in particular, must be made appropriate to our region and scale of
23 agriculture. Federal farm policy reforms and programs can help the industry overcome these obstacles.
24

25
26 We believe that family farmers in New England should have control over the handling of their animals and that they
27 should comply with each state's policies for animal husbandry practices. Livestock health is critical to production
28 agriculture and our nation's ability to provide a safe food supply. Achieving the necessary means to ensure livestock
29 health and welfare is a priority for NEFU.

30
31 Further, NEFU believes that the unrestricted importation of livestock and livestock products is causing serious
32 damage to American domestic livestock production. Additionally, a lack of meat import inspection poses an
33 increased potential of contaminated food reaching tables in the U.S. We recommend that Congress take appropriate
34 steps to protect U.S. livestock producers from unfair trading practices.

35
36 NEFU priorities:

- 37
- 38 1. Allow states to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with contiguous states to allow
39 sales of meat and poultry inspected by either state to be sold in both states;
- 40 2. Increase the local food enterprise set aside under the Business and Industry Loan program to 10 percent
41 to accommodate the high costs of building or refurbishing existing meat and poultry processing facilities.
42 Increase program outreach to this constituency;
- 43 3. Provide a scale-appropriate procedure to receive USDA approval to develop new products and recipes
44 to allow producers and processors to innovate in response to consumer demands. Currently, any changes
45 in or development of a recipe or product can cost thousands of dollars to get to approval;
- 46 4. Increase the number of USDA meat and poultry inspectors;
- 47 5. Provide federal assistance to states wishing to establish a state-inspected meat and poultry inspection
48 program;
- 49 6. Legislatively or administratively revisit the interstate sales of state inspected meat provision to provide
50 greater flexibility;
- 51 7. Provide federal technical assistance and training to small and very small meat and poultry processing
52 facilities;
- 53 8. Maintain Country-of-Origin Labeling;
- 54 9. Support efforts to increase the number of facilities allowed to provide high-end meat processing such as

- 1 curing and smoking as a value-added service to producers;
- 2 10. Support the promotion of animal welfare, as opposed to animal rights initiatives, which would limit
- 3 production agriculture by imposing mandatory restrictions on traditional methods of agricultural
- 4 animal production;
- 5 11. Continue to allow FDA to permit the use of therapeutic antibiotics approved for use in livestock
- 6 unless valid scientific evidence proves the product is unsafe, and support producers' right to treat their
- 7 animals with antibiotics to maintain herd health while opposing the constant sub-therapeutic use of
- 8 antibiotics;
- 9 12. Livestock producers who choose to use antibiotics in animal husbandry are responsible for the correct
- 10 use of those products including adequate record keeping and withdrawal before slaughter or use of
- 11 milk or eggs. NEFU does not support the extensive use of antibiotics to compensate for inadequate
- 12 animal husbandry, environment or genetics. In order to ensure human health and consumer
- 13 confidence, NEFU supports policies that require independent monitoring of data on the use of
- 14 antibiotics at food and feed companies, and encourages USDA to increase testing for pathogens in
- 15 processing plants;
- 16 13. Require more vigorous inspection of imported meats to ensure foreign standards are equal to U.S.
- 17 standards;
- 18 14. In order to maintain consumer confidence in the safety and wholesomeness of meat and poultry
- 19 products, New England Farmers Union urges USDA to ensure that continuous meat inspection
- 20 systems remain in effect and do not move toward a risk-based system;
- 21 15. Require conspicuous labeling throughout the processing chain identifying:
- 22 a. point of origin,
- 23 b. date of kill,
- 24 c. whether meat was frozen, and
- 25 d. the date/dates the meat was subsequently refrozen.
- 26
- 27

28 NEFU supports:

- 29 1. Investigate the impact of foreign pricing practices on the U.S. market;
- 30 2. Impose countervailing duties to offset subsidies paid to foreign exporters;
- 31 3. Require the amount of imported meat and live animals intended for slaughter be reported weekly;
- 32 4. United States government's ability to impose trade sanctions against foreign countries based on USTR
- 33 assessments;
- 34 5. Re-establish the importation law to replace existing tariff-rate quota system with an import quota system;
- 35 6. Require end-use certificates to monitor the flow of livestock being imported;
- 36 7. Strengthen USDA and FDA safety standards to prevent bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE)
- 37 contaminated products from being imported;
- 38 8. Ban meat and/or meat products from foreign countries that allow use of medications or additives not
- 39 approved for use in the U.S.;
- 40 9. Require more vigorous inspection of imported meat processing facilities to ensure foreign standards are
- 41 equal to U.S. standards;
- 42 10. Prohibit ground and shaved meat from being imported into the U.S.;
- 43 11. Enforce all existing quarantine requirements and health standards as set forth by USDA/Animal and Plant
- 44 Health Inspection Service (APHIS) regarding imports of livestock and other commodities;
- 45 12. Fully fund a disease (such as chronic wasting disease) eradication program, including testing of non-
- 46 traditional livestock species and imported livestock and livestock byproducts;
- 47 13. Ban livestock, animal protein products and meat imports that would jeopardize U.S. efforts to eradicate
- 48 livestock diseases including BSE and Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD);
- 49 14. Encourage congressional support for emergency economic assistance for producers who have suffered
- 50 economic and market losses as a result of an incident of livestock disease as covered by the Animal Health
- 51 Protection Act (PL 108-498);
- 52 15. Establish funding for a voluntary Johne's Disease testing program;
- 53 16. Increase research on transmission modes, vaccine regimes and protocol for vesicular stomatitis by federal
- 54 officials and private organizations;
- 55 17. Re-evaluate the quarantine restriction and reclassification of vesicular stomatitis from a Class A to a Class

- 1 B disease;
- 2 18. Prevent Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) through:
- 3 Increasing federal and international research to understand and prevent BSE;
- 4 Continuing the ban on processing, blending and shipping, from the site where tested, of meat from an animal that
- 5 has been tested for BSE until the results are available to appropriate parties;
- 6 a. Rescinding the USDA rules that allow the import of livestock and meat products from countries
- 7 with active disease outbreaks without Congressional oversight and producer and consumer input;
- 8 b. Continuing ban on animal and meat imports from countries with BSE outbreaks until the disease is
- 9 controlled and/or eradicated;
- 10 c. Banning all meat and feed imports from countries that have not implemented and enforced a
- 11 ruminant-to-ruminant feed ban,
- 12 d. Prohibiting the importation of animal protein products from countries that cannot certify BSE- and
- 13 transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSE)-free products;
- 14 e. Prohibiting TSE-positive materials in non-ruminant feeds, and
- 15 f. Cross-referencing all regulations for complete consistency of standards;
- 16 19. Develop a comprehensive strategy to help producers detect and eliminate stray voltage. The strategy should
- 17 include research on stray voltage, inspectors to detect the problem, and public education about funding
- 18 available to assist producers who have suffered losses due to stray voltage;
- 19 20. Enforce Section 21 General Requirement Rule 215-B of the National Electric Safety Code to prohibit using
- 20 the ground as the sole conductor or return to utilities substations;
- 21 21. Require user-fees for importers to implement inspections and disease prevention;
- 22 22. Encourage Congress to continue funding research and prevention methods for all harmful and life-
- 23 threatening strains of Avian (Bird) Flu and H1N1. USDA should develop a strategic plan to help producers
- 24 detect, monitor and eradicate infected animals. Vaccination compensation for mandatory culling should be
- 25 directed toward producers with limited finances to prevent the driving out of small producers;
- 26 23. Maintain the grass fed label to ensure consumer confidence and brand integrity. Move to supports, bring
- 27 24. Education to the public regarding the important use of animals for agricultural and medical research. Any
- 28 illegal actions taken by animal rights organizations toward producers should be prosecuted to the fullest extent
- 29 of the law.
- 30 25. Supporting state efforts to require that any film, photos or other media documenting animal cruelty must be
- 31 reported and released within a timely manner.
- 32 26. Supports producers' right to own and raise livestock and have livestock recognized as personal property.
- 33 27. Opposes a ban on the slaughter of horses.
- 34 28. We oppose the criminalization of individuals processing, shipping, transporting, purchasing, selling,
- 35 delivering, or receiving any horse, horse flesh, or carcass for the purpose of harvest.
- 36 29. Supports a call for the reinstatement of facilities to provide for the humane disposal of horses;
- 37 30. Meat food products from cloned animals should be labeled at the retail level; and
- 38 31. Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs)
- 39 a. NEFU believes that state should develop regulations and an enforcement process for very large
- 40 livestock operations;
- 41 b. NEFU supports the use of anaerobic digester and biomass combustion technology for CAFO
- 42 Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans;
- 43 c. NEFU supports the study of anaerobic digester and biomass combustion technology and
- 44 associated nutrient byproducts (such as ash and digestate) for air and water quality effects at
- 45 CAFO sites, and the development of improved best management practices that retain nutrients and
- 46 reduce pathogens from animal waste on agricultural lands; and
- 47 d. NEFU supports continued enforcement of Clean Air Act and Clean Water Act rules at CAFO
- 48 sites, and research on the removal of nutrients from animal wastes.

50 **FISHERIES**

51 Fisheries includes both fresh water and marine aquaculture, wild caught fish, mollusks, crustacean, and kelp harvest,

52 and the sustainable harvest of any other freshwater or marine resource. Small boat fishermen and women in New

53 England are facing the same challenges as farmers – an aging population, consolidation of fishing fleets, loss of

54 fishing licenses, reduced fish stocks, and the high cost of production/fuel/licenses making it hard for beginning

55

1 fishermen and women to enter the industry. Consumers in the five New England states with coastal waters value
2 their working waterfronts and want viable fishing businesses to grow. The ultimate goal is the sustainable harvest of
3 marine resources in state and federal waters and the continued commitment to end overfishing and rebuild depleted
4 stocks. NEFU policies for fisheries are evolving as our fishing membership grows.

5
6 NEFU priorities:

- 7
- 8 1. Market support for dogfish under the Section 32 Commodity Purchase Program to support fisheries
9 suffering from a decline in cod and other groundfish;
- 10 2. We support the extension of the full range of USDA Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food type
11 programs to support fisherman.
 - 12 a. These programs should provide regionally appropriate research and technical assistance to
13 improve the profitability of sustainable fishing practices and to enhance marketing and
14 processing of sustainably caught fish within a local and regional food system;
 - 15 b. Programs that enhance the production and processing of local meat and poultry should be
16 extended to local fisheries products;
 - 17 c. KYF programs should provide access to education and training for beginning fishermen and
18 women;
 - 19 d. USDA conservation programs should support the development and adoption of sustainable
20 fishing practices and the protection of coastal ecosystems;
 - 21 e. Nutrition incentives should be extended to fisheries products.
- 22
- 23

24 NEFU supports:

- 25 1. Fisheries trusts
26 NEFU supports the development of community-based initiatives such as fisheries trusts and permit banks.
27 These tools can help protect depleted fisheries resources, reinvigorate fishing businesses and revitalize
28 coastal fishing communities. These trusts will allow traditional fishing communities to work together to
29 buy permits that would be financially unavailable to their fleet otherwise and will offer financial
30 incentives to fishermen that are willing to adopt legally binding leasehold covenants regarding biological,
31 social and economic practices (e.g. limiting habitat impacts and minimizing by-catch; providing stable
32 jobs for local crew; and improving sustainable business practices).
- 33
- 34 2. Ecosystem based management
35 NEFU supports incorporating a holistic view into all future fisheries management where the cost/benefits
36 to the ecosystem are part of any decision. Ecosystem Based Management considers the dynamic
37 interactions between all components of the marine ecosystem, especially the specific interactions of forage
38 and predator populations.
- 39
- 40 3. Shoreside infrastructure
41 As the number of fishermen using small ports throughout New England has decreased, attention paid to
42 the infrastructure they rely on has diminished. Simultaneously, the development value for many former
43 working waterfront spaces has skyrocketed in New England. If we are to have local, small boat fishing in
44 New England, we must work to ensure that docks, piers, moorings, dredging, and offloading facilities are
45 maintained and available for current and future generations of fishermen.
- 46
- 47 4. Selective harvesting practices
48 NEFU supports selective harvesting practices for fishermen and women that allow for healthy stocks to be
49 targeted while at-risk and depleted stocks are avoided. This would include both supporting current
50 selective harvesting practices and the development of new fishing gear or techniques.
- 51
- 52 5. Community- and co-operative-based marketing and branding innovations
53 NEFU actively supports the development and support of new marketing and branding models that provide
54 a fair livelihood for fishing families, increased availability of healthy local food products for the consumer

1 and the sustainability of wild-harvest fisheries. NEFU supports extension of USDA Rural Development
2 support for these projects.
3

4 6. Forage fish protections

5 NEFU recognizes that, as crucial components of healthy ecosystems and fishery health, forage fish
6 populations are the essential foundation of the marine foodweb. Therefore, these stocks must be carefully
7 managed to avoid overharvest. Specifically, the role of these stocks as prey for other ecologically and
8 commercially important species must be considered when establishing conservative, science-based annual
9 catch levels and a risk-averse management strategy should be adopted.
10

11 7. Seafloor habitat

12 NEFU actively supports the development of meaningful protections for sensitive seafloor habitat essential
13 for the needs of managed species. Such designations should be based on the best available science and
14 should prohibit those fishing gears and/or practices that are not conducive to protecting these important
15 and vulnerable areas. While a balance must be struck between fisheries access and habitat protections, we
16 believe that the long-term interests of both the ecosystem and our fisheries are best served by preserving
17 those areas which are most important to fish stocks and most vulnerable to fisheries-related damage.
18

19 8. NEFU supports programs that provide access to education and training for beginning fishermen and
20 women.

21 9. NEFU supports the development and funding of comprehensive, real-time, and cost-effective catch
22 monitoring programs and annual stock assessments to improve fisheries management.
23

24 AQUACULTURE

25 Aquaculture is an important means of providing healthy seafood. Every year the United States imports enormous
26 amounts of seafood into this country. In fact, seafood is the third largest portion of our national trade deficit behind
27 petroleum and automobiles. In 2004 we imported over \$11 billion of seafood. New England aquaculture is the
28 leading supplier of fresh, locally grown seafood. These farmers are helping preserve working waterfronts and
29 communities linked to the sea. Our water farmers make their living on, and literally in, the water every day. Healthy
30 ecosystems with high water quality and diverse habitats are a key ingredient in our sustainably grown healthy
31 seafood.
32

33 NEFU priorities:
34

- 35 1. Federally supported research on controlling diseases common to aquaculture production;
- 36 2. Inclusion of aquaculture in crop, disaster and whole farm revenue insurance programs.
37

38 SEED BANKS/LOCAL VARIETALS

39 NEFU supports:
40

- 41 1. Seed Banks: Seed is a critical foundation to crop agriculture and horticulture. As depositories of priceless
42 plant genetics, seed banks represent future food security. Seed banks must contain the greatest genetic
43 diversity possible, must organize, catalog and preserve those resources competently and completely, and
44 must allow clear use and access to seed breeders, farmers, serious agriculturalists and other professionals.
45 The nature of the seed bank mission – maintaining the broadest diversity of genetic resources possible for
46 future potential uses – is a significant benefit to society in general and agriculture in particular. As a
47 strategic public asset, NEFU supports funding for seed banks, akin to funding for public libraries. Funding
48 for classical plant and animal breeding should be a priority area within the Agriculture and Food Research
49 Initiatives (AFRI) process and the Agriculture Research Service (ARS).
50
- 51 2. Locally Adapted Seed: Agriculture is diverse, so it follows that seed resources also should be diverse to
52 meet the varying needs of local agriculture. The world has an incredible diversity of climates, soils,
53 growing seasons, elevations and crop production challenges. Successful crop production requires seed that
54

1 is locally adapted to regional conditions and plants that display resiliency and elasticity in the face of
2 sometimes-difficult growing conditions. NEFU supports local seed producers who produce locally adapted
3 seed and in doing so create new market opportunities and contribute significantly to regionally self-reliant,
4 successful agriculture.
5

6 **HONEY/POLLINATION**

7

8 Native pollinators are vital to agriculture and in particular the production of fruits and vegetables. Native bee
9 pollinated forage and hay crops such as clover and alfalfa are also used to feed livestock and dairy animals.

10
11 NEFU priorities:

- 12 1. Agricultural research on the causes of colony collapses disorder and education to encourage innovative
13 approaches to protecting native honeybee health and improve genetic stocks of native honeybees;
- 14 2. Development and expanded research to enhance native pollinators;
- 15 3. Ensuring that native pollinator-beneficial habitat and best management practices are eligible for cost-
16 sharing assistance and incentives in USDA conservation programs intended to assist producers.

17
18 NEFU supports:

- 19 1. Encouraging EPA to enforce its pesticide use-labels to ensure proper application of pesticides;
- 20 2. Encouraging collaboration between the pesticide manufacturing and pollinator industries to educate
21 applicators and producers about the potentially harmful effects of pesticides on native pollinator populations;
- 22 3. Continued monitoring of pest populations and pest control methods;
- 23 4. Continued monitoring of pollinator imports, accidental importation of pests and invasive species.
24

25 26 **MAPLE SYRUP**

27

28 NEFU priorities:

- 29 1. Testing and penalties for adulteration of products sold as “pure maple syrup;”
- 30 2. Eligibility of maple syrup under the USDA SNAP and other farmers’ market coupon programs;
- 31 3. Research and development of energy-saving technology in the maple syrup industry;
- 32 4. Policies that allow for responsible tapping of maple trees on public land;
- 33 5. Voluntary grading systems for maple syrup;
- 34 6. Classification of maple syrup as a ‘specialty crop’ under USDA guidelines;
- 35 7. The formation of producer and marketing co-ops to support the viability of small land-holders and sugaring
36 operations;
- 37 8. Full funding for the Acer Access and Development Program as authorized in the Farm Bill;
- 38 9. Funding for protection, detection, response and management of the Asian long-horned beetle;
- 39 10. Classification of all products made solely by concentrating maple sap (maple syrup, maple cream, maple
40 candy, maple sugar) as low-risk products and so not subject to regulations that apply to processed foods;
- 41 11. Defining sugarhouses that solely concentrate sap as ‘farms’ rather than ‘facilities.’
42

43 **TREE FARMS AND FORESTRY**

44

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

48
49 NEFU encourages private landowners to adopt collaborative sustainable forest management practices, including but
50 not limited to completion and implementation of forest stewardship management plans as recognized by USDA’s
51 Forest Service.

52
53 NEFU encourages public-land managers to support and facilitate the formation of locally owned co-operatives and
54 businesses to harvest and process forest products. Sustainable forestry and forestry practices should meet the needs

1 of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs by practicing a land
2 stewardship ethic that integrates reforestation and the managing, growing, nurturing and harvesting of trees for
3 useful products and ecosystem services such as the conservation of soil, air and water quality, carbon, biological
4 diversity, wildlife and aquatic habitats, recreation, and aesthetics.

5
6 NEFU priorities:

- 7 1. The implementation of sustainable forestry by ensuring long-term forest productivity and yield based on
8 the use of the best scientific information available;
- 9 2. Long-term forest productivity, carbon storage and conservation of forest resources through prompt
10 reforestation, soil conservation, afforestation and other measures;
- 11 3. Developing and implementing stand- and landscape-level measures that promote habitat diversity and the
12 conservation of forest plants and animals, including aquatic species;
- 13 4. The implementation of sustainable forestry practices through appropriate training and education programs;
- 14 5. The formation and support of forestry co-ops as a mechanism for sustaining small, locally owned woodlots
15 and landholders;
- 16 6. The continued funding through NRCS of programs that support forestland owners who engage consulting
17 foresters for the development or updating of forest management plans.

18
19 NEFU supports:

- 20 1. Encouraging forest landowners to utilize the services of forest management and harvesting professionals;
- 21 2. The use of best management practices to protect water quality;
- 22 3. Conserving biological diversity, biodiversity hotspots and high-biodiversity wilderness areas;
- 23 4. Avoiding illegal logging;
- 24 5. Research, science, and technology, upon which sustainable forest management decisions are based.

25 26 27 28 **INDUSTRIAL HEMP**

29 The North American Industrial Hemp Council has been leading a nationwide effort to educate government officials
30 and the public about the agricultural benefits of re-establishing the use of industrial hemp, and several states
31 including Vermont, Missouri, North Dakota, Hawaii, and Colorado have either passed legislation or are considering
32 legislation to permit research into the viability and economic potential of industrial hemp production in the United
33 States and the planting of test plots using modern agricultural techniques. NEFU supports state legislation to permit
34 research and test plots in the New England states.
35

1 **III. MANAGEMENT PRACTICES**

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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 The National Agricultural Statistics Service recently reported that certified organic growers in the New England
24 States sold \$119.3 million of organically grown agricultural commodities in 2011 – leading the nation with more
25 than 4 percent of the total agricultural cash receipts in the New England States. Sales of certified organic livestock
26 and poultry products (including organic milk) accounted for \$70 million in New England. Sales of certified organic
27 crops accounted for around \$40 million of which certified organic maple syrup accounted for over 25 percent.
28 Organic agriculture is impacting many of New England’s traditional crops.
29

30 NEFU priorities:

- 31
32 1. Requiring USDA to maintain the role of the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) as the official
33 source of developing policies and procedures to interpret and implement the federal organic standards.
34 Adequate staffing must be provided to enable the NOSB to fulfill its obligation to organic producers.
35 Farmer or self-employed members of the NOSB should be given financial compensation for loss of
36 earning, increased costs or other specific costs associated with serving on the Board to ensure that they are
37 able to apply for and serve on this volunteer Board;
38 2. Maintaining organic livestock and poultry production standards that are uniform for growers at all scales
39 and account for feeding and animal health care practices for continuous or transitional organic
40 management;
41 3. Maintaining and protecting the integrity of organic labeling;
42 4. The clear definition, strict enforcement and monitoring of the USDA National Organic Program (NOP).
43

44 NEFU supports:

- 45
46 1. Ensuring accreditation and certification costs do not discriminate against small producers;
47 2. Organic standards that prohibit the use of irradiation, genetically modified organisms, bio-solids, or sewage
48 sludge that contains heavy metals;
49 3. Labeling standards encouraging the sale of organic products while not limiting opportunities to market
50 other clearly defined natural or sustainably produced food products, or those adhering to Fair Trade
51 principles and standards;
52 4. Adequate and a comparable percentage to non-organic funding for collection of organic data. As the
53 organic industry matures and grows at a rapid rate, the lack of national data for the production, pricing, and
54 marketing of organic products has been an impediment to further development of the industry and to the

- 1 effective functioning of many organic programs within USDA;
- 2 5. Close scrutiny of organic certifiers' qualifications and performance by NOP with mandatory training and
- 3 licensing of organic inspectors;
- 4 6. Language to ensure farmer-friendly and transparent means for certified organic farmers to simultaneously
- 5 qualify for higher tier Conservation Stewardship Program opportunities;
- 6 7. Sufficient funding for the NOP to administer and enforce the standards of the organic industry;
- 7 8. Allow organic milk producers to opt out of the conventional federal dairy check off program.;
- 8 9. Any referendum on whether to establish a multi-commodity organic check off program must be transparent
- 9 and adoption must be dependent upon approval by a majority of organic producers.

10 **GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISMS AND BIOTECHNOLOGY SEED TECHNOLOGY AND**

11 **GENETICS**

12 Since its introduction in 1996, the use of genetically modified seeds to achieve herbicide tolerance and insect

13 resistance has grown exponentially. A full 88 percent of the U.S. corn crop, 93 percent of the U.S. soybean crop and

14 94 percent of cotton in the 2012 crop year were grown from genetically engineered seed. The U.S. leads the world

15 in the use of GMO seed technology with 395 million acres planted to GMO corn, soybeans, cotton, canola, sugar

16 beets, alfalfa and squash in 2011.

17 The use of this technology is widespread. Its use is controversial. GMOs have created ethical, environmental, food

18 safety, legal, market and structural issues that impact everyone in the food chain. Consumer and producer concerns

19 need to be addressed. NEFU acknowledges concerns that biotechnology is being used as a trade barrier. NEFU

20 respects all nations' sovereignty and food policies and thus urges open dialogue, cooperation and understanding in

21 trade negotiations relating to biotechnology.

22 NEFU priorities:

- 23 1. Mandatory labeling of all GMO seed in order to allow producers freedom of choice according to their
- 24 needs and priorities, and mandatory labeling of all food that contains genetically altered ingredients so as to
- 25 allow consumers freedom of choice in what they consume and the agricultural systems they support;
- 26 2. We support the development of new GMO traits when issues of cross-pollination, liability, commodity and
- 27 seed stock segregation and market acceptance are objectively addressed and fairly resolved for the
- 28 protection of all producers and consumers;
- 29 3. While biotech traits are under patent, the patent holder should be prepared to indemnify its trait users
- 30 against financial burdens caused by claims;
- 31 4. Research conducted in an environmentally secure indoor facility should be exempt from the above
- 32 requirements. Research conducted in open fields production should be subject to mandatory public
- 33 disclosure of persons or entities initiating the research, location of the sites, specific species and traits
- 34 involved and the characteristics of the intended resultant genetically modified plant to be created;
- 35 5. U.S. government agencies, particularly the USDA and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) should
- 36 continue to serve their respective roles in providing unbiased, scientifically-based evaluations concerning
- 37 the human and animal safety and wholesomeness, as well as the environmental impacts of biotechnology-
- 38 enhanced commodities.

39 NEFU supports:

- 40 1. Legislation to exempt farmers from paying royalties on patented farm animals and technical fees on seeds
- 41 which have been genetically modified;
- 42 2. Legislation to prohibit the use of tax dollars in developing terminator technology, e.g., a gene to insure that
- 43 seed will not reproduce;
- 44 3. The right of farmers to save and plant seed derived from proprietary organisms on their own land;
- 45 4. New products involving GMOs be certified as safe by the FDA in testing done independently of the patent
- 46 holder, before being allowed on the market. Such testing is to be done at the expense of the specific patent
- 47 holders seeking to market such products;
- 48 5. Congressional action to regulate the biotech industry's technology agreements. Farmers should not have to
- 49 sign away their fundamental rights, including, but not limited to a jury of their peers in court, in exchange
- 50 for the privilege of growing biotech crops. Grievances should be settled in the home state of the farmer, not
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1 the state of the biotech corporation;

- 2 6. Any damages caused to farmers through lower prices, lost markets or contamination shall be fully
- 3 reimbursed to farmers, including legal fees, by the company producing the genetically modified product;
- 4 7. All data used in the analysis of the health and environmental effects of GMOs should be public record, and
- 5 that criminal penalties be established for the willful withholding or altering of such data;
- 6 8. Prohibiting government regulatory agencies from licensing genetically modified products that are not
- 7 acceptable for both human consumption and animal feed;
- 8 9. Until USDA and FDA improve oversight and regulation of pharma crops, NEFU cannot endorse or support
- 9 pharma farming based on economic, environmental, food safety and liability risks to producers and
- 10 consumers;
- 11 10. Requiring government regulatory agencies and input suppliers to ensure that farmers are informed of all
- 12 potential market risks and segregation requirements associated with planting any licensed genetically
- 13 modified crop;
- 14 11. Government regulatory agencies shall consider domestic and foreign consumer acceptance of the product
- 15 when licensing;
- 16 12. Development of a paper verification system and a storage and marketing plan to aid farmers with non-
- 17 GMO grains;
- 18 13. Identity-preserved systems and insist they receive protection from cross contamination;
- 19 14. The position that GMO contamination of organic seed constitutes irreparable harm to the organic seed
- 20 industry and undermines the integrity of organic seed. Any detectable level is unacceptable;
- 21 15. GMO seeds and crops be adequately labeled and stored, so that they do not interfere with the export or
- 22 import of crops and commodities into countries that have concerns about them;
- 23 16. Legislation to prohibit the patenting of heritage seed, animal and biological genetics and individual plant
- 24 traits;
- 25 17. Legislation to prohibit the development and selling of seed that is sterile;
- 26 18. Legislation requiring that patent holders or owners of GMO technology be held strictly liable for damages
- 27 caused by genetic trespass including safety, health, economic and environmental effects. Farmers are not to
- 28 be held liable for food safety, human health or environmental problems, including cross-pollination, related
- 29 to the use of GMOs as long as generally accepted crop production practices are followed.

30 **APPROPRIATE TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT AND SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURAL**

31 **RESEARCH**

32 NEFU supports:

- 33 1. Federal funding for ATTRA and other programs that provide technical assistance to small farmers.
- 34 2. Efforts to fill the gap between traditional technologies and affordable, appropriately sized, commercially
- 35 available equipment with good quality tools and equipment that are affordable and suited to the scale of
- 36 operations of the small farmers;
- 37 3. The SARE program that supports farmer directed and on-farm research and education on sustainable
- 38 agricultural practices that improve soil, reduce the use of purchased inputs, conserve energy and increase
- 39 farm profitability;
- 40 4. Integrated pest management, the use of cover crops to improve fertility, and practices that improve soil health
- 41 such as nutrient management are all examples of these practices that NEFU supports;
- 42 5. NEFU encourages research and support for the practice of nutrient-density farming, which employs
- 43 biological practices designed to ensure that harvested crops have a measurably larger quantity of a broad
- 44 spectrum of different minerals, vitamins, phytonutrients, and antioxidants than crops raised using other
- 45 methods.
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48 **INVASIVE SPECIES**

49 The spread of invasive plants and animals is a serious environmental problem threatening New England's natural

50 ecosystems. Given the collective threat these species pose, any programs to remediate or eradicate invasive species

51 should not be at the burden or expense of the landowner.

52 NEFU supports:

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

THE ENVIRONMENT AND THE FAMILY FARM

NEFU acknowledges the science of global climate change and the influence of human-based activities on atmospheric CO2 levels. Farmers and agricultural practices can play a key role in large-scale carbon sequestration and renewable energy production.

NEFU priorities:

NEFU urges policymakers to prioritize programs which reward farmers for sequestering carbon, and prioritize climate change mitigation and adaptation research that focuses on soil-based carbon sequestration and sustainable biofuel production.

NEFU supports:

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

1 **IV. GOVERNMENT ROLE IN AGRICULTURE**

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3 **GOVERNMENT SUPPORT**

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5
6 New England farmers provide important environmental, economic and social benefits for the region's 14 million
7 residents, including clean air, clean water, and wildlife habitat and carbon sequestration. NEFU encourages
8 development of state and federal programs that recognize and reward farmers for the environmental stewardship and
9 benefits they provide. NEFU also encourages USDA to speed development of protocols for private ecosystem
10 markets as authorized in the 2008 Farm Bill.

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12 **Payment program eligibility and limitations**

13 NEFU priorities:

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

32 NEFU supports:

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1. Appropriate caps on producer income and payment levels to assure funds are being directed to family farmers and ranchers, and that would provide additional funds for programs to support beginning and limited income farmers;
 2. Limiting eligibility for farm program payments to those actively engaged in agriculture. The definition of a person who is actively engaged in production agriculture needs to remain strong and require active personal management and active personal labor in the actual farming operation. Full funding of USDA programs that encourage permanent protection of working farm and forestlands;
 3. Full funding for USDA programs that provide funding for pasture and wetlands restoration;
 4. Federal sodbuster and swamp buster provisions which disallow the payment of farm and crop insurance subsidies to farmers that cultivate highly erodible land (HEL) that was not cultivated between 1981 and 1985 or convert a wetland that was not farmed prior to 1985;
 5. Conservation Compliance, which requires that farmers who cultivate HEL that was in production prior to 1985 do so under an approved conservation plan.

48 **Federal crop insurance**

49 NEFU supports:

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1. The continuation and improvement of the federal crop insurance program. We advocate for strong educational campaigns to help farmers make informed decisions about crop insurance options;
 2. The expansion of federal crop insurance programs to support the diversity of crops that can be grown and recognize the changing infrastructure and markets available to farmers and producers in New England'
 3. Requiring conservation compliance to be eligible for federal crop insurance subsidies;

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4. A limitation on the cumulative value of all federal premium subsidies for the purchase of “buy-up” crop insurance coverage.

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Farm viability programs

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NEFU supports:

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

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Farm and fisheries profitability

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NEFU supports:

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

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Agricultural statistics

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NEFU supports:

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

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USDA Rural Development Programs

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Many Rural Development programs restrict eligibility to projects located in rural areas defined as any area other than a city or town that has a population of greater than 50,000 including the urbanized area contiguous and adjacent to such a city or town according to the latest decennial census. This definition tends to exclude worthy projects, particularly in southern New England where agriculture tends to be integrated into urban and peri-urban settings.

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NEFU supports:

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200
1. Rural Development programs should primarily benefit agricultural producers and rural workers but ranking and eligibility criteria must recognize that food systems are regional in scope and often dependent upon integration with urban food systems in the same “food shed;”
 2. NEFU supports an expansion of eligibility for USDA Rural Development loans and grants for projects not in rural areas if the loan or grant primarily benefits agricultural producers and provides employment for residents of a rural area.

201

USDA marketing programs

1
2 Even small investments in the local and regional food system can pay big benefits in new jobs, new markets and
3 greater access to fresh fruits, vegetables, meat and dairy. A report from the Union of Concerned Scientists called
4 [Market Forces: Creating Jobs Through Public Investment in Local and Regional Food Systems](#) provides an
5 impressive survey of existing data on the many economic, health and environmental impacts of direct to consumer,
6 school, restaurant and institution marketing by farmers. New England leads the country in the number of farmers'
7 markets. New England's diversified agriculture and fisheries provide many opportunities for regional economic
8 development and NEFU supports policies and programs that advance our region's efforts to grow, process and
9 distribute farm and fisheries products for local and regional consumption.

10
11 NEFU priorities:

- 12 1. Programs that provide low-income seniors and WIC participants with coupons for consumers at farmers'
13 markets and on-farm sales not limited to farmers' markets;
- 14 2. We also support allocating federal funds to be used for wireless Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT)
15 systems that can read SNAP cards at farmers' markets;
- 16 3. Fund programs that provide low-income seniors with coupons for the purchase of fresh fruits, vegetables,
17 meat, fish, dairy and other agricultural products at farmers' markets, CSAs, CSFs, farm stands and other
18 direct marketing venues;
- 19 4. Loan programs for local food distribution and marketing enterprises that serve markets in-state or within
20 400 miles of production site. These loans can fund slaughterhouses, small food distributors, dairy
21 processing, farmer owned co-ops, warehouses, mills, kitchen incubators, and can extend funds to urban as
22 well as rural regions;
- 23 5. Farm-to-school and farm-to-institution programs that support the distribution and consumption of New
24 England-grown and -processed food, lumber, and fish in New England institutions;
- 25 6. Local preferences programs that allow local schools to establish purchasing preferences for locally
26 produced dairy, as well as fruits, vegetables and meats for school meals.

27
28 Community-supported farming and fisheries

29 NEFU supports:

- 30 1. NEFU supports initiatives that promote the development of community-supported enterprises. New
31 England farmers and fishermen, nurserymen and flower growers are establishing community supported
32 enterprises from which consumers/members purchase shares in the enterprise in advance of the season.
33 This gives producers cash at the start of each season, and includes the customers in the risks inherent in
34 farming, fishing, and horticultural operations;
- 35 2. We support USDA efforts to reach out to consumers through the Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food
36 initiative.

37
38
39 Value-added agriculture and processing

40 NEFU supports:

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

47
48 Interstate Sale of State Inspected Meat

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

1
2 NEFU priorities:

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

7
8 NEFU supports:

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

11
12 Agri-Tourism

13 NEFU supports:

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

20
21 Agriculture education

22 NEFU supports:

- 23 1. Legislation to allow certain agriculture courses, as approved by the states' departments of education, to
24 count as science credits to be applied to state requirements for high school graduation;
- 25 2. Encouraging the strengthening of state leadership on agricultural education;
- 26 3. Efforts to continue and expand educational programs supportive of family farm agriculture and rural
27 communities. We encourage educators to consider innovative approaches to family agriculture, including
28 organic, value-added and sustainable agriculture.

29
30 Training New Farmers and Fishermen and Women

31 NEFU supports:

- 32 1. State and federal policies – such as low interest loans, grants and tax incentives – that provide adequate
33 financing to help maintain New England's family farm and fisheries tradition and provide special
34 assistance to beginning family farmers and fishermen, and minority farmers and fishermen;
- 35 2. College and university schools of agriculture, technical high schools with agricultural curricula, and other
36 similar programs;
- 37 3. The maintenance and expansion of technical assistance for New England farmers and fishermen and
38 women through university extension programs, state agricultural agencies, community-based organizations
39 and private consultants. Technical assistance appropriate to New England should include a focus on access
40 to land, marketing assistance, access to capital, and scale-appropriate food safety training. The flexible new
41 farmer curriculum currently offered by the University of Massachusetts is a model for our region.

42
43 Land grant universities and institutions of higher learning

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

47
48 NEFU notes the near total lack of course content and curricula on co-operative enterprise, co-operative history and
49 management in our region's educational institutions, and particularly in secondary schools. This is in clear contrast
50 to the contribution made by co-operatives to the economy and food system in New England. We applaud the efforts
51 of some colleges and universities to address this problem and call for support and investment in courses, certificates,
52 advanced degrees and other educational programs that will support the next generation of co-operative leaders in our
53 communities. NEFU supports the continued contribution of cooperative extension to the region's farmers, youth and
54 communities.

1 NEFU priorities:

- 2 1. Increased funding in cooperative extension personnel and services related to direct, on-farm assistance,
3 dissemination and distribution of crops and cropping methods, and to facilitate feedback for success and
4 failures;
- 5 2. Formula funding for land grant universities, which creates a stable base of funding for continuation of
6 services in small states;
- 7 3. Increased funding to better enable land grant institutions in New England to be able to develop viable state
8 and county agricultural research stations;
- 9 4. Increased emphasis on cooperative development, management and history at every level of research,
10 education and extension from Land Grant University curriculum to 4-H. The Co-operative Enterprise
11 curriculum offered by the University of Massachusetts is a model for our region.

12
13 Federal estate tax

14 NEFU supports:

- 15 1. Estate tax relief for family-owned farms in order to facilitate the transfer of those enterprises to the next
16 generation;
- 17 2. A federal estate tax exemption per estate that is set at 5 million, indexed annually for inflation with a
18 reference year of 2010 and a top tax rate of 40 percent;
- 19 3. Simplified exemption qualification rules and requirements, along with the implementation of graduated tax
20 rates;
- 21 4. Section 2032A applications based on the use of the land for agriculture and not on the owner, thus allowing
22 land covered by 2032A to be rented to another for farming purposes;
- 23 5. Allow property that has been valued using 2032A to be freely transferred without triggering recapture as
24 long as it is maintained in its qualified use;
- 25 6. Eliminate the cap on the amount by which an estate's value may be reduced through the use of Section
26 2032A;
- 27 7. Sale of a conservation easement on land subject to Section 2032A should not trigger a re-capture of the
28 avoided estate tax.

29
30 Broadband access

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

33
34 Libraries

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

37
38 NEFU opposes any efforts to cut funds for libraries, including materials and services for the blind and visually
39 impaired.

40
41 Postal service

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

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 the
32 public from foodborne illnesses and educate farmers about how to handle their products safely. Regulations should
33 be clearly and consistently enforced, with an emphasis on technical assistance and training, rather than a reliance on
34 punitive action following violations. NEFU does not believe that one-size-fits all regulations, as proposed by the
35 FDA under the Food Safety Modernization Act, are appropriate for the types of farms we have in New England.

36
37 NEFU priorities:

- 38 1. Regulation that is region and scale appropriate. In particular, the cost in time and money of government
39 mandated safety inspections and testing must not be overly burdensome for small producers;
- 40 2. Regulations that are based on sound science;
- 41 3. Exemptions based on volume of production of covered products to stay true to the intent of the exemption
42 in the Tester, Hagen Amendment;
- 43 4. Enforcement and farmer training programs carried out by State Departments of Agriculture (rather than
44 State Departments of Public Health) with federal funding;
- 45 5. Exemption from the Preventive Control rules for on-farm aggregation;
- 46 6. Regulations pertaining to on-farm processing of foods must be sensitive to issues of scale, recognizing that
47 guidance for small-scale, low-volume operations must be different. Regulations should govern product
48 safety, rather than process, with an understanding that there are many ways to produce a safe food item and
49 that producers should be allowed the flexibility to choose processes that are appropriate for their particular
50 situation.

51
52 NEFU supports:

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

1 facilities. A facility is any place where raw agricultural products are prepared for wholesale or retail sale.

2
3 Value-added and local processing

4 NEFU supports:

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

19
20 Food biosecurity

21 NEFU supports:

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

29
30 National Animal Identification/Premises Registration

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

41
42 NEFU supports 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 the United
44 States with the following conditions:

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

- 1
2 a. This public database would become a revenue source for private entities seeking to make a profit;
3 b. It would not provide for oversight to protect confidential producer information.
4 c. It would not mitigate producer liability.
5 d. It would create opportunities for packers to condition the purchase of livestock upon participation in
6 a voluntary I.D. program, a condition that would threaten rather than encourage transparency.
7 e. It would assume coordination among a complex web of data with no guarantees of success.
8 f. It would assume all sectors of the livestock industry would agree upon the development and
9 maintenance of a single entity to represent each species' interests when, in fact, the interests of each
10 sector are quite varied.
11

12 Land use

13 The New England states have a long tradition of promoting the permanent protection of farmland for continued
14 agricultural use and for future generations of family farmers through a combination of tax incentives, funding
15 purchase of agricultural conservation easement programs and land use policies.
16

17 NEFU supports:

- 18 1. The sale and/or donation of a conservation easement by landowners to permanently protect farmland as a
19 legitimate exercise of a property right;
20 2. The continued dedication of public funding for state PACE programs;
21 3. Local assessment of land protected by a conservation easement at a use-value rate for property tax
22 purposes;
23 4. State programs supporting a use-value rate for property tax purposes for land that is in active agricultural
24 use;
25 5. State programs that provide access to unused, state-owned and arable and grazable land to farmers and
26 ranchers with a priority for beginning farmers;
27 6. Administration of the federal Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP) in a manner that is
28 respectful of the long history and experience of established state PACE programs;
29 7. Full funding for FRPP;
30 8. Congress making permanent the IRS tax deduction rules for the donation of a conservation easement
31 included in the 2008 Farm Bill;
32 9. Exempting the proceeds of the sale of a conservation easement on farmland from the federal capital gains
33 tax;
34 10. Allowing for the sale of a conservation easement on farmland land covered by the 2032A election of the
35 federal Estate Tax to not trigger any recapture provisions therein.
36

37 Transfer of development rights

38 NEFU supports the transfer or sale of one parcel of land's development rights to the owner of another parcel. This
39 allows the development on one parcel while preventing development of the other, by placing a conservation
40 easement or deed restriction on the parcel transferring its development rights. Transfer of development rights
41 protects farmland and other natural areas permanently, and it keeps land private and on the tax rolls. It provides
42 farmers with a financially competitive alternative to development and helps keep farmland affordable.
43

44 Eminent domain

45 NEFU is concerned by the U.S. Supreme Court decision, *Kelo v. New London, Connecticut*, that allows
46 governments to take private land for the purposes of private development. Fair and balanced eminent domain
47 guidelines should protect the rights of individual property owners as well as promote the public good.
48

49 NEFU supports:

- 50 1. A prohibition on allowing private businesses to condemn public land;
51 2. A prohibition on the taking of development rights by eminent domain.
52

53 Water quality protection
54
55

1 The protection of our surface and ground water resources is critical not only to continuing farm operations, but as a
2 source of drinking water for all residents of New England states.

3
4 NEFU supports:

- 5 1. The creation of a national database on the extent of water quality problems, including nationwide voluntary
6 well-testing programs that include cost sharing for landowners;
- 7 2. Legislation or regulations affecting surface and ground water balancing these interests in an effort to keep
8 surface and ground water from becoming contaminated in the first place, and to move quickly to clean up
9 already contaminated sources of drinking water;
- 10 3. Continued implementation of the Safe Drinking Water Act;
- 11 4. The uniform administration of Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) policies throughout the nation.
12 Adding to the list of contaminants that municipalities and rural water districts are required to test for, as
13 mandated by EPA, must be backed by science. We encourage EPA to stop its practice of targeting specific
14 regions with stricter standards than applied in non-targeted regions. Failure to curb this practice will likely
15 result in an exodus of sensitive industries including family farms, thereby jeopardizing the level of
16 economic activity within the targeted region;
- 17 5. Requiring that inspectors be public employees, rather than employees of the companies who are being
18 regulated;
- 19 6. Information and education concerning the present condition of our surface and ground water supplies and
20 what we can and should do to prevent any further contamination;
- 21 7. Efforts in research that clarify the issue of point source pollution and non-point source pollution;
- 22 8. Programs to protect and improve the quality of surface waters and urge that all who use the resource, such
23 as boaters and fishermen, be included in the effort;
- 24 9. The creation of water quality credit trading programs;
- 25 10. State tax incentives, grants and loans to encourage the application and installation of water quality
26 improvement and conservation projects on family farms;
- 27 11. Producers participating in the State Watershed Assessment Program (SWAP);
- 28 12. Requiring Confined Animal Feeding Operations (CAFO) to post the appropriate bonds to cover the cost of
29 cleaning up any contamination of land and water resources. When posting these bonds, CAFOs should also
30 be required to develop and submit waste storage closure plans;
- 31 13. National minimum guidelines, or standards, that give primacy for implementation and flexibility in regional
32 planning to the states. A national policy should discourage polluters from “shopping” among the states for
33 the lowest environmental standards and encourage states and localities to establish standards beyond the
34 federal minimums;
- 35 14. Cost-share provisions targeted to small and medium-sized farmers. Responsibility for submitting a waste
36 management plan and complying with the waste management provisions should be shared by the owner of
37 the livestock and the operator of the facility;
- 38 15. Increasing funding for conservation programs that provide federal cost-share and technical assistance to
39 enable farmers to comply with environmental requirements;
- 40 16. Family farmers being appointed to serve as advisers to any federal agency when a national waste standard
41 is developed;
- 42 17. Targeting water subsidies to family-sized farm operations to conserve water and taxpayer dollars.

43
44 Pesticide regulations

45 NEFU supports pesticide and herbicide regulations that include:

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

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

Fertilizer regulations

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

NEFU supports:

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

Truth in food labeling

NEFU priorities:

1. To defend and support the country-of-origin labeling (COOL) requirements as mandated in the 2008 Farm Bill and urge its expansion to the labeling of all food products distributed and sold in the U.S., including dairy products;
2. We support the labeling of genetically modified ingredients in food products at the wholesale and retail levels.

NEFU supports:

1. Proper labeling of organic food products;
2. The use of milk or meat products from cloned animals when those products are labeled as such at the retail level;
3. The continuation of standards for labeling milk and dairy products, enabling farmers and consumers to have the opportunity to choose whether or not to use or consume synthetic bovine growth hormone (BGH). We support labeling laws to allow milk to be labeled r-BST free;
4. The sale of food products that have been irradiated, as long as they are labeled as such and appropriate educational materials are made available to consumers.

Urban and Peri-urban Agriculture

NEFU priorities:

1. Zoning to increase access to land for farms and community gardens;
2. Zoning and policy measures that allow for scale-appropriate livestock husbandry within city limits;
3. Programs that support the use of unused city-owned land for urban and peri-urban agriculture;
4. Support state and local efforts to include agriculture within comprehensive urban and peri-urban land planning efforts;
5. Support for land trust acquisition of urban and peri-urban land for farming and the use of conservation easements on urban and peri-urban land;
6. Updating zoning regulations to allow for agriculture.

NEFU supports:

1. Support systems for urban residents to connect with one another, learn and teach about cultivating the land

- 1 and preserving food, and fulfill their vision for beautifying their own neighborhoods;
- 2 2. Community or city services that assist with compost deliveries, bulk buying of seeds and plants, and other
- 3 amendments;
- 4 3. Farmers' markets where local gardeners can sell what they produce;
- 5 4. Programs that include youth, elderly, and marginalized populations in gardening and that seek out
- 6 knowledge and expertise from urban immigrant groups who have direct knowledge and experience of
- 7 agriculture;
- 8 5. Programs that provide technical assistance and training to urban farmers.
- 9

10 Farm labor

11 NEFU priorities:

- 12 1. We support simplifying the H2A program by removing overly burdensome requirements to better serve the
- 13 needs of family farmers including seasonal and year round operations;
- 14 2. Funds for programs that improve the supply, stability and training of the agricultural labor force;
- 15 3. Extend the National Labor Relations Act to cover farms that employ enough hired help to be subject to the
- 16 federal minimum wage provisions applicable to agricultural workers;
- 17 4. Support changes to the H2A program guidelines that allow farmers to establish a need for H2A
- 18 workers by showing a lack of skilled and experienced U.S. workers;
- 19 5. We also support a review of the Adverse Effective Wage Rate formula to ensure it truly reflects an annual
- 20 average hourly wage rate for similar work in the region;
- 21 6. Support the modernization of the exemption from child labor laws for children who are employed by their
- 22 parents on their parents' farm to reflect contemporary legal structures in use by family farms as well as the
- 23 prevalence of leasing of farmland.
- 24
- 25

26 NEFU supports:

- 27 1. Worker protection standards regarding wage rates, health, safety and housing conditions for migrant,
- 28 seasonal, minority and other farm laborers and for education of their children;
- 29 2. Rights of workers to bargain collectively for fair wages;
- 30 3. A livable minimum wage;
- 31 4. Rights of entitlement program recipients, such as those on Social Security, to have their benefits reflect
- 32 increases in the costs of living.
- 33
- 34

35 Immigration policy

36 We believe the growing consequences of a broken immigration system must be addressed in a bipartisan effort that

37 considers the following principles:

38

39

- 40 1. Immigration is a federal issue that should be addressed at the federal level. We therefore oppose
- 41 programs such as E-Verify at the state level only;
- 42 2. We support adoption of a mandatory E-Verify program only in conjunction with a coherent and viably
- 43 effective agricultural worker program. The E-Verify system must allow communication among federal
- 44 agencies for determining status in order to protect the integrity of the worker and of the employer;
- 45 3. As we are best served by a free-market philosophy that maximizes individual freedom and opportunity,
- 46 our immigration system must be flexible enough to address the needs of businesses while protecting
- 47 the interests of workers. This includes an effective visa system responsive to geographic proximity and
- 48 economic and cultural factors, which acknowledge the beneficial contributions immigrants make as
- 49 workers, taxpayers and consumers;
- 50 4. As strong families are critical to developing successful individuals and cohesive communities, our
- 51 immigration policies should prioritize keeping families together to better enable supportive home
- 52 environments for all children;
- 53 5. Our immigration enforcement strategy should focus on public safety and consider consequences to
- 54 businesses, workers and consumers. Furthermore, our broader immigration reform effort should
- 55 include a path to reliably and affordably determine who is permitted to work, ensuring an adequate

- 1 labor force for a growing economy;
- 2 6. Immigrants are part of both our rural and urban communities. We must adapt to this reality and
- 3 recognize the critical role immigration has played in our nation’s history and economy;
- 4 7. Immigration policies must provide a sensible path for those who are here without legal status, are of
- 5 good character, pay taxes, and are committed to becoming fully participating members of our society.
- 6 The legalization of undocumented workers may occur after paying appropriate fines and incurring
- 7 penalties for illegal entry;
- 8 8. Encouraging any people seeking permanent residence in the United States to apply for citizenship with
- 9 all the rights and responsibilities that accompany it;
- 10 9. Moving forward with a worker visa program for immigrants who are working on farms and ranches,
- 11 including both seasonal and full time year-round workers. Eligibility for visa renewal should be based
- 12 on work history.

13 We also support:

- 14
- 15 1. Implementing the DREAM Act;
- 16 2. A fast track toward U.S. citizenship for those immigrants of upstanding character who seek citizenship
- 17 and serve with honor in a branch of the U.S. military service;
- 18 3. A pathway to citizenship or legal residency for undocumented agricultural workers that does not
- 19 restrict their employment to any specific farm or group of farms. We oppose the indentured servitude
- 20 of a captive work force.

21 International trade

22 NEFU priorities:

- 23 1. A U.S. ban on all imports of dairy, livestock and poultry, including any products containing hides or
- 24 feathers, from any nations with documented Foot and Mouth Disease;
- 25 2. Imported food or feed must have been produced, processed and packaged under standards consistent with
- 26 U.S. standards;
- 27 3. To support a national goal of eliminating the U.S. trade deficit to become a net exporter of food and goods.
- 28 All trade agreements should further the national goal of eliminating the trade deficit and becoming a net
- 29 exporter of goods.

30 NEFU supports:

- 31 1. The neutralizations of foreign currency manipulations that result in unfair trade;
- 32 2. Elimination of unilateral sanctions on agricultural and medical products;
- 33 3. Coordination of efforts internationally to reduce the anti-competitive results of increased concentration in
- 34 agriculture;
- 35 4. Preservation of U.S. rights and policy flexibility to provide economic safety net assistance to agricultural
- 36 producers;
- 37 5. Support for international cooperation to achieve improved commodity prices by balancing supply and
- 38 demand;
- 39 6. Commitment to an ongoing process to address implementation and compliance issues.

40 Definition of agriculture

41 NEFU supports the development of a broad, inclusive definition of agriculture to be applied uniformly across all

42 federal agencies and programs for use in regulating agriculture and agricultural activities. Such a definition should

43 encompass, but not be limited to, all aspects of crop and livestock farming, forestry, nurseries, fisheries, on-farm

44 retail and other direct-to-consumer operations, on-farm energy facilities, and agri-tourism, preparation for market

45 and other value added processing by the farm of such products produced on the farm, and should become the

46 standard definition used when applying labor laws, taxation regulations, grant eligibility requirements, and any other

47 federal rules and regulations related to agriculture.

1 **V. ENERGY**

2
3 NEFU supports energy policies that promote domestic, regionally produced energy sources. Clean, efficient energy
4 should be affordable to all, with adequate supplies to meet the needs of the region. U.S. energy sources should be
5 diverse and developed as close to points of use as possible rather than depending upon long distance and vulnerable
6 transmission and transportation networks.
7

8 NEFU believes that farmers are part of the solution to achieve an independent energy economy. NEFU believes that
9 if New England is to be energy independent, our renewable energy will come from the productivity of the land.
10 Therefore our region’s success at achieving energy independence rests on farmers and our rural economy’s ability to
11 sustainably manage and improve the productive capacity of that land to develop and manage distributed energy
12 systems based on the produce of the land. We support the community-based development of localized, decentralized
13 alternative energy and encourage tax credits and incentives for the proliferation of on-farm or community-based
14 energy sources. NEFU believes that the best way to pay for improved efficiency and renewable energy infrastructure
15 is through putting a price on non-renewable carbon consumption.
16

17 NEFU supports fundamental and especially applied research and development of renewable energy in the region to
18 provide greater energy and food production from our land base, while reducing atmospheric carbon, improved
19 environmental services, and strengthening our rural communities.
20

21 NEFU supports measures that both increase energy efficiency as well as the use of sustainably produced renewable
22 energy, while reducing use of imported petroleum products.
23

24
25 **CARBON PRICING**

26
27 Carbon sequestration is an innovative way to enhance income for producers and improve domestic food and energy
28 security by storing carbon where it is agriculturally productive in the soil. Therefore, the pricing of carbon should be
29 encouraged. A carbon pricing program can be a cost effective, market-based approach to reduce overall greenhouse
30 gas emissions, and improve agricultural soils. NEFU believes that pricing carbon is the best way to encourage
31 market choices that favor efficient energy use, and foster creative solutions to achieve energy independence.
32

33 NEFU supports:

- 34
35 1. A carbon pricing system that:
- 36 • Grants to USDA the control, verification and administration of any agriculture payment program;
 - 37 • Does not place an artificial cap on domestic offset allowance;
 - 38 • Bases carbon sequestration rates upon science;
 - 39 • Recognizes early actors;
 - 40 • Allows agricultural producers to stack carbon credits;
 - 41 • Does not cap agricultural carbon emissions; and
 - 42 • Creates a 3rd party verified soil carbon standards for the measurement of soil carbon sequestration
43 or loss.
- 44 2. NEFU supports carbon pricing systems that meet these objectives, including but not limited to pricing
45 systems that include fee & dividend models as well as cap and trade, or other carbon tax systems.
46
- 47 3. In addition, NEFU advocates an aggressive and ambitious cellulosic ethanol research, development and
48 production program geared to rapidly develop the necessary technology to compliment traditional ethanol
49 supplies of motor fuels.
50
- 51 4. If carbon pricing is not implemented, NEFU supports the continued development of certified agricultural
52 production practices for biofuels to be recommended for a renewable fuel standard, and a price for carbon
53 sequestered in the soil that is greater than the traded price for sequestered atmospheric carbon.
54

1
2 **BIOMASS**
3

4 The future of New England bioenergy production will depend on development of regionally appropriate crops and
5 varieties. NEFU supports the aggressive development of regionally appropriate high yielding biomass crops and
6 associated infrastructure recognizing that food and fuel production and ecosystem services are not mutually
7 exclusive in well-balanced agricultural production systems. In addition to yield, biofuel crop development should
8 take into account possible bi-products and effects on soil health, biodiversity, invasive potential, water requirements
9 and other local and regional environmental, social and economic factors.

10
11 NEFU supports:

- 12
13 1. Sustainably harvested biomass fuel combustion for transportation, co-generation and district heating, and
14 supports the manufacture of pelletized solid fuels for heating rural areas.
15 2. Support and effective implementation of the Biomass Crop Assistance program to provide producer
16 incentives for the production of biomass crops.
17 3. Incentives to use the cleanest combustion technology available.
18 4. Local variety development, testing and distribution supported and administered through land grant
19 colleges, research stations and conservation districts.
20
21 5 Federal guaranteed loans for biomass projects deployed through third party lenders managed in a similar
22 manner to Small Business Administration loan programs.

23
24 **ALTERNATIVE ENERGY PRODUCTION AND MARKETING**
25

26 NEFU supports:

- 27
28 1. Models and programs that convert farm methane to farm energy
29 • Research to make manure digesters a profitable venture for smaller livestock operations;
30 • Funding and development assistance for community manure digesters.
31
32 2. Biodiesel
33
34 • Expand the distribution network for biodiesel fuel throughout New England by instituting tax
35 incentives for wholesale and retail distributors;
36 • Encourage use of biodiesel fuel through the development of informational and educational
37 materials and programs;
38 • Adopt a definition of biodiesel that conforms to ASTM D6751, the most current federal standard.
39 Establish local testing labs and enforcement resources for biodiesel fuel;
40 • Continue federal subsidies for biodiesel production until the biodiesel industry becomes
41 established at a self-sufficient level.
42
43 3. Ethanol: The ethanol industry is vitally important to the U.S.'s independence from reliance on foreign
44 oil. NEFU supports
45
46 • Biomass production of ethanol and federal investment in that production;
47 • Continue the ethanol import tariff;
48 • Biofuels should not be exported or imported until energy independence is achieved.
49
50 4. Gassification/biochar production
51
52 • Increases in biochar research including field trials, production techniques, and biogeochemical and
53 economic analysis;

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- Greater commercialization assistance for currently available biomass gassification and pyrolysis technology at both centralized and distributed scales;
- Research and development to reduce the scale of syngas processing for liquid fuels and the development of cost effective distributed co-generation and gas refining technology;
- Incentives in conjunction with soil-based carbon sequestration policies to encourage the sustainable production of biochar from crop residues and wood waste as a soil amendment.

5. District heating, cooling and cogeneration

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

6. Low carbon fuel standards

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

7. Wind and solar energy: NEFU supports development and distribution of electric generation from wind and solar power.

- We call for federal legislation to require all utilities to allow community-based wind and solar projects access to the electric grid by actively pursuing power purchase agreements;
- In order to help expand the use of smaller wind and solar energy systems, we support net metering for systems up to 100kW;
- Incentives for on-farm alternative energy production provided by municipalities;
- The use of dynamic pricing systems to provide incentives for non-peak energy use;
- Grants to farmers for installation of three-phase power to facilitate on-farm renewable energy production and sale;
- Allowing farm based energy producers to designate others to receive energy credits (renewable energy CSA);
- We support billing small wind generators on an annual basis. Net metering allows bidirectional metering of electricity, measured by one meter, where there is no discrimination between electricity produced and electricity consumed by the small electricity consumer-generator.
- Uniform wind siting standards;
- Federal production tax credits for wind and solar energy be made more applicable to farmers by extending the federal production tax credit to offset schedule F income;
- A comprehensive policy that protects landowners from speculation and unfair contracts in the development of natural resources such as wind development;
- The production of wind and solar energy on farms protected with conservation easements to the extent that such development does not undermine the original purpose of the conservation easement;
- Inclusion of farm based energy production in every state energy planning process;
- Increased involvement of farmers in public utility commission decision-making;
- Electric transmission lines: The right of property owners to deny public utilities eminent 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 affirms the following principles that have been recognized as being of particular importance to farmer and
17 producer co-operatives:
18

- 19
- 20 1. One-member, one-vote
 - 21 2. Continuing education
 - 22 3. Open membership
 - 23 4. Patronage refund
 - 24 5. Competitive prices
 - 25 6. Limited return on investment
 - 26 7. Continuous expansion
 - 27 8. Political & religious neutrality

28
29 NEFU priorities:

- 30
- 31 1. Protect and promote the co-operative identity. Oppose modification of any state laws or additional state
32 laws that will have the effect of eliminating requirements and definitions that establish the essential co-
33 operative characteristics of member ownership and democratic control by member/patron users, financing
34 by member/patron users, and distribution of benefits to patrons based on their participation in the co-
35 operative business, or that establish mechanisms of control for external investors. Enforce and develop
36 state laws that prohibit use of the word “co-op”, “co-operative” or “cooperative” to identify any business or
37 entity that is not incorporated under co-operative statutes or does not fulfill accepted characteristics of a co-
38 operative as defined by bodies such as the International Co-operative Alliance.
 - 39 2. Revitalize USDA co-operative services. The Cooperative Marketing Act of 1926 provides for a USDA
40 program of research, technical assistance and educational programs on the co-operative form of business.
41 Since this program has been subject to vastly reduced human resources and redirection, NEFU supports
42 revitalization of co-operative services programs in USDA, restoration of agency status, and support for co-
43 operative specialists in rural development state offices for support of co-operative enterprise across sectors
44 and industries.
 - 45 3. Promotion of co-operative education. Support the inclusion of curricula on the history, management and
46 diversity of co-operative enterprise in colleges and universities in our region. Encourage co-operatives to
47 set aside the full amount of educational funds permitted by law in order to fulfill the principle of education,
48 training and information for members, elected representatives, managers, and employees so they can
49 contribute effectively to the development of their co-operatives, and efforts to inform the general public —
50 particularly young people and opinion leaders — about the nature and benefits of co-operation.
 - 51 4. Defense of the Capper-Volstead Act of 1922, which establishes the legal framework for producer co-ops.
52 a. The rights of agricultural producers to act together to handle, process and market agricultural
53 products through co-operative activity, as guaranteed under the Capper-Volstead Act of 1922,
54 must be continued. These same rights should be formally extended under law to farm supply and

1 consumer co-operatives.

- 2 b. The rights of co-operative members to organize and operate regional and interregional co-
3 operatives (marketing agencies in common) or to merge with other co-operative associations
4 should not be restricted by law or government regulation. However, we are not in favor of regional
5 co-operatives absorbing local co-ops until other options of maintaining local control have been
6 exhausted, including merger or joint venture with a nearby co-operative. When necessary for a
7 regional to absorb a local co-operative, we strongly urge every effort would be made by the local
8 members or a nearby co-operative to purchase the co-operative back when it is feasible. We
9 demand that regional co-operative boards work together, and with local co-operatives, to help
10 them continue operating for the benefit of the members.
- 11 c. The responsibilities of administering the Capper-Volstead Act should remain with the U.S.
12 Department of Agriculture.
- 13 d. Because co-operative businesses are member-owned and controlled, we oppose any governmental
14 regulation that would infringe upon the rights of co-operative members to determine the policies
15 or operation of their co-operative.
- 16 e. Value-added co-operatives maintaining co-operative principles of member-ownership and control
17 (see Background below).

18
19
20 NEFU supports:

- 21
- 22 1. The International Co-operative Alliance's (ICA) "Blueprint for a Co-operative Decade" builds on the
23 United Nation's International Year of Co-ops in 2012 to promote a vision for co-ops and credit unions as
24 acknowledged leaders in economic, social and environmental sustainability, the preferred business model
25 of people around the world, and the fastest growing form of enterprise by 2020. NEFU will encourage
26 other Farmers Union chapters, agricultural co-operatives, and allied organizations to become involved in
27 efforts to support this initiative, joining with the ICA and other organizations such as the Neighboring Food
28 Co-op Association and the National Cooperative Business Association to raise the profile of co-operative
29 enterprise in our communities, to demonstrate the benefits of co-ops in building local ownership and
30 wealth, and to apply the co-operative model to new challenges and opportunities in our food system and
31 economy.
 - 32 2. Promotion and development of the co-operative model as an effective means of increasing producers'
33 bargaining power. Provide for the infrastructure necessary for production, processing, marketing and
34 distribution of food and other products.
 - 35 3. The growth and development of marketing, supply and service co-operatives on local, regional and national
36 levels. We recommend that farmer-owned and -controlled co-operatives work together whenever and
37 wherever possible to obtain more marketing and bargaining power for farmers. We encourage marketing
38 co-operatives, especially in dairying, to continue their efforts toward the creation of marketing agencies in
39 common for the purpose of improving marketing efficiency and producer prices.
 - 40 4. The unique role that food co-ops play in developing markets for organic, fairly traded and locally and
41 regionally sourced foods, and partnering with producers to strengthen communities. NEFU supports the
42 growth and development of food co-ops as member-owned grocery stores, and encourages collaboration
43 among food co-ops, producers, and producer co-operatives in advancing a shared vision of a vibrant and
44 resilient regional economy and New England better able to "feed and fuel itself."
 - 45 5. The organization and growth of credit unions, recognizing the role that these member-owned financial
46 institutions play in the economic lives of local communities. We oppose any effort to impose a tax on
47 member-owned non-profit credit unions. We support maintaining the National Credit Union Share
48 Insurance Fund as a separate and independent agency from other federal deposit insurance systems. We
49 support the right of all Americans to choose how and where they deposit their earnings and transact their
50 personal financial business. We encourage efforts by credit unions to develop their ability to provide
51 financial services to local businesses and co-ops in their areas of operation.
 - 52 6. Collaboration among co-ops across sectors and particularly in the regional food system as a means of
53 sustaining our communities and securing economic infrastructure in the long term.
 - 54 7. Co-operative Financing: NEFU supports the current 50 percent membership criteria for CoBank
55 borrowers. We support US Treasury funding of Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs),

1 such as the Cooperative Fund of New England and community loan funds, and encourage these
2 organizations to focus on providing financing and other support for co-operative enterprise in the region.
3 We urge the government to initiate federal funding programs along the lines of the original REA program
4 to assist farmers in forming value-added co-operatives.

- 5 8. Repeal of “block voting” provisions in co-ops. Because the “one person, one vote” principle upon which
6 the individual democratic rights of this country was founded has been eroded by permitting block voting by
7 co-operatives on behalf of their farmer-members, NEFU strongly supports efforts to repeal “block voting”
8 provisions wherever they exist in co-operative America. Individual farmers need to be afforded an
9 opportunity to disagree with their marketing co-operatives whose interest may differ from that of the
10 farmer.

11
12 NEFU opposes:

- 13 1. All joint ventures or mergers between co-operatives and multinational corporations.
14 2. Outsourcing of Product by Producer Co-ops: Some regional co-operatives have begun buying or selling
15 goods from outside interests that are normally sourced from members. Such examples include 1) buying
16 extra-territorial and sometimes distressed milk at price levels well below prices paid to members, 2) selling
17 unbranded fuels to nonmember companies at lower prices than typically negotiated with member co-ops,
18 and 3) purchasing commodities from outside the U.S. for prices lower than those paid its members selling
19 the same commodities. These practices, though perceived as benign, are often detrimental to co-op
20 members and local co-ops. Such practices often result in undercutting members’ and local co-ops’ prices,
21 and eroding their position in the marketplace. NEFU strongly urges such co-operatives to curtail such
22 practices and develop compensation formulas to ensure that those harmed by such initiatives be promptly
23 compensated. Prompt compensation might involve co-operatives holding any additional income derived
24 from such practices in escrow, and disbursing payments to its members within the same fiscal year.
25 3. Modification of any state laws that will have the effect of eliminating requirements and definitions that
26 establish the essential co-operative characteristics of ownership and control by member/patron users,
27 financing by member/patron users, and distribution of benefits to patrons based on their participation in the
28 co-operative business. We encourage vigilance against such actions and support renewed educational
29 efforts to preserve the critical co-operative principles that have served American farmers and others in rural
30 America for more than two centuries.
31 4. Co-ops joining legal defense fund schemes to avoid full equity payment to co-op patrons. NEFU
32 encourages co-ops to follow the Capper Volstead Act, which requires co-ops pay back a minimum of 20
33 percent of earnings as cash to members for a given fiscal year.
34
35

36 **BACKGROUND**

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

45
46 The promotion and encouragement of farm, fishery and forestry co-ops should be emphasized as an effective means
47 to increase producers’ bargaining power in the economy and food system. We acknowledge and encourage the
48 promotion of the role of co-operative enterprise in securing for our region the infrastructure necessary for
49 production, processing, marketing and distribution of food and other products.

50
51 We reaffirm our belief in and commitment to the co-operative identity and principles as identified by the
52 International Co-operative Alliance:

- 53 1. Voluntary and Open Membership. Co-operatives are voluntary organizations, open to all persons able to
54 use their services and willing to accept the responsibilities of membership, without gender, social, racial,
55 political or religious discrimination.

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2. Democratic Member Control. Co-operatives are democratic organizations controlled by their members, who actively participate in setting their policies and making decisions. Men and women serving as elected representatives are accountable to the membership. In primary co-operatives members have equal voting rights (one member, one vote) and co-operatives at other levels are also organized in a democratic manner.
3. Member Economic Participation. Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of their co-operative. At least part of that capital is usually the common property of the co-operative. Members usually receive limited compensation, if any, on capital subscribed as a condition of membership. Members allocate surpluses for any or all of the following purposes: developing their co-operative, possibly by setting up reserves, part of which at least would be indivisible; benefiting members in proportion to their transactions with the co-operative; and supporting other activities approved by the membership.
4. Autonomy and Independence. Co-operatives are autonomous, self-help organizations controlled by their members. If they enter to agreements with other organizations, including governments, or raise capital from external sources, they do so on terms that ensure democratic control by their members and maintain their co-operative autonomy.
5. Education, Training and Information. Co-operatives provide education and training for their members, elected representatives, managers, and employees so they can contribute effectively to the development of their co-operatives. They inform the general public - particularly young people and opinion leaders - about the nature and benefits of co-operation.
6. Cooperation among Co-operatives. Co-operatives serve their members most effectively and strengthen the co-operative movement by working together through local, national, regional and international structures.
7. Concern for Community. Co-operatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies approved by their members.

VII. LAND AND FISHING ACCESS

LAND AND FISHING ACCESS

NEFU supports policies and programs that expand economic opportunity and promote entry in farming and fishing. National policy objectives for agricultural land tenure should serve as a framework for USDA agencies and offices, programs, rules, and resource allocation. NEFU supports an emphasis on access to land focused on affordability, land preservation and succession. We also support federal policies and programs that expand fishing access for independent fishermen and women and beginning fishermen and women.

NEFU priorities:

1. Conduct a new Agricultural Economics and Land Ownership Survey (AELOS) or enhance the Agricultural Resource Management Survey (ARMS) to gather contemporary data on farmland ownership and tenure;
2. Models and programs that provide more secure tenure, make land more available, address land and farmer housing affordability, and help seekers and owners connect;
3. Programs that support beginning farmers and fishermen and women and farm and fishery entry with attention to training, credit, land and fishing 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 and fisherman seeking ownership and operating loans. Encouragement of Aggie Bond program in New England to provide credit to beginning farmers and fisherman;
5. Promote advancements in farmland protection tools;
6. Promote and support fisheries trusts and permit banks that only lease to independent and beginning fisherman; and
7. 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.

NEFU supports:

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

FARM TRANSFER AND SUCCESSION

NEFU priorities:

1. Reward or prioritize farm and fishing operators with succession plans who are applying to programs such as public and private purchase of development rights, fisheries trusts or farm and fishing 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 and fishery transfers and amend federal and state tax codes to remove them.

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

1 **VIII. NUTRITION**

2
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
14 **UNIVERSAL BREAKFAST PROGRAM**

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

16 NEFU supports:

- 17 1. A Universal Breakfast Program;
18 2. USDA commodities for school breakfast programs.
19

20 **AFTERNOON MILK PROGRAM**

21 NEFU urges the USDA to provide an afternoon reimbursable program that shall include dairy products.
22

23 **GOVERNMENT NUTRITION PROGRAMS**

24 NEFU supports:

- 25 1. Programs that provide locally produced foods, including locally produced milk, to school cafeterias and
26 government nutrition programs including state institutions;
27 2. Full reinstatement of the dairy portion of the Women, Infants and Children program (WIC).
28

29 **SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAM**

30 NEFU supports:

- 31 1. Make USDA funds available and rewrite program requirements to support the procurement, preparation and
32 service of local foods, allowing for nutritious meals that also support local and regional farmers and
33 processors;
34 2. USDA mandate that all foods and commodities used in the School Lunch Program (and other federally-
35 subsidized school nutrition programs) contain only products and ingredients certified as safe under FDA’s
36 safety program, GRAS (Generally Recognized As Safe);
37 3. Make available healthy beverage alternatives to all school children who are lactose intolerant.
38

39
40 **FAST FOOD INDUSTRY**

41 NEFU calls upon the industry to increase efforts to provide higher quality and nutritional meal items. Nutritionally
42 deprived diets lead to higher levels of obesity and other diseases. Further, we call upon the fast food industry to
43 purchase raw commodities from local and regional producers.
44

45 **Food and nutrition services**

46 NEFU priorities:

- 47 1. Programs which allow food stamp users to purchase food directly from farmers’ markets/farm stands,
48 CSAs, CSFs, food carts and other direct to consumer marketing venues;
49 2. Support of wireless electronic benefit technologies for use at farmers’ markets, farm stands, CSAs, CSFs,
50 food carts and other direct to consumer marketing venue;
51 3. The Food Stamp Act and maintain a nutrition title in the federal farm bill;
52 4. Adoption of double value benefits for SNAP at farmers’ markets/farm stands;
53 5. Maintain program integrity and support funding sufficient to meet the needs nation’s food insecure.

- 1
- 2 NEFU supports:
- 3 1. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and maintaining the integrity of the program;
- 4 2. Providing local milk in all feeding programs and prioritizing the use of local milk in SNAP and WIC;
- 5 3. Outreach efforts to extend services to the increasing number of hungry people who should be served,
- 6 particularly in rural areas where access is a problem;
- 7 4. Exclusion of farm loans as income in determining eligibility for food stamps;
- 8 5. Continued development of the Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) program;
- 9 6. Prohibiting efforts to substitute cash payment for food stamps;
- 10 7. Exploration of models that would specify certain SNAP dollars be used at markets, just like WIC;
- 11 8. Commodity distribution programs and child feeding programs;
- 12 9. USDA making healthy surplus foods readily available to food banks and emergency kitchens, bearing the
- 13 cost of transportation and storage;
- 14 10. Federal law that requires commodities distributed for nutrition programs be domestically produced.

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

2
3 Areas of interest include Farm Credit system, Community Development Financial Institutions, Health and Medical
4 Savings Accounts, technical assistance programs, tax deductibility for health insurance, and farm savings accounts.

5
6 NEFU priorities:

- 7
8 1. The Farm Credit System (FCS) remains a viable source of agricultural credit and recommit 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;
16 4. The IRS allows farmers to use their health insurance as a deduction on their schedule F form, rather than a
17 tax credit on the 1040 form.

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.
32 5. U.S. Treasury funding of Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIS) and encourage these organi-
33 zations to focus on providing financing and other support to farmers, fishermen and small scale processors.
34 6. Programs that provide technical assistance and training to farmers, fishermen and small-scale processors.

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