

FOOD FROM FAMILY FARMS ACT

- Good food for all people
- Fair prices for family farmers
- Thriving rural communities

Good for the Environment

U.S. farm policy presently fosters record low prices for farmers, increased pesticide use, and large polluting livestock factories.

Environmental Costs of Current Farm Policy:

- Giant, corporate-owned livestock factories confine thousands of animals in single facilities, and produce staggering amounts of animal waste. Hog, chicken and cattle waste have polluted 35,000 miles of rivers in 22 states and contaminated groundwater in 17 states.
- The push to maximize production has caused fertilizer use to triple since 1960, rising from 7.5 million to 22 million tons annually, resulting in pollution of water supplies and the Gulf of Mexico.
- Since 1964 pesticide use has grown three and a half times even as pesticide potency has increased. More than 14 million Americans drink public water that routinely contains pesticides.
- Farmers who want to change from pesticide-intensive practices frequently encounter financial lenders who require farmers to use chemical-intensive techniques as a requirement to obtain credit.
- The U.S. loses more than five billion tons of topsoil every year. If this rate continues, our country will lose as much topsoil in ten years as it took nature a thousand years to produce.

FOOD FROM FAMILY FARMS ACT

A new farm policy is needed that includes stewardship of our natural resources as an essential component. The Food from Family Farms Act (FFFA) offers the framework to support a sustainable agricultural system.

The Food from Family Farms Act promotes:

- *Higher prices for farmers to encourage environmentally sound practices*

Low farm prices make it extremely difficult for farmers to switch from chemical-intensive farming techniques to more environmentally sound practices. Key components

of the Food from Family Farms Act include provisions to **ensure a fair price** at the marketplace for family farmers, **offer conservation programs and incentives**, and **establish an inventory management program** that maintains supply in response to demand. These programs reduce the pressure on farmers to maximize yields.



PHOTO: AMY FRYKMAN

Good for the Environment CONTINUED

• *Diversified family farms*

Today, large livestock confinement operations buy feed grain at prices well below the cost of production, and therefore enjoy an unfair competitive advantage over diversified family farm livestock operations that produce their own grain. Fair market prices for farmers under the Food from Family Farms Act would **eliminate a large economic incentive for livestock factories** that have ruined water and air quality in many areas of the country. Livestock raised less intensively by family farmers along with better crop rotations will create a more environmentally sound and humane meat production system.



PHOTO: CYNTHIA VAGNETTI

• *Stopping the movement toward contract farming controlled by agribusiness*

When the only economic alternative for a farmer is to contract with a giant agribusiness, the operator must sign away his or her right to make independent decisions about their farming or ranching practices. These contracts often necessitate environmentally destructive practices, including promotion of monocultures, the use of antibiotics and hormones, and polluting lagoons. Fair prices for commodities as promoted by the Food from Family Farms Act would help ensure that **ownership and control remains with the independent farm/ranch operator**. Instead of following mandatory contracts written to increase corporate profits, farmers would retain the right to make management decisions that promote land stewardship and conservation for future generations.

• *Increased support for conservation programs*

Farmers and ranchers would earn a fair price in the marketplace under the Food from Family Farms Act, **making massive taxpayer-supported subsidies unnecessary**. Some of the freed-up funds could be used for research and to promote sustainable agriculture methods. In addition, conservation set-asides with cost-share to help implement conservation practices would be available.

• *Reversing the global trend toward industrial agriculture and environmental damage*

U.S. commodity and livestock markets heavily influence prices worldwide. Higher domestic prices under the Food from Family Farms Act would **create a sound base to enable peasant-based agriculture economies around the world to continue to feed their own people** while resisting the pressure to divert their land to cash crops for export. As a result, **maintenance of soil and water conserving practices** developed for the production of crops consistent with the area's culture and geographical features could be encouraged and embraced.

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For more information or to promote the Food from Family Farms Act and its policies, contact the **National Family Farm Coalition** (202) 543-5675 • nffc@nffc.net