



**Testimony of Kenneth Hartman, Jr.
President
National Corn Growers Association**

**Before the U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture,
Nutrition and Forestry**

**Regarding “Perspectives from the Field:
Farmer and Rancher Views on the Agricultural Economy,
Part I.”**

**106 Dirksen Senate Office Building
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Chairman Boozman, Ranking Member Klobuchar, and Members of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry, thank you for the invitation to testify today.

My name is Kenneth Hartman, Jr. I am a fifth-generation farmer from Waterloo, Illinois, where my family and I, including one of our daughters, operate a grain farm. Together we primarily grow corn, soybeans, and wheat. I currently serve as President of the National Corn Growers Association (NCGA).

Founded in 1957, NCGA represents more than 36,000 dues-paying corn growers in 48 states, and the interests of more than 300,000 farmers who contribute through corn checkoff programs in their states. NCGA and its affiliated associations in 27 states work together to help protect and advance corn growers' interests.

The hearing today is timely. Farmers across the country right now are talking to their lenders about the costs of planting their next crop. Unfortunately, with the current forecasted prices, many growers are feeling financially stressed before the 2025 crop is even planted.

Today, I will focus my testimony on challenges in the farm economy, our views on the American Relief Act that passed in December, the need for a strengthened farm bill, and additional actions Congress can take this year to support corn growers.

Challenges in the Corn Economy

The United States is a corn-producing superpower, growing about one-third of the world's corn and doing so more sustainably than anywhere else on earth. In 2024, U.S. corn farmers planted 90.6 million acres of corn, producing over 14.8 billion bushels. Following a record production of 15.3 billion bushels in 2023, U.S. corn growers produced the fourth-largest corn crop in history with a record yield in 2024. Despite record setting productivity in these two years, the value of production for farmers has diminished. The value of U.S. corn production dropped from \$89.5 billion for the 2022 crop to an estimated \$63.2 billion for the 2024 crop.

While the value of our corn production has dropped substantially, costs have not. The average corn price American farmers receive in the market has declined 40 percent from 2022 to the average price expected for 2025. Comparatively, the average cost to produce corn has declined by just 6 percent.

A major component of the cost to produce corn is fertilizer, representing about one-third of the operating costs for growing corn. Although fertilizer prices have declined from 2022 peaks, fertilizer costs remain relatively high compared to a historical average before the pandemic and high relative to corn market prices. At today's prices, it costs farmers more bushels of corn to buy a ton of phosphate fertilizers, particularly DAP and MAP, than it did when those same fertilizers were at their retail price peak in 2022. Fertilizer nutrients are especially critical in corn productivity and returning those nutrients is important in maintaining healthy soils.

A comparison of the USDA reported average cost of production to grow corn, producer yields, and market year average prices indicates that many corn growers will experience a net loss in profitability for the third year in a row in 2025. On average, American corn farmers are facing losses of over \$160 per acre of corn for their 2025 crop, following losses over \$100 per acre in both 2023 and 2024. Sustained high input costs and dropping commodity prices leave American farmers in a vulnerable financial position.

Last summer, Dana Allen-Tully, a grower leader of the Minnesota Corn Growers Association, testified in front of the House Agriculture Committee. During this farm economy hearing, she summarized the pressures saying, “We have to have policies in place that reflect the realities of farming today. The stakes of farming are so incredibly high – higher than I ever remember them to be. We are putting everything we have on the line every single year for very thin and oftentimes negative margins.”

American Relief Act

In December, Congress passed H.R.10545, the American Relief Act, which included an extension of the farm bill, economic assistance for row crop producers and assistance for farmers and ranchers who faced natural disasters throughout 2023 and 2024. Corn growers appreciate the members of Congress, including the Agriculture Committee leadership, who worked hard to include these agriculture provisions and ensured their passage.

NCGA supported efforts to provide economic assistance, including the Farmer Assistance and Revenue Mitigation Act (FARM Act) that was introduced by Representative Trent Kelly. The FARM Act laid out a model for economic assistance for row crop producers using existing USDA data. The final provisions in the American Relief Act mirror the earlier legislation, although there were changes to the calculations and the overall amount of assistance decreased.

According to estimates published by the Food and Agricultural Policy Research Institute (FAPRI) at the University of Missouri, corn growers may receive payments around \$42.51 per acre for the 2024 crop year. Given the millions of acres of corn planted across the country, corn growers are estimated to receive \$3.8 billion of economic assistance nationwide.

We will continue working with committee members and the U.S. Department of Agriculture to ensure the timely and successful implementation of the economic and disaster assistance programs. Once the aid is released and received, it will be appreciated by growers, particularly those who have faced steep financial strain from recent years of crop and revenue losses. As we look ahead, corn growers across the country still face economic headwinds and further action is needed to improve the farm bill safety net programs and the market outlook for producers.

Corn growers were disappointed that a legislative solution providing access to nationwide, year-round E15 was ultimately not included in the year-end legislation. NCGA and state partners had a pathway to achieve a legislative solution to year-round E15, an issue that we and our partners have worked on for more than a decade. Including year-round E15 would have come at no cost to the federal government and would have offered a market-centric opportunity to boost the corn economy.

We appreciate our champions on Capitol Hill, including Senator Fischer, Ranking Member Klobuchar, and several additional members of this committee, who continue to lead on this important issue and pave the way forward. Solving this problem would benefit the entire liquid fuels industry and the rural economy.

Farm Bill Priorities

As a grassroots and grower led association, NCGA and our affiliated state associations have worked with producer leaders from across the country to develop principles and prioritize policy recommendations for the farm bill.

The priorities for corn growers in the farm bill are summarized in our key principles:

- Protecting federal crop insurance
- Strengthening the producer safety net
- Bolstering U.S. international market development efforts
- Supporting voluntary conservation programs, and
- Championing initiatives important to rural America.

Corn growers are committed to making USDA programs work more effectively for producers and to ensure the next farm bill addresses the current and future needs of producers. In the spring of 2023, then NCGA President Tom Haag and Vice President Harold Wolle provided testimony to the relevant Senate and House subcommittees on the farm bill reauthorization. The NCGA recommendations can be found in the testimony for the Senate Subcommittee on Commodities, Risk Management and Trade hearing on May 2, 2023, available [here](#).

NCGA priorities include support for improvements to crop insurance, commodity, trade, and conservation programs with a focus on market-oriented policies that help growers manage their risks. Many of these recommendations are reflected in the Senate frameworks and marker bills that were released last year and would be an improvement on existing USDA programs for growers across the country.

Following the hearings, corn growers have continued to evaluate, debate, and update our national policies and priorities utilizing our grassroots process. Notably, at the July 2023 session of Corn Congress, grower delegates from across corn state associations voted on and adopted the following farm bill policy, “we support a one-time nationwide mandatory base acre update as determined by recent planting history.” This policy position was later reaffirmed by another vote of the grower delegates at the next Corn Congress held at Commodity Classic in March 2024.

As Congress works to update programs to better meet the risks, challenges, and costs facing producers today, the modernization of base acres would bring an important update to commodity program eligibility and better serve current producers, their farms, and the risks associated with commodities more recently planted.

Corn growers support several specific changes to strengthen the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) commodity programs. These programs are intended to provide farmers with a critical safety net when they face significant drops in crop prices or revenues. Importantly, investments to improve these programs, along with updates to base acres, would help ensure that when commodity program payments are triggered, the assistance will reach the producers when and where it is needed.

While the PLC program has not triggered payments for corn growers for either the 2022 or 2023 crop years, the ARC County and ARC individual programs have provided some assistance to corn growers around the country. These trends are expected to continue for the 2024 crop year and even if the programs are triggered, the farm bill does not authorize USDA to begin making payments until after October 1, 2025.

For the 2025 crop year, growers currently have until April 15, 2025, to elect between the ARC and PLC programs. Recent estimates show that the support from these programs may occur at higher levels than in recent years as a result of the PLC effective reference price “escalator” and the ARC benchmark revenue calculations. However, any triggered support would not begin to reach producers until after October 1, 2026.

Overall, a new farm bill with improved safety net programs is overdue. Congress has the ability to make existing USDA programs more effective, efficient, and responsive through strategic investments and policy enhancements. Corn growers are working with allied farm organizations, commodity groups, lenders, and other stakeholders to continue to push for legislative action. NCGA and our members would like to see this process move forward in a bipartisan manner and for a full farm bill reauthorization to be signed into law as soon as possible.

Corn Competitiveness Report

NCGA recently released the 2025 Corn Competitiveness Report outlining a path to bolster the economic outlook for farmers and rural America. Corn growers have identified six key targets for enhancing the competitiveness for U.S. corn and specific examples of the ways in which we can achieve these targets. The full report, available [here](#), is also attached to the end of the testimony.

These include developing new foreign markets, expanding consumer access to higher blends of ethanol, fueling innovation in new uses research, ensuring sensible regulations are in place, and extending key federal tax provisions. Ultimately, it is a roadmap to establish an environment in which farmers can be innovative, productive, and profitable.

Right now, many American farmers do not have the financial resources of their own to adopt new management practices or meet burdensome regulations. Not only are regulations financially costly, but they also stifle the innovation that has propelled American farmers forward over the last century. In 2024, American corn farmers harvested 1.7 percent fewer acres than they did in 1924 but produced 729 percent more corn. Major growth in production, without using more land, is the result of freedom to operate and access to resources that champion innovation.

To maintain our status as producers of the world's most affordable, abundant, and sustainable corn we also need demand opportunities that provide market-driven price opportunities for farmers to earn a profit and reinvest in our farms, families, and rural communities. To drive greater demand, farmers need access to new market opportunities while protecting existing markets. Increased demand for corn will carry multiple benefits by supporting prices which allow farmers to make a living and invest in their communities.

Foreign competitors are currently capturing market share that would otherwise be met by American producers. Our experiences show us that lost market share cannot be easily recaptured, and oftentimes never fully recovers. Therefore, we must be proactively setting up new supply chain opportunities in key regions of the world, like the Indo-Pacific, Africa, and Europe.

American corn growers produce the most high-quality sustainable corn in the world but without forward-thinking trade policies, we will struggle to maintain our global leadership.

Summary and Closing

As the 119th Congress gets fully underway, corn growers urge the Agriculture Committees to prioritize the passage of an improved farm bill and to have continued oversight on the implementation of assistance provided for producers in the American Relief Act. As we look to the future, we need to work together to create a policy environment that supports sustained growth in the market demand of U.S. corn and corn products, including domestic, foreign, and further new uses.

In closing, thank you to the Senators and staff for your support of America's farmers. We look forward to working with you to confront the current and emerging issues impacting our businesses, families, and rural communities.



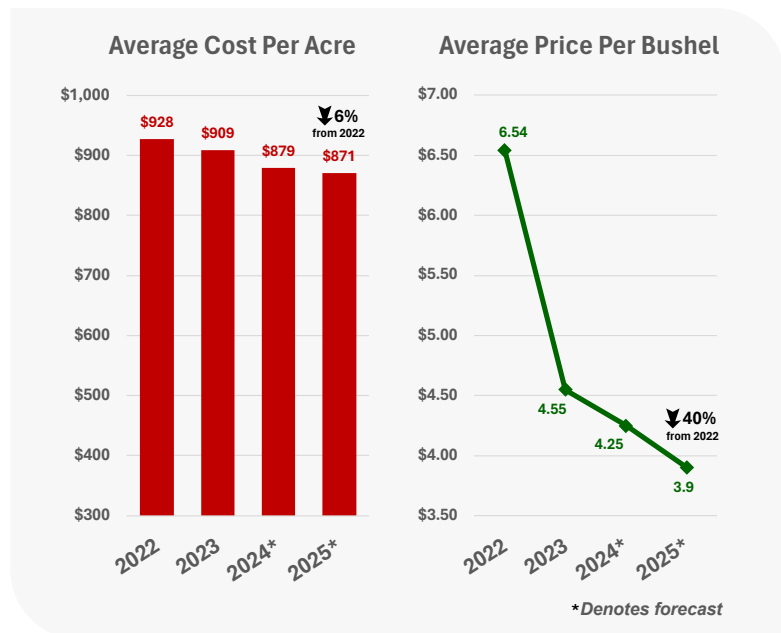
Targets for Enhancing Competitiveness of U.S. Corn

2025 NCGA CORN COMPETITIVENESS REPORT

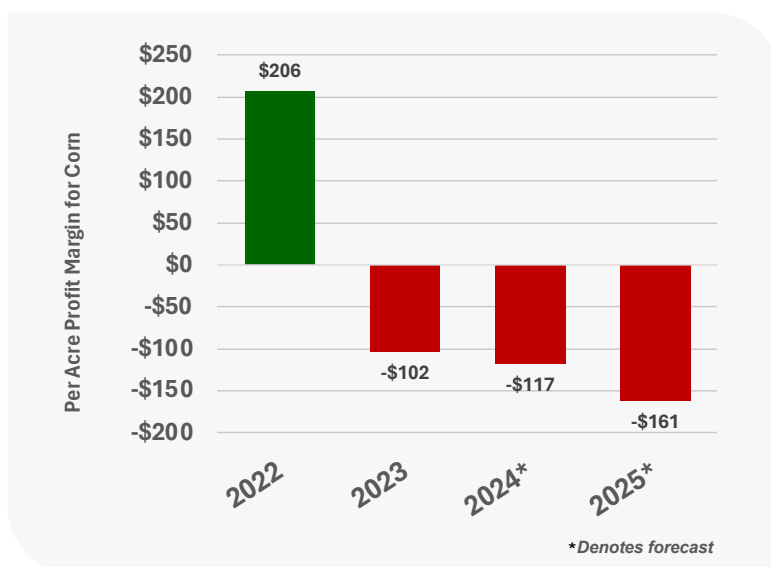
The United States is a corn-producing superpower, growing about one-third of the world's corn and doing so more sustainably than anywhere else on earth. With a centuries-rich history, 96% of U.S. corn is grown by American farm families. But the future of this American-grown powerhouse is in jeopardy as costly and burdensome regulations and outdated, unfavorable policies hinder American corn farmers' market access resulting in high costs and low market prices.

The average corn price American farmers receive declined 40% from 2022 to the average price expected for 2025. The average cost to produce corn has also declined, but only by 6%. Corn is a market commodity; the price farmers are paid for their corn is based on the board of trade price, adjusted for basis, at the time of the sale. Meanwhile, most farmers buy inputs at costs set by their retailer.

Corn Price Has Dropped Substantially More Than Cost to Produce



Three Years of Losses for Corn Farmers



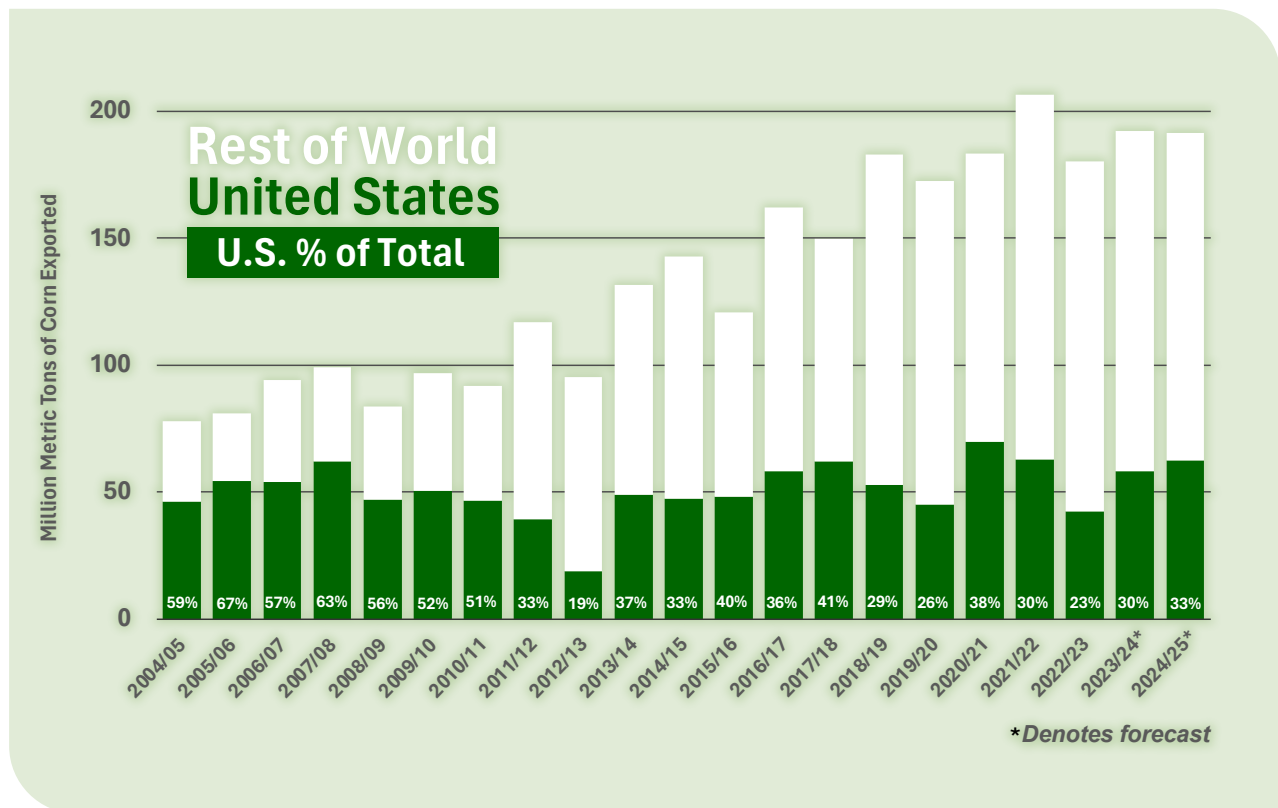
As former President John F. Kennedy famously stated, "The farmer is the only man in our economy who buys everything at retail, sells everything at wholesale, and pays the freight both ways."

Because of this unique situation, farmers have less control over their own profitability than producers in other sectors of the economy. For 2025, corn growers are preparing to take a net loss for the third year in a row. On average, American farmers are facing losses of over \$160 per acre of corn. Sustained high input costs and dropping prices leave American farmers in a vulnerable financial position.

In that position, American farmers don't have the financial resources to adopt new management practices or meet burdensome regulations that dictate how they operate their farms. Not only are regulations financially costly, but they also stifle the innovation that has propelled American farmers forward over the last century. In 2024, American corn farmers harvested 1.7% fewer acres than they did in 1924 but produced 729% more corn. Major growth in production, without using more land, is the result of freedom to operate and access to resources that champion innovation.

Despite this major growth in production, the U.S. global market share for corn has decreased in the past two decades as other nations support agricultural growth and expand global trade relationships. America's share of global corn exports dropped from 59% in 2004 to 33% in 2024. As global production continues to increase, corn prices depend on growing demand. The financial viability of U.S. corn farmers depends on robust demand for U.S. corn in all forms: grain and value-added products for both domestic and international markets. Expanding use of U.S. corn not only supports corn prices for U.S. farms but also boosts rural economies and brings jobs and manufacturing to the U.S.

World Exports Grow While the U.S Share of Global Corn Exports Declines



If the U.S. is going to build the greatest economy in history, supporting American corn farmers is foundational. Corn growers need an environment where they can be innovative, productive and profitable, with unobstructed access to necessary inputs, management tools and markets. They also need an environment that preserves and protects the integrity of farming for future generations and allows hardworking American corn farmers to thrive and contribute to building the greatest economy in history.

American corn farmers are facing challenges that threaten competitiveness. But there are solutions. These six targets would support U.S. corn's competitiveness and ensure growing corn remains viable for America's farm families.

COMPETITIVENESS TARGET: INCREASE GLOBAL MARKET ACCESS FOR U.S. CORN

CHALLENGE: EXPORT MARKETS FOR U.S. CORN

Solution #1: Trade Initiatives with Market Access

The U.S. has not formed a new trade agreement in over a decade. If market access provisions are not included in ongoing trade negotiations, America cannot make good on meaningful export opportunities. Increasing trade initiatives around the globe that include real market access provisions, such as purchase commitments, will generate demand for American corn and support corn prices for U.S. farmers. By fortifying existing markets and discovering new potential markets, U.S. corn farmers can solidify a diverse set of customers, which helps mitigate supply chain uncertainty and displaced markets.

Solution #2: Eliminate Trade Barriers

When foreign countries enact regulations that disrupt trade, like bans or tariffs on U.S.-produced corn, farmers are left holding the bag. While these barriers to trade may be issued under the guise of something like protecting public health, they are often an ineffective attempt at propping up a domestic industry. For example, [Mexico's efforts to ban genetically modified corn](#), which were not based on science, would have been detrimental to American corn farmers if fully realized, especially as Mexico is the top export destination for U.S. corn. From [Brazil's tariff on ethanol imports](#) to a variety of countries erecting barriers to [importing of biotech products](#) and even delays in approvals from foreign regulatory bodies, agricultural products are often the target of unjust trade barriers that must be eliminated.

Solution #3: Market Access for Animal Ag Exports

Demand for animal protein around the world, especially in developing countries, continues to increase. American livestock producers are the most efficient and sustainable producers in the world, with easy access to abundant feed grains, including corn. Seeking increased market access for animal protein exports would provide a source of nutrition to the world while supporting farmers and rural America.

CHALLENGE: CORN EXPORT INEFFICIENCY

Solution: Work to Eliminate Transportation Barriers

Barriers in the transportation of corn to market often cut into financial margins for corn farmers. Disruptions along the inland waterway and rail systems increase transportation costs, impacting corn prices. Locks and dams along the inland waterway system have been pushed far beyond their 50-year design life, which can cause closures or further delays, driving transportation costs higher still. In 2024, rail inefficiencies at the Mexican border caused stoppages for corn farmers and for businesses along the supply chain. This not only increased transportation costs but created a glut in domestic supply. Investing in critical transportation infrastructure and working with our adjacent trade partners to ensure fluidity of the export system will allow for efficient delivery of the superior product U.S. corn farmers provide to the world market.

Why It Matters: U.S. corn growers need equitable and reciprocal trade deals that protect American farmers from unfair trade.

COMPETITIVENESS TARGET: EXPAND USE OF U.S. CORN IN ETHANOL

CHALLENGE: THREATS TO BIOFUELS DEMAND FOR U.S. CORN

Solution #1: Provide a Level Playing Field for Biofuels

In 2024, final rulemakings were issued for the EPA Light Duty Vehicle Multi Pollutant Standard, and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's Corporate Average Fuel Economy standard. Both rules favor electric vehicles and rapidly force consumer choice away from internal combustion engine vehicles, which would cause significant injury to all liquid fuel demand, including ethanol. Using EPA's rule forecast, [NCGA projects](#) corn use for ethanol would decline more than 1 billion bushels annually beginning in 2041, representing about 20% of current corn use for ethanol. Litigation opposing these rulemakings for [light-](#) and [heavy-duty](#) vehicles is already underway. Favorable decisions reached in the courts this year would create lasting benchmarks for administrative action on these issues in the future.

Solution #2: Legislation for Higher Blends of Ethanol & New Octane Standard

During the 118th Congress, legislation that would facilitate an increase in corn demand failed to move forward. Both the Consumer and Fuel Retailer Choice Act and the Next Generation Fuels Act, which have been introduced several times over, would have solved decades-long issues for the fuel value chain, stimulated ethanol demand, lowered everyday costs of fuel for consumers and reduced emissions.

Solution #3: Eliminate Trade Barriers

Brazil's 18% tariff on ethanol imports has shut off access to a major market for U.S. ethanol producers. The U.S. government should strongly encourage Brazil to eliminate the tariff and return to market parity for ethanol.

Solution #4: Certify Corn Ethanol for Expanded Markets

The Fuels Parity Act which would have removed the dated prohibition of corn starch ethanol from qualifying as an "advanced biofuel" was also left on the table by the 118th Congress. In order for ethanol to remain competitive in the dynamic modern biofuels market, reasonable changes to the Renewable Fuels Standard such as this must be made.



Why It Matters: U.S. corn growers are ready to have a vital role in making America a dominant energy producer with abundant, low cost, American-made corn-based ethanol.

COMPETITIVENESS TARGET: STRENGTHEN FARM RISK MANAGEMENT

CHALLENGE: OUTDATED FARM SAFETY NET PROGRAMS

Solution #1: Protect and Strengthen Federal Crop Insurance

Federal crop insurance has a proven track record of helping producers quickly respond to natural disasters. The success of the public-private partnership in providing risk management tools has led to wide adoption rates among row crop producers. In 2023, corn farmers alone insured \$73.6 billion in liabilities through the purchase of over 407,000 policies nationwide. Increasing crop insurance access and affordability for producers, including beginning farmers, will further protect and strengthen the economies of rural America.

Solution #2: Strengthen Commodity Revenue and Price Programs

Key risk management tools and USDA programs continue to be stress tested by natural disasters, economic challenges and unpredictable events. Strengthening the Farm Bill commodity programs administered by the Farm Service Agency, including the Agriculture Risk Coverage and Price Loss Coverage commodity programs, will provide farmers with a better safety net when they face significant income losses due to fluctuations in crop prices or revenue. Targeted improvements, such as an update to base acres to reflect recent planting history, would ensure farmers have appropriate access to the programs. These programs have not been reauthorized or improved since the 2018 farm bill.



Why It Matters: U.S. corn growers need strengthened farm risk management tools that support rural economies when American family farmers face risks that threaten their businesses.

COMPETITIVENESS TARGET: PRESERVE THE AMERICAN FARM FAMILY LEGACY & FARMLAND ACCESS

CHALLENGE: TAX INCREASES THREATEN FARM PROFITABILITY

Solution #1: Extend Key Federal Tax Provisions

The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 includes federal tax policy provisions used by corn farmers to support and grow their family businesses, including bonus depreciation, Section 179 expensing and the qualified business income deduction. These important provisions, set to expire after 2025, should be extended in the federal tax code. Otherwise, farms are set to see their taxes raised, threatening their farm profitability.

Solution #2: Extend the Higher Estate and Gift Tax Exemptions

To ensure long-term continuity and smooth transition between generations of family-owned, agriculturally based and other small businesses, the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act temporarily doubled the exemptions for federal estate tax and raised the exemption for gift taxes, both adjusted for inflation. The increased estate tax and gift exemptions are set to expire after 2025 and should be extended in the federal tax code. Reverting to the lower estate and gift tax exemptions would hinder family farm successions.

CHALLENGE: VERTICAL INTEGRATION IN CROP FARMING

Solution #1: Incentive for Farmer Investment, Operation and Capital

As of 2022, [39%](#) of U.S. farmland is rented or leased. As of 2014 (most recent available), [80%](#) of rented farmland is owned by people not actively involved in farming. Non-operator buyers prop up land values despite factors otherwise expected to result in softening, such as low commodity prices, negative crop returns and high interest rates. Incentives support and encourage farmer investment in land, including solutions that allow capital to come in alongside farmers, rather than compete with them, would help preserve active family farms. Farmers in a third year of losses cannot generate a cash down payment for a land purchase or cash flow land payments. Incentives to stimulate purchases with direct operation of cropland would help farmers access farmland, protect against vertical integration evolution and support farming families.

Solution #2: Resist Consolidation and Differentiation in the Corn Sector

The market for standard yellow corn is as close to perfect competition as possible: an active market with many buyers and sellers selling the same undifferentiated product at the same price where market participants can easily access market information. These components uphold market structure and family farm participation in this market for corn. Consolidation of input suppliers and grain purchasers translates to fewer buyers and sellers in the market and should be resisted. Programs and incentives that link sustainability benefits to corn in the market differentiate the product and price and could be problematic to the market for standard corn if there is large scale participation. Alternatively, small scale differentiation offers niche market opportunities for family farms. In designing programs and incentives, it is critical that the chain of custody model used accounts for expected farmer participation to maintain commodity market integrity and pricing transparency.

Why It Matters: U.S. corn growers need a supportive environment for reinvestment into farms and transfer of farmland within farm families.

COMPETITIVENESS TARGET: PROTECT ACCESS TO AGRICULTURAL INNOVATIONS

CHALLENGE: HIGH INPUT COSTS

Solution: Eliminate Tariffs on Fertilizers and Herbicides

NCGA has been vocal about the negative impacts that duties on phosphate imports are causing farmers, and concurrently, how duties on 2,4-D imports would also negatively affect farmers. Duties on these two imports would place supply chains under stress, leading to shortages and higher prices, while preventing farmers from accessing tools that meet their individual needs.

CHALLENGE: PESTS & DISEASE IN CROPS

Solution #1: Protect Endangered Species with Workable Solutions for Farmers

EPA's Endangered Species Act Framework is designed to provide species protection in advance of full consultation by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service. However, the overly conservative approach underway may result in requirements for farmers to comply with burdensome mitigations, which are not only financially burdensome but also excessively time-constraining for farmers. Once requirements and mitigations are in place, there is little chance of reducing or eliminating them should a full consultation find they are not needed. It is important to ensure endangered species are afforded protection with strategies that are realistic and manageable for farmers to implement.

Solution #2: Champion Innovation in Agronomic Research

As pests, diseases and weather patterns evolve over time, research and development of new products is critical to combat existing and emerging threats. One example is the rising occurrence of mycotoxins like aflatoxin and vomitoxin, toxic substances produced by certain fungi found in corn that can be harmful to humans and animals. Increased appropriated funds for research related to these toxins would be directed to NCGA's Aflatoxin Mitigation Center of Excellence, a collaborative effort among state corn checkoff boards and university experts to efficiently identify tools for prevention, in-field measures and post-harvest strategies to combat aflatoxin and other mycotoxins.

CHALLENGE: MAINTAIN STATUS AS PRODUCERS FOR THE WORLD'S MOST AFFORDABLE, ABUNDANT AND SUSTAINABLE CORN

Solution #1: Regenerative Opportunities with Biotech Hybrids

The [reduction of soil loss](#) over the last 35 years was enabled by biotech seeds offering additional weed management options. Farmers can produce more with less soil erosion and fewer pesticide applications because of biotechnology.

Solution #2: Biotech Modification Reduces Dangerous Food Contaminants

An [analysis](#) of over 6,000 peer-reviewed studies covering 21 years of data found that biotech corn increased yields up to 25% and dramatically decreased dangerous food contaminants. The study, published in Scientific Reports, analyzed field data from 1996, when the first biotech corn was planted, through 2016 in the U.S., Europe, South America, Asia, Africa and Australia.

Solution #3: Preserve Access to Seed & Crop Protection Technology

Safe, affordable, sustainable and abundant supplies of agricultural products are essential to the wellbeing of our country. For decades, millions of American farmers and ranchers have dutifully supplied these goods to U.S. consumers. Weeds, insects and disease outbreaks can inflict significant crop yield losses. They can also infest grazing lands, making them unusable for livestock and contributing to wildfire fuel loads. Without continued access to tools needed to protect against devastating pests, U.S. farms and ranches would quickly become economically unsustainable, jeopardizing U.S. farmers' ability to provide affordable food and other agricultural products to consumers. For decades, genetic improvement technologies have helped U.S. farmers improve crop yields and protect against pests. Novel applications of these tools may help safeguard crops from drought and enhance their nutritional qualities, among other improvements. Preserving access to these technologies and encouraging further advancement is essential to maintaining both a robust, quality supply of goods for U.S. consumers and competitiveness for U.S. agriculture globally.



Why It Matters: U.S. corn growers need a suite of input and crop protection options without costly and burdensome regulations. This will lower costs on the farm and champion innovation in technological advances and farm management.

COMPETITIVENESS TARGET: STRENGTHEN USE OF U.S. CORN IN AMERICAN PRODUCTS

CHALLENGE: MARKET BARRIERS TO ENTRY FOR CORN-BASED PRODUCTS

Solution #1: Policy Supporting Commercialization of New Uses of Corn

Congress should implement a tax incentive for new companies in the bioeconomy space using domestic feedstocks like corn to manufacture renewables. Many research initiatives in this area fail to overcome a “valley of death” moving from the lab to implementation of “steel in the ground” facilities. This tax incentive would help return manufacturing of these products to the U.S. and increase demand for U.S.-grown corn.

Solution #2: Cross-Agency Collaboration on Funding New Uses of Corn

U.S. agriculture would benefit if the USDA, National Institute of Food and Agriculture, Department of Energy, and others collaborated more closely on research, development and commercialization in the biotechnology and renewable chemicals space. Executive Order 14081 initiated steps, but bioeconomy support must continue through programs at national labs, BioPreferred and Rural Development.

Solution #3: Increase Public-Private Partnerships to Improve Technology Transfer

Government agencies and national labs have developed valuable technologies, but the technology transfer process must be simplified. An increase in public-private partnerships would facilitate investment in new technology commercialization and reduce technology transfer red tape. BioMade is a great start, but improved leverage of public-private partnerships and other efforts that help technologies overcome the “valley of death” and scale up is needed to support production of American-made products using American-grown feedstocks.

Solution 4: Consistent Terminology and Biobased Product NAICS Codes

Consistent terminology and definitions need to be established for differentiating biobased products from recyclable, biodegradable and others. The North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) codes should also be defined for biobased products so their economic contribution can be measured and businesses using renewable feedstocks like U.S.-grown corn can get more access to capital for scale up.

CHALLENGE: DISPARATE RULES FOR CARBON SCORING & COMPLIANCE

Solution: Define Carbon Programs and Requirements

U.S. corn farmers are positioned to help companies solve challenges by sequestering carbon on their farms. Programs, rules and requirements that enable U.S.-grown products to qualify as feedstocks for sustainable aviation fuel and other new uses will put America first, support farmers and rural livelihoods and make a positive impact on the world. Defining programs for carbon intensity and utilizing American-grown crops will increase the demand for quality products that are produced more efficiently in the U.S. than anywhere else in the world.

Why It Matters: U.S. corn growers need reduced market barriers and prioritized use of U.S. corn in American-made products. This supports domestic industry and jobs, propelling a Buy American Hire American economy.