



**Testimony of Jed Bower
President
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**Before the U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture,
Nutrition and Forestry**

**Regarding “Increasing Domestic Consumption of U.S. –
Grown Agricultural Products”**

**106 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC**

March 10, 2026

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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 Jed Bower. I am a fifth-generation farmer from Washington Courthouse, Ohio. I grow corn and soybeans with my wife, Emily and children, Ethan and Emma. 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 500,000 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.

It is an honor to testify before this committee. Today's hearing on domestic demand expansion could not come at a more critical time for our industry. 2026 is the United States of America's 250th year, and in those 250 years, corn has been foundational to the American success story. Evolving from a source of survival to an economic powerhouse, corn is undoubtedly America's Crop. Unfortunately, the legacy generations of corn growers have built is in jeopardy. Today corn farmers are facing many challenges, and the ability of the next generation to take over the farm is in question for too many families right now, including my own.

Low prices and stubbornly high input costs positioned corn farmers to take a loss of approximately \$125 per acre on average in 2025; 2026 is expected to be the fourth year in a row of net losses on the farm. We are facing steeper global competition from Brazilian farmers, who continue to increase corn production, and a Brazilian government that continues to invest in the nation's agricultural capacity, export opportunities, infrastructure, and market development. This growth, plus farmers' improvements in productivity, has resulted in a global oversupply of corn. Domestically, USDA estimates that we have a 2.1-billion-bushel surplus of corn from the 2025 crop. Many farmers are running out of time and running out of patience as they pursue solutions that have not materialized.

With the next 250 years in mind, NCGA is doubling down on a market development strategy and a policy agenda to diversify long term demand opportunities for our grower members. This agenda involves expanding current markets and building new market opportunities that will increase domestic utilization of corn and ethanol as a more economical and sustainable feedstock.

Ethanol / Biofuels

Ethanol is a proven success story for the corn industry, and it has potential for additional growth. Since its inception, the ethanol industry has strengthened rural economies, created jobs, and driven farmer profitability. But to maintain and expand those benefits, we must continue to build on the policies that have made the corn and ethanol industries successful. Today, over a third of each year's corn crop is turned into fuel. Yet we believe there is room for exponential growth in this market, for both on-road fuel and for industries like marine and aviation. American farmers are more than ready to provide the supply to an expanding biofuels sector. However, legislative and regulatory barriers have held us back. Our ask is a simple one: take the guardrails off and allow this sector to reach new heights.

First, year-round access to E15 is critical. Farmers have waited far too long for this simple, deregulatory action to be passed. We have the support of the large majority of the fuel sector, and the President has pledged several times over that he will sign legislation granting year-round E15 access once Congress gets it across the finish line. I want to take a moment to thank you, Mr. Chairman, for publicly declaring your support for year-round E15. Your voice is so important on this issue. I look forward to working with you to find a path forward to get this done.

Aside from the obvious and sorely needed boost this would provide to corn farmers, year-round E15 would lead to significant savings for American consumers. American farmers want to contribute to American energy dominance, security, and affordability, particularly at a time when geopolitics are increasingly complicating markets and supply chains. To that end, year-round E15 would:

- Save consumers an average of \$0.25/gallon at the pump¹.
- Reduce consumer spending on motor fuel by \$20.6 billion annually and save the average American household \$168 on motor fuel costs.
- Put an additional \$36.3 billion in income into the pockets of American households.
- Generate an additional \$7 billion in tax revenue for the Federal Treasury and \$6 billion for State and local governments.
- Increase corn utilization by 490 million bushels for every percentage increase in the national average blend rate.²

Second, the Renewable Fuel Standard remains the cornerstone of biofuels policy. The RFS has provided a stable framework that connects American agriculture with America's fuel supply. Strong and predictable Renewable Volume Obligations (RVO)s are essential. They give farmers, ethanol producers, and fuel retailers the confidence to invest and grow. Weak or uncertain targets, on the other hand, ripple through the rural economy and undermine the stability farmers depend on. We appreciate the current EPA's efforts thus far and look forward to seeing finalized 2026-2027 RVOs as soon as possible.

Beyond maintaining current markets, we must also look toward the future and new opportunities for biofuels to help decarbonize the transportation sector. One of the most promising is Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF). Corn-based ethanol can play a major role as a feedstock for producing SAF. The 45Z tax credit, which Congress wisely extended in the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA), will help stimulate expansion of this emerging industry. NCGA is working to ensure that farmers have a seat at the table. In order to do that, we will need backing from the Treasury Department, USDA, and the Department of Energy. Corn growers were encouraged by Treasury's recent proposal on implementation of the credit. Much needed clarity was given on

¹ <https://ncga.com/stay-informed/media/in-the-news/article/2025/09/new-study-unrestricted-sales-of-e15-would-fuel-the-economy>

² Source: <https://growthenergy.org/2025/06/25/>

the on-farm practice component of the 45Z. It is imperative that USDA and DOE now properly execute their upcoming rulemakings to maintain this positive momentum.

Lastly, corn growers are actively exploring an emerging opportunity for ethanol in marine fuel. The shipping industry is under mounting pressure to increase its use of alternative fuels to meet growing customer demand and respond to tightening international and regional standards. These trends create an accelerating demand for alternative maritime fuels that can be delivered by U.S. bioenergy producers. Policies and international frameworks that incentivize increased use of alternative fuels offer an enormous potential market opportunity for American-made biofuels produced from American-grown crops like corn. Reaching volumes of over four billion gallons within the next five years, this market represents an unprecedented opportunity for American farmers.

NCGA looks forward to working with the administration and Congress as the U.S. government engages with global standards-setting bodies to ensure that the interests of American biofuel producers, farmers, marine shippers, and consumers are represented and that we are positioned to compete globally.

Biobased Products

For many years, NCGA has invested in the research and development of new uses for corn. This discovery process continues to bear fruit and corn farmers will be focusing more of their engagement in Washington on removing policy and regulatory barriers and increasing incentives to scaling uptake of biobased products. Increasing market access for biobased products not only creates an economic opportunity for farmers when corn and ethanol are used as feedstocks, but it also presents a more environmentally sustainable alternative for ingredients in many products that Americans use in their everyday lives, such as fibers and polymers. For example, capturing just 10 percent of the plastics market with biobased alternatives could generate demand for an additional 15 billion bushels of corn.

NCGA is increasing its pursuit of new market opportunities beyond traditional policy pathways, with a renewed focus on corn's role in the bioeconomy, where renewable corn-based solutions can replace fossil fuels in everyday products. Currently, we invest in the commercialization of new products utilizing corn as a feedstock and encourage innovation through NCGA's Consider Corn Challenge. To date, if all 22 winners of the challenge became fully commercialized, it is estimated that total demand could increase by 3.4 billion bushels of corn.

Supporting key USDA Farm Bill energy title programs, such as the Section 9002 BioPreferred Program and the Section 9003 Biorefinery, Renewable Chemical, and Biobased Products Assistance Program, could unleash significant potential for the agriculture bioeconomy. Together, these programs encourage federal procurement of biobased products, de-risk innovation for U.S. biomanufacturing and biorefining, support domestic renewable energy production, and strengthen supply chains across the country. Additionally, investing in the ag bioeconomy advances U.S. national security by reducing reliance on foreign inputs and equipping American companies with the tools necessary to compete in global biobased markets. Currently, the biobased products industry only scratches the surface of what it could mean to the American economy.

NCGA has partnered with the Corn Refiners Association and the Plant Based Products Council to develop legislation to propose a federal tax incentive that would encourage the conversion of U.S. grown agricultural feedstocks into renewable chemicals and materials. As both an investment and production credit, this incentive would diversify demand for farmers, strengthen domestic biomanufacturing, and stimulate rural economies. Boosting market opportunities for bioproducts made from agricultural feedstocks creates new revenue streams for growers of many different crops. We encourage Congress to invest in these tools and enhance USDA programs that support American farmers and the agricultural bioeconomy.

Trade

Though the focus of today's hearing is on domestic markets, I would be remiss if I did not at least mention trade, given its importance to corn demand and its relevance to this committee's important work. One of NCGA's strategic priorities is to increase demand for corn and corn products, and we were pleased to see our signature market access programs – Market Access Program (MAP) and Foreign Market Development (FMD) – receive double funding through the One Big Beautiful Bill Act. These programs are vital to unearthing new international markets and heading off trade issues before they impede access. As our global competitors attempt to outpace our exports, the resources in MAP and FMD keep our exports strong.

We also appreciate the administration's work on trade deals that have resulted in new market access for U.S. corn growers, and we encourage swift implementation and enforcement of new deals. We encourage prioritization of high-volume opportunities for corn in all forms including ethanol, dried distillers' grains with solubles (DDGS), and meat, pork and poultry.

Lastly, our strongest trading partners are our closest neighbors. Under the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), Mexico has become our top export market for corn, valued at \$5.5 billion and Canada has become our top export market for ethanol, valued at nearly \$1.5 billion. USMCA also includes valuable tools to fight back against harmful policies proposed by our neighbors and win those disputes, as evident in the U.S.'s successful challenge of Mexico's attempt to ban biotech corn. Renewing the USMCA is a crucial element to preserving and growing these foundational markets for U.S. corn growers, and extension of this agreement is one of NCGA's main policy priorities in 2026.

Life Cycle Analysis

One barrier to new market access that corn farmers face is inconsistency in modeling the life cycle of corn. NCGA has invested heavily in lifecycle analysis (LCA) to ensure that the environmental performance of U.S. corn production is represented with credible data and transparent science. We strive to be science based and math driven. Working with universities, national laboratories, and industry partners, NCGA has improved the models and datasets that quantify real farm outcomes—reflecting modern practices such as precision nutrient management, conservation systems, and steadily improving yields. As customers increasingly rely on lifecycle accounting to source fuels, materials, and food ingredients, it is essential that the math used in those markets accurately reflects the efficiency and environmental performance of American farmers. Cooperation and coordination from Congress and the administration in this

effort would be invaluable. We are needlessly handing over markets to our competitors. Right sizing models through regulation and/or legislation could prevent this from happening.

NCGA's work ensures that sustainability claims about U.S. agriculture are grounded in verifiable outcomes rather than assumptions or narratives. Decades of innovation have allowed U.S. farmers to produce more while using fewer resources per bushel, making American row crop production the most efficient and sustainable in the world. When lifecycle models reflect real data from U.S. farms, the results consistently demonstrate that performance. Simply put: if the math is right, American farmers win.

Risk Management Tools

In addition to increasing demand, NCGA's other strategic pillar is protecting corn farmers' profitability and freedom to operate. Barriers to freedom to operate, weather events, and high input costs are just some of the variables that impact a farmer's profitability. Sometimes restrictions on production tools and methods can restrict market access as well. A strong safety net to manage these risks is critical, and I want to take this opportunity to recognize the Senate Agriculture Committee for its important work to help farmers manage risk and weather emergencies.

While several important and longstanding farm bill priorities for corn growers were addressed through the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, corn growers recognize that the legislation was passed via the budget reconciliation process which limited the scope of policy provisions. The law includes key investments in commodity and crop insurance programs, including several recommendations from corn growers to strengthen the producer's risk management tools.

Corn growers support the bipartisan development and passage of a "Farm Bill 2.0" this year to address additional policies and provisions throughout USDA programs. NCGA continues to support enhancements in the commodity, conservation, credit, rural development, research and energy titles. As the legislative process continues, corn growers will oppose efforts to cut crop insurance programs or restrict producer accessibility to risk management and crop protection tools that would limit their freedom to operate.

In closing, I thank the committee once again for its focus on expanding domestic demand for U.S. agricultural products. This objective is imperative to our future. I implore all members of Congress to put politics aside to advance real solutions – like the ones we have discussed today – for the American farmer. As we look to the future, we need to work together to create a policy environment that supports sustained growth in demand for U.S. corn and corn products, including domestic, foreign, and additional new uses markets.

If we can't build the markets that will stabilize the farm economy, we face the real potential of an industry-wide contraction that would erode the rural economy and the communities where we live and work, while giving competitors like Brazil an opening to replace us in the global market, and compromising our food security. U.S. farmers are too good at what we do – giving the U.S. global strategic advantages in the process - to sit back and let this happen. Please fight with us to secure our next 250 years of farming.

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.