



# Policy Priorities

## Confronting pressures on land and resources

Family farmers are facing challenges to stay in business due to mounting pressures on access to land and natural resources. As farmland values increase, the barriers to entry for family farmers continue to grow. Increased investment in green energy projects, construction of warehouses along transportation corridors, interest in farmland ownership for investment portfolios, and residential development are making it more difficult for land to stay in production through family farm agriculture. Groundwater reserves in rapidly growing communities, particularly north of Indianapolis, are being drawn down which could jeopardize agricultural production.

Our priorities include:

- Placing greater emphasis on and expanding beginning farmer programs that will help with land transition between farmers and keep acres in agriculture.
- Pursuing voluntary, incentive-based policies that recognize farmers' ability to protect our natural resources and address climate change.
- Collaborating with state and federal agencies to ensure that there are adequate staffing resources to best implement conservation programs.
- Enacting policies that consider and account for development pressures on local water supplies.
- Working with and seeking to represent the interests of farmers who are also woodland and timberland owners.
- Supporting local control over state control and opposing the use of eminent domain for private gain.
- Supporting agriculture easement trusts.

## **Building a competitive and resilient market**

Family farmers need access to fair and resilient markets. Policies should not be enacted solely to help the largest players in these markets but ought to be helpful for all, particularly for small and mid-size farms. Consumer demand for food sourced from a shorter supply chain is not a fad, it's a lasting part of the market, but there are only a few accessible processing options for independent livestock and poultry producers in Indiana.

Our priorities include:

- Passing and implementing legislation to provide more marketing options for livestock and poultry producers to sell their meat products to consumers.
- Ensuring that Indiana State Board of Animal Health inspection services are adequately and appropriately funded.
- Encouraging greater use and promotion of statewide marketing programs, like the *Indiana Grown* initiative.
- Helping farmers to work together to market their crops and livestock to achieve economies of scale and meet institutional demand.
- Supporting the Right to Repair farm equipment and access to independent repair.

## Supporting vibrant rural communities

Family farmers depend on the essential services and amenities found in vibrant rural communities. Small towns and cities require a well-educated workforce and robust small business community, as entrepreneurs and a civically engaged population help our communities thrive. The rural economy has changed greatly in recent decades, and businesses and educational institutions in rural Indiana need to adapt and keep pace. Unfortunately, family farmers also often depend on off-farm job opportunities for access to affordable health insurance and income to compensate for what they are unable to receive from the ag marketplace. A more diversified economy in small towns and cities can attract the next generation of farmers and rural residents to build vibrant communities in the years ahead.

Our priorities include:

- Bolstering programs that improve the quality and affordability of health care and insurance in rural areas.
- Supporting agricultural education at all levels to ensure our communities have a well-trained and capable workforce that can take root in small towns and cities.
- Expanding and improving public education and post-secondary technical education institutions, particularly for agriculture.
- Working with rural entrepreneurs to create stronger economic ties between family farmers and small businesses in our communities.
- Expanding access to high-speed internet in rural Indiana to support the growing communications needs of thriving rural communities.
- Providing resources for health care facilities, emergency services, rural water and wastewater systems, childcare centers, and other essential facilities critical to rural residents' quality of life.