



**THE AGRICULTURAL COUNCIL OF ARKANSAS**  
**RESOLUTIONS**  
**2014**

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## **TITLE I – General Policy Statements**

### **COUNCIL POLICY**

It is the permanent policy of the Agricultural Council of Arkansas (ACA) to represent the interests of its members in all regulatory and legislative matters related to agriculture. The ACA will always seek the advice and counsel of its members to best reflect the opinion of the majority of ACA members.

*ACA's Mission Statement:* It is the mission of the ACA to promote agriculture, advocate on behalf of the agriculture industry, and improve the economies of the communities around us.

The ACA welcomes membership to any individual, business, or organization supportive of our mission, and we encourage our membership to recruit new members.

### **PUBLIC RELATIONS FOR AGRICULTURE**

The ACA believes it is necessary for the American public to have an understanding of U. S. agriculture. ACA members recommend that the Ag Council contact other farm and agribusiness organizations to see if a plan might be developed for a successful public relations campaign for agriculture in Arkansas and nationwide.

The ACA remains committed to working with the Agricultural Foundation of Arkansas (AFA) and other agriculture based organizations to educate policymakers and the general public of the importance of agriculture and the role farmers play in providing food, fiber and fuel. The ACA encourages its members to consider donating to the AFA to help fulfill its mission to promote the agriculture industry in Arkansas. The ACA also encourages its members to give gifts to the Agricultural Council of Arkansas Trust to help fulfill its mission to research, education, public safety, and charity on behalf of the agriculture industry in Arkansas. In addition, the ACA encourages members to consider giving to the Agricultural Development Council of the University of Arkansas Foundation.

The ACA encourages other agriculture organizations to support an effort to explore the feasibility of developing a national check-off for the purpose of telling agriculture's remarkable story to the American people through the media.

### **GENERAL GOVERNMENT AGRICULTURE POLICY**

#### **Role of Federal Government in Agriculture**

The ACA believes the federal government should enact policies that support the domestic production agriculture industry and rural communities. The federal government should wisely use taxpayer dollars to support farmers during disaster periods due to weather, revenue shortages, and low commodity prices. Such support should work as a safety net to protect American farmers and keep them in business following disasters.

In addition, the federal government should promote American agriculture products domestically and abroad. The federal government should also play a key role in funding agriculture research to enhance our nation's production capabilities and expand market opportunities for commodities grown in America. The government can and should provide or encourage lending institutions to provide low interest capital to farmers seeking to establish or expand a farming operation. The government should always seek to expand trade opportunities for American agriculture products around the world. The government should establish reasonable and fair regulations that protect the environment, provide a safe workplace, and ensure continued agriculture production of a safe and abundant supply of food, fiber and fuel in America. The government should also continue to provide adequate infrastructure systems that assist farmers in developing and marketing crops.

### **Role of State Government in Agriculture**

The State of Arkansas should support farmers and the agricultural industry in Arkansas. The State of Arkansas should continue to provide tax incentives to farmers that purchase equipment for purposes of producing crops and tax incentives for making conservation investments for reducing water waste and energy use. The State should continue to help fund statewide efforts to 1) promote agriculture commodities, 2) regulate the use of certain agricultural inputs, 3) combat pests like the boll weevil, and 4) educate the public of the importance of agriculture. The ACA supports the Arkansas State Plant Board and the Department of Agriculture. The ACA believes that both organizations should continue to seek the input of farmers as they make decisions that will impact the agriculture industry in Arkansas.

The ACA believes the Arkansas Department of Agriculture, Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality, and the Arkansas Natural Resources Commission should work to ensure that the State Water Plan and other environmental regulatory infrastructures do not negatively impact Arkansas farms. The ACA believes these agencies should include recommendations in the State Water Plan that benefit the farmer and the environment. Such recommendations may require policy or law changes from the legislature or relevant state and federal agencies.

## **TITLE II – Farm Bill Policy Statements**

### **FUTURE FARM BILL**

The ACA would like to see a farm bill that provides adequate economical support to the Agricultural industry, and such a system must be designed to continue providing American citizens with an abundant, affordable and safe food supply. The next Farm Bill should provide adequate levels of support to keep the American producers competitive in the global marketplace. The 2008 Farm Bill provides such support; yet, we are still losing producers at an alarming rate. The ACA believes the Farm Bill should provide programs to encourage young and beginning farmers to farm. The legislation must also create a safety net that reduces the risk of operating a farm to the maximum extent possible. The legislation should provide low interest capital opportunities and other incentives for farm investments in implements, storage capacity, information technology, farm equipment, workers' compensation insurance, irrigation and

energy systems, conservation practices, education and job training, and job creation. Such programs should abstain from requiring income requirements and other means testing methods or payment limitations.

### **Payment Limits/Income Testing**

The ACA strongly opposes any program which provides for ceilings or limitations on the price, loan, price support payment, diversion payment, marketing loan gain, crop insurance, or any other income which any agricultural producer may receive. Such discrimination is unfair, inequitable and disrupts and defeats the purpose of any program designed to improve the economic position of agriculture. The ACA opposes any kind of means test for farm program benefits because it would put many farmers out of business. Setting such eligibility tests on farmers would directly harm many farms in Arkansas.

### **Commodity Title**

Farmers prefer earning their income from the marketplace rather than being dependent on government support programs. Unfortunately, until world trade practices are made fair and equitable, government support for agriculture will remain imperative. Even if the marketplace could yield satisfactory profits for agriculture, government regulations restricting farming practices can make it difficult for farmers to manage their businesses.

The ACA believes that farm programs should be designed for the direct benefit of producers. This includes direct payments to producers which are essential to Arkansas' agriculture. The ACA strongly believes that payment limits and/or income testing should be removed as they represent bad policy and do not reflect the economics of modern farming operations. Farm program payment limitations do not reflect the economics of modern farming operations and should be removed. Farm programs should include safety nets for producers that recognize the realities of the cost of production as well as global commodity markets and the roles played by other governments in trade and agriculture.

The ACA supports Direct Payments and believes that if Congress insists on eliminating this program that remaining funds are redirected towards new risk management programs that work for producers in Arkansas and other parts of the Mid-South. The ACA believes that such programs are necessary for farmers to stay in business in lean years and to access credit from lenders. Yield loss policies typically do not work well for irrigated farmers as they are typically able to produce crops even during significant drought periods. Cost of production insurance, price protection, and shallow loss insurance policies to protect against yield and revenue losses are more applicable and more critical to Mid-South agriculture. However, there must be multiple options of each for farmers to choose among.

### ***Disaster Support:***

The ACA supports legislation that provides financial assistance to all producers that have suffered losses due to natural disasters and economic disasters. The ACA believes the declaration of each county and all contiguous counties should be completed by the Administration in a timely manner. The method of disaster assistance payments to eligible producers should be processed in the simplest and quickest method available and should be delivered through the Farm Service Agency (FSA) where possible. In addition, the U.S.

government should continue to provide adequate funding for existing disaster assistance funding such as loan and grant programs through USDA and SBA as well as USDA and the USACE for watershed rehabilitation.

## **Insurance Title**

### *Federal Crop Insurance:*

The ACA encourages Congress to develop and make available to the farmer an affordable and effective crop insurance program. The program should be designed to allow the farmer to protect himself from excessive production risks, price risks, weather risks, and other revenue risks. Additionally, the premium paid by the producer must be realistically priced by the Government to encourage broad based producer participation and support from farm production lenders.

The crop insurance program should be administered in a manner that discourages abuse of the program.

The crop insurance program should maintain a high level of government cost share for premiums to help share risk and keep premiums reasonable and affordable.

The crop insurance programs should not have eligibility requirements or other means testing requirements. Crop insurance program should not have payment limits either.

The ACA believes the federal crop insurance program should be restructured to operate as a more effective insurance program. It should allow the farmer to insure his investment in the crop or cost of production, but not allow the farmer to earn a profit from an insured loss.

The ACA believes crop insurance program should provide price support as well as support for yield loss. Price support should be at a level for each commodity that will allow farmers to remain viable during times of exceptionally low market prices. The ACA also supports shallow loss insurance programs for cotton (STAX) and other commodities where appropriate, but the ACA does not believe that such policies are sufficient to be considered substitutes for direct payments. The ACA would like Congress and the Risk Management Agency (RMA) to work with different commodity groups to develop a new risk management tool that would provide coverage for cost of production increases, price declines, and revenue declines.

## **Conservation Title**

### *USDA, NRCS & Natural Resources:*

The ACA supports soil and water conservation practices and USDA farm conservation programs so long as these programs offer equal opportunity to all farms and to all geographic areas. In order to conserve resources for future generations, the ACA favors voluntary, government funded, long term land conservation practices.

The ACA believes that USDA should continue to deem farmland, which could be classed as wetland, eligible for conservation payments.

The ACA favors passage of national and state legislation which offers incentives to farmers to impound water for irrigation purposes, to recover tail water, or better maximize on-farm water use.

The ACA opposes any restrictions on streams in agricultural areas which would limit the use of excess flow.

The ACA encourages the continued development of surface water storage and usage. The ACA supports the use of USDA funds, USACE funds, state funds, and other funding sources to develop USACE projects including the Bayou Meto Irrigation Project and the Grand Prairie Irrigation Project as both of these projects are considered to be environmentally sound and represent improved surface water utilization to help ensure long-term sustainable agricultural production in Arkansas. The ACA supports “earmarks” for these critical water projects, which are important for the environment and sustainability of Arkansas farmers. The ACA believes the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) should provide some financial and technical help to these projects.

Conservation programs should abstain from means testing for qualifying and should not contain payment limitations.

### **Energy Title**

The ACA encourages research and development necessary to provide adequate electricity for rural communities as well as production agriculture. The ACA also encourages continued support for research and development to promote increased production and utilization of ethanol, biodiesel and all other alternative energy sources. The ACA supports tax credits as incentives to promote research, development, production and utilization of all alternative energy sources. As the alternative fuel infrastructure develops, the ACA encourages utilization of alternative fuels by governments for State and Federal vehicles. The ACA also encourages the use of biodiesel fuel in farm equipment. The ACA supports any tax credits or grants available to producers that purchase equipment or technology that will improve energy efficiency, reduce energy usage on farms, and improve irrigation systems.

The ACA opposes mandates on fuel storage infrastructure on farms if such regulations are cost prohibitive or unwarranted. The ACA objects to any efforts to retroactively enforce compliance with any federal regulation pertaining to on farm fuel storage.

### **Credit Title**

The ACA recommends that Congress look to expand opportunities for farmers to access capital at favorable levels that encourage investment. The ACA would like to see more government guaranteed low interest, long-term agriculture related loans. The ACA is concerned that a reduction in commodity programs will make obtaining an operating loan more difficult as fewer lending institutions would be willing to lend money with increased risk of default.

### **Trade Title**

The ACA would like the USDA to work with the Department of Commerce and other agencies to expand trade opportunities, resolve trade disputes, and promote U.S. agriculture products in

foreign markets. The ACA also encourages USDA and other relevant trade related agencies to serve as an advocate for U.S. agriculture when it comes to trade enforcement and market development.

The ACA urges full funding and implementation of the export Foreign Agriculture Services' enhancement program so as to provide maximum benefit to producers. U.S. trade policy and trade negotiations should enhance U.S. farm programs and thereby lower the cost of such programs.

### **Nutrition Title**

The ACA would like the federal government to utilize U.S. commodities to feed low income, mal-nourished in the U.S. and around the world. The ACA strongly believes that any additional funding for nutrition should not come from other agriculture programs. The ACA believes that some savings could be achieved in Administrative costs and through reducing fraud and abuse within existing nutrition programs.

The ACA believes that the Nutrition Title is a key component of farm and food policy and should be included in a comprehensive farm bill. The ACA does not support efforts to divorce the nutrition title from the other titles included in the farm bill. The ACA understands that nutrition programs provides a market for agricultural commodities, helps feed the less fortunate, and improves the economic conditions of food makers, transportation companies, and food retail stores.

### **Rural Development Title**

The ACA believes that rural development programs should be funded at the highest possible levels and should be distributed to those seeking to improve the rural economies by targeting farms, rural businesses and entrepreneurship. The ACA supports the Delta Regional Authority (DRA) and its mission to improve the economies of the Mississippi River Delta Region. The ACA also supports Rural Development programs that provide infrastructure for water, roads, health care, education, economic development, and information technology.

### **Research Title**

#### *Research and Extension Services:*

The agricultural colleges, including the experiment stations, extension services, and contract researchers have helped make America the leader in innovative techniques for agriculture and deserve full public support for funding at the highest possible levels. The ACA strongly supports increased research in fields that will increase yields, improve quality, and reduce on-farm input usage. In addition the ACA supports research in seed, chemical and other technologies and practices to enhance pest management, including reducing resistance to such technologies.

The ACA believes check-off funds should continue to be invested in research projects done by the University of Arkansas's Division of Agriculture Research and Extension Service.

The ACA encourages the UofA, USDA, and other government research institutions to research, verify, and develop new technologies in information technology systems to increase efficiency in

energy and water use, chemical applications, and other components of precision agriculture. Such technologies include, but are not limited to, smart phone and tablet apps, unmanned aerial vehicle systems, remote irrigation and energy controls, irrigation systems management, and other technologies of the future.

*Agriculture Research Service:*

The ACA recognizes the important research conducted by the ARS facilities in Arkansas and encourages members of the Arkansas Congressional Delegation to provide adequate funding to these facilities so they may continue their efforts to assist farmers by enhancing yield quality and quantity and developing value added uses.

*Congressionally Directed Spending:*

The ACA understands that Congressionally directed spending in the form of "earmarks" may be necessary to quickly direct federal funds to agriculture research projects critical to Arkansas and the agriculture industry, and we support the use of earmarks for such purposes.

### **TITLE III – Policy Statements on Miscellaneous Items**

#### **Deficit Reduction Policy**

The ACA is concerned with our nation's current debt load. The ACA believes that Congress should work in a bipartisan manner to address our nation's debt and to reduce our annual budget deficits. The ACA believes Congress should also take action to reduce our nation's trade deficit. The ACA believes agriculture can and should participate in these efforts. However, the ACA does not support placing disproportionate deficit reduction burden upon agriculture. The ACA believes that tax reform may need to play a significant part in reducing our national debt.

#### **Trade Policy**

The ACA favors government policy which permits the sale of any agricultural products to any country with the resources to purchase them. The ACA supports lifting all trade sanctions against Cuba, especially those under the Department of Treasury's jurisdiction.

U.S. foreign policy often has a tremendous effect on the farm economy. Although we do not advocate putting the interests of farmers ahead of the nation's interests, the ACA believes that under no circumstance should agriculture be asked to bear an unfair share of the burden of U. S. foreign policy. The ACA opposes the export embargo of any agricultural commodity.

The ACA opposes the movement of all commodities to offshore sites for further processing such as, but not limited to, milling packaging and weaving unless covered by free trade agreement.

The ACA believes that American trade policy should be supported within WTO negotiations, and that American trade policy must be consistent with U. S. agricultural policies. It is essential to monitor America's trading competitors' policy positions relating to agriculture and trade.

The ACA supports free trade agreements that are fair to U.S. producers and expand export opportunities for U.S. grown commodities.

The ACA believes that government should be active in maintaining open markets, especially when foreign nations arbitrarily halt imports of U.S. agricultural products based on phytosanitary specifications or other arbitrary standards.

### **Environmental Policy**

*U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA):*

The ACA believes that the EPA has moved outside of congressional authority by announcing its intentions to regulate certain aspects of air quality and water quality through emission standards and the Clean Water Act. The ACA suggests that the U. S. Congress put further checks and balances on the EPA that would provide needed oversight and limit of such attempts, especially in regulating agricultural practices in the Mississippi River basin.

The EPA has further issued rules covering state issued permits for applications of pesticides over certain crops due to possible runoff. ACA believes that no further regulations are necessary since each product's label has been reviewed and approved for proper application by EPA.

The ACA would encourage Congress to consider mandating Congressional approval of any new regulations determined to pose a significant economic risk to the agriculture industry in the U.S.

The ACA is concerned with recent attempts by the EPA to set nutrient standards for watersheds by setting pollutant discharge regulations for individual farms. The ACA believes such policies are unwarranted because they are not currently scientifically proven to be effective and are difficult to impose.

The ACA supports legislation to reduce compliance costs and mandates associated with regulations on on-farm fuel storage.

The ACA supports the development and use of safe technologies in crop genetics and herbicides that will help farmers better control damaging weeds and maximize yield potentials.

The ACA believes that USDA/EPA should maintain its commitment to U.S. farmers by conducting timely, scientific reviews of technologies, and get them to farmers in a timely manner. It's important for farmers to be able to utilize all safe and effective tools that may be available to them in order to produce crops, increase yields, and remain sustainable.

The ACA believes that new listing of certain mussel species under the Endangered Species Act should not prohibit or restrict a farmer's ability to continue their farming operations.

*Chemical Use Policy:*

The ACA recommends that pesticides and other agricultural chemicals which are applied in a recommended manner not be banned or restricted unless adequate research has proven them harmful to humans, animals in warranted need of protection, or agricultural crops.

The ACA questions the mechanism by which any biological species is determined to be threatened or endangered as it often appears to be opinion based rather than science based.

Should any restrictions be placed on the use of farm land because of environmental concerns, it is the ACA's conviction that any costs or reduction in income incurred by farmers, due to such restrictions, should be paid for by the public through government.

### **Labor Policy**

#### *Right to work status:*

We urge our Congressional delegation to continue to support retention of Section 14(b) of the Taft-Hartley Act.

#### *Department of Labor (OSHA):*

The ACA believes the Department of Labor must consider the farm labor shortages when implementing any new rule related to child labor on farms. Farm families should be exempted from any such child labor restrictions. The ACA recommends that current labor rules for farms, which exempt family farms, should not be amended.

#### *Worker's Compensation:*

The ACA strongly supports and endorses the AG COMP SIF worker's compensation program and recommends that all eligible farms and agri-businesses in Arkansas join the ACA and participate in the program. The program offers a number of direct benefits to farms, agri-businesses, and agricultural employees.

### **Tax Policy**

#### *Social Security:*

We oppose further increases in Social Security taxes.

#### *Estate Taxes:*

The Ag Council supports the total and permanent repeal of all estate and inheritance taxes, especially as they relate to family farms and rural small businesses.

### **Health Care Policy**

The ACA encourages its members to consider utilizing the BRAVO health insurance policies available with a membership to the ACA.

The ACA opposes federal mandates for businesses to provide health care to all employees. The ACA supports the development of low cost care systems and improved care for all.

### **Regulatory Policy**

#### *Regulatory Agencies:*

The ACA supports sensible rules issued by OSHA, EPA, FDA, and U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) which reasonably can be expected to achieve results. We insist that OSHA, EPA, FDA, and FWS rules and actions result in a national cost/benefit ratio based on reasonable scientific evidence.

The ACA believes that all regulations should be simple and easy for compliance purposes. The ACA supports efforts to streamline or simplify existing regulations. The ACA also supports eliminating any rules deemed to be overly burdensome, duplicative, ineffective or obsolete.

The ACA believes that regulations impacting financial institutions should not punish or penalize rural banks, community banks or any other lending institution that may provide agricultural loans. Regulating agencies should recognize the important role of such banks in maintaining a healthy agriculture industry. The ACA supports regulatory policies that encourage agriculture lending and provide access for borrowing.

### **Energy Policy**

The ACA supports policy that assures adequate energy supplies necessary for rural community viability as well as agricultural production, harvesting, processing and transporting agricultural commodities. Use of renewable energy resources, alternate fuel sources, recycling and conservation should be the basis of any energy policy. The ACA supports public policy that continues to provide incentives for entities in the development of biofuel.

The ACA encourages research and development necessary to provide adequate electricity for rural communities as well as production agriculture. The ACA encourages research and development to promote increased production and utilization of ethanol, biodiesel and all other alternative energy sources. The ACA supports tax credits as incentives to promote research, development, production and utilization of all alternative energy sources. As the alternative fuel infrastructure develops, the ACA encourages utilization of alternative fuels by governments for State and Federal vehicles. The ACA also encourages the use of biodiesel fuel in farm equipment.

The ACA opposes the use of eminent domain in the development of utility transmission lines and other energy systems, especially in instances that primarily benefit private parties rather than the general public. Landowners should be compensated adequately for any land use for such purposes, and such utility companies should utilize existing right a ways and infrastructure when developing such lines.

The ACA supports the development and use of renewable fuels from agricultural sources. Policies that support the development and use of such fuels provide an alternative market for agricultural commodities and helps create stability in commodity markets. Any policies to create a mandate for the development and use of such fuels should provide adequate “off-ramps” should any unintended consequences arise in association with food supply or domestic security.

The ACA believes to the maximum extent possible that government regulators and fuel providers should work to ensure that the Arkansas agriculture industry has access to adequate and affordable fuel supplies.

*“Cap & Trade” Systems:* The ACA believes that the U.S. should not establish Cap and Trade policies until all developed and developing nations reach a full and fair agreement on how to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases. China and India, the two largest cotton and textile

producing countries, are competitors with United States cotton in the international market. Both countries are significantly increasing greenhouse gas emissions and both have thus far refused to sign on to any agreement to curtail their emissions.

In the event of such legislative action, the ACA believes USDA should develop and administer agriculture offsets in a Cap and Trade program. The development of these offsets is a means to mitigate, to some degree, the impact of significantly higher energy and input costs to production agriculture and agribusiness; all production, marketing and processing will be adversely affected in varying degrees. The ACA remains concerned that additional production costs resulting from implementation of provisions of any Cap and Trade program will place United States' agriculture and agriculture products at a clear disadvantage in international markets.

### **Transportation Policy**

The ACA supports the improvement of interstate highways for transportation and delivery of agricultural commodities. The ACA supports interaction with Arkansas Highway Department to improve the ability to move farm commodities and farm equipment on Arkansas' roads and highways more effectively, and the ACA supports the concept of securing low-cost permits and tags for such movements. The ACA would point out that construction of interstate highways should consider present land use and provide proper access to land, and we support fair compensation for landowners when use and access is restricted.

The ACA remains concerned with dock strikes and other transportation union strikes which can pose serious threats to exports and domestic marketing of farm commodities. With due regard to the position of both labor and domestic marketing of farm commodities, we believe it is in the national interest and essential to the well-being of agriculture in America, that government action be taken to prevent prolonged work stoppages in our nation's transportation system.

The ACA favors export shipment of agricultural products by the least costly method. The ACA also supports size and weight exemptions for truck carrying agricultural commodities and products, including cotton seed. The ACA supports the development of a voluntary statewide system of pre-inspections for safety compliance that would reduce the risk of targeted pull-overs of agricultural trucks transporting grain and other agricultural products, especially during harvest season.

The ACA supports reforms to the Surface Transportation Board (STB) that would provide more shippers rights for the transportation of agricultural commodities and products while maintaining a healthy railroad industry.

The ACA supports the development and use of Unmanned Aerial Systems for precision agriculture practices. Regulations for use must work for farmers and landowners. Such regulations should not increase cost of use or limit the ability to use on private property.

The ACA requests that the Corps of Engineers manage, maintain, and improve waterways in a manner that will ensure the full use of navigable waterways at all times. The ACA also supports funding for inland ports and waterways. The ACA supports a 12' navigational channel in the Arkansas River Navigation System (MKARNS).

The ACA also supports the continued expansion of our national and state highway system including I-40 and I-69.

The ACA understands that Congressionally directed spending in the form of “earmarks” may be necessary to quickly direct federal funds to transportation projects critical to Arkansas and the agriculture industry, and we support the use of earmarks for such purposes.

### **Water and Water Infrastructure Policy**

The ACA recognizes the efforts of the officers of the various districts, the Mississippi River Commission, the Corps of Engineers, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service, participating in flood control and improvement of lands in Arkansas. The ACA recommends that Congress direct the Corps to include availability of agricultural irrigation water in their studies.

The ACA requests Congress to address the failure of the Corps of Engineers to certify the levees in its district and further request prompt certification of said levees to alleviate the farmers of paying millions of dollars in unnecessary flood insurance coverage. The levee certification issue is vital to members of this organization and the rural communities throughout much of the state. The ACA opposes FEMA’s efforts to set new regulations related to flood plains that would mandate the purchasing of flood insurance.

The ACA urges expedited completion of the river basin projects in Arkansas for which funds have been authorized and appropriated. The ACA support maximum appropriations for all lower Mississippi Valley flood control and improvement projects.

The ACA urges authorization and appropriation of federal funds for maintenance of banks, dikes and control structures along the Arkansas River. The ACA also supports funding for inland ports and waterways. The ACA supports a 12’ navigational channel in the MKARNS. The ACA also supports dredging the lower Mississippi River, but not at the expense of other water infrastructure projects in Arkansas.

The ACA opposes proposals to enhance the Inland Waterways Trust Fund through increased lockage fees.

The ACA supports completion of the work proposed by the Corps of Engineers to improve the Mississippi levees, from Cape Girardeau, Missouri, to the Gulf of Mexico, so as to fully protect the citizenry and property in the states of the lower Mississippi Valley.

The ACA also supports legislation to preserve wildlife habitat by authorizing the Secretary of the Army, acting through the Chief of Engineers, to acquire easement in lieu of fee for lands designated for acquisition in mitigation of losses or damage to fish and wildlife resulting from Federal improvement.

The ACA recognizes that beavers have become a major impediment to drainage of both farm and timber lands in Arkansas. The ACA pledges its cooperation with federal, state and local agencies in searching for a solution to this problem.

The ACA understands that Congressionally directed spending in the form of “earmarks” may be necessary to quickly direct federal funds to water infrastructure projects critical to Arkansas and the agriculture industry, and we support the use of earmarks for such purposes

*Drainage - Section 404:* The ACA believes in a healthy environment, and we are committed to good drainage as we, know it to be essential to the productivity of the alluvial areas of the country. The ACA is convinced that a reasonable balance can be achieved for the good of the country between these two objectives if EPA and Corps of Engineers will promulgate sensible regulations and administer them in a wise manner. The ACA opposes the unfair increases in fees for obtaining a Section 404 permit which were proposed at one time by the Corps of Engineers.

The ACA recommends restricting Section 404 jurisdiction to the historical definition of "navigable waters." We also think Congress should adopt a reasonable definition of "wetlands." We further recommend that any new legislation make it clear that the Corps of Engineers has final authority to issue permits under Section 404. The ACA believes decisions on 404 permits should be rendered within six months.

*Farmed Wetlands:* We believe that any farmland that was in cultivation prior to 1985 should be considered prior converted cropland regardless of how long water may stand on it during the growing season.

### **Food Safety Policy**

The ACA supports the development and enforcement of regulations by USDA/FDA to ensure the safety of all food and sources of food for the nation, whether produced domestically or internationally. The ACA believes inspection of imported agricultural products is lacking and should be enhanced.

The ACA supports federal funding for USDA inspections of imported catfish from overseas. The ACA supports country of origin labeling for catfish and catfish like species sold in Arkansas restaurants and by food services to better inform consumers. The ACA believes consumers should receive such notice at restaurants, cafeterias, lunch room, food stands, and other similar food facilities in Arkansas.

### **Lacey Act and Carp**

The ACA believes that the Lacey Act should not apply to carp and penalties for violations related to the act should be reduced as they may relate to the interstate transportation of such species.

### **Commodity Market Oversight Policy**

In lieu of recent overall market problems, the ACA supports absolute clear definitions of marketing terms including, but not limited, to hedging, speculating, and transparency. Any new regulations should be developed with the intent to increase transparency and limit unwarranted market volatility.

## **Commodity Policies**

It is the ACA's position to work with the various national and state commodity based organizations to promote agriculture and advocate for policies where the ACA and the commodity organizations are in agreement.

*Rice:* Rice has long been the world's number one food grain. It has become Arkansas' largest program crop. It is vital to the state's economy and to Ag Council members. In order to fulfill America's desire to help feed the world's needy people we recommend full use of all government programs to maximize the exportation of rice.

We support the USA Rice Federation's efforts to use all the money from the Columbian Free Trade Agreement Tariff Rate Quotas (TRQ) for research.

The ACA believes rice should be promoted as a nutritious food based upon its qualities. The USDA, FDA, and other relevant federal and state agencies should encourage rice consumption as an important component to any meal. The ACA believes arsenic levels occurring in rice are naturally occurring organic or inorganic, and are not at levels deemed harmful to human health. We support the FDA's efforts to work with industry and researchers to determine how arsenic levels in rice may be decreased.

*Soybeans:* The assurance of viable Soybean seed is vital to Arkansas' farmers. We encourage uniform standard testing of soybean seed and results made available to farmers upon request. The ACA supports continued development of biodiesel from soybeans.

*Cotton:* The ACA encourages cotton commodity brokers to be bonded. The ACA supports the development of a shallow loss insurance program for cotton. The ACA supports continuing to comply with the U.S. – Brazil agreement for the WTO case against the U.S.

## **Fertilizer Costs**

The ACA supports efforts to conduct a feasibility study on the viability of developing and operating fertilizer production facilities in Arkansas for the purposes of increasing competition among producers and providing farmers with lower cost options for fertilizers. The ACA supports the reduction or elimination of duties on imported fertilizer products in order to keep such costs to a minimum.

## **Property Rights Policy**

### *Trespass:*

The ACA supports private property rights and encourage the strict enforcement of trespass laws. Additionally, we support the passage of increased penalties for repeat offenders of the law.

### *Eminent Domain:*

Property acquired under the right of eminent domain, when not used for the purpose for which it was taken, should be offered for resale to the person from whom it was seized at the price at which it was confiscated.

The ACA opposes the use of eminent domain in the development of utility transmission lines and other energy systems, especially in instances that primarily benefit private parties rather than the general public. Landowners should be compensated adequately for any land use for such purposes.

If any governmental entity takes, appropriates, seizes, restricts, or modifies the use of private property, the owner should be adequately compensated for any present or future loss.

*Landlord:*

The ACA supports Article 9 of the Arkansas Uniform Commercial Code that gives automatic priority status of landlord liens on crops under Ark. Code Ann. Section 18-41-101.

**Welfare Policy**

*Unemployment Compensation:*

ACA members are alarmed about the escalating costs of unemployment compensation. Administration of this program is of great concern. Government employees tend to side with other employees. Oftentimes former employees are allowed to continue drawing unemployment compensation after they have found other employment. Reason needs to be brought to the program.

The ACA supports new reforms to welfare programs that would limit the eligibility and use of these programs in order to encourage participants to seek and accept employment opportunities.

**Anti-Trust Policy**

ACA members are increasingly concerned with recent mergers between agricultural suppliers and the resultant erosion in competition reflected in increased prices of crop production inputs. The ACA believes it is crucial that producers not be placed at the mercy of one or two dominant companies for various input products.

The ACA recommends that the Arkansas Attorney General and the U.S. DOJ continue to remain vigilant in identifying and prosecuting violations of anti-trust laws, especially as they relate to agriculture suppliers.

**Education Policy**

The ACA supports required learning related to educating students of the importance of agriculture to our economy and our nation's history. Students should learn more about the farm families that produce the food they eat. The ACA supports scholarship programs to students seeking degrees related to agriculture.

The ACA supports Future Farmers of America (FFA), 4-H, and other agriculture education programs for children and young adults. The ACA would like to work with these organizations to educate these students and future agriculture leaders on the importance of organizations like the Ag Council.

## **Science Policy**

### *Biotechnology:*

Recognizing that biotechnology may contribute useful technology to agriculture which could enhance both quality and competitiveness of farm products, the ACA encourages development in this field. Such research and development is necessary to meet global food demands of the future.

The ACA urges USDA and other appropriate governmental agencies to expedite the testing and release of recombinant plants containing the useful genes which have the potential to render crop production more efficient.

The ACA encourages research to develop traits beneficial to consumers which will open new uses and new markets for commodities.

## **Immigration Policy**

*Farm Labor:* It is the policy of the Council to support federal legislation governing the procuring and the placement of legal immigrants filling farm laborer positions.

# **TITLE IV – Policy Statements on State Issues**

## **STATE GOVERNMENT**

### **Agriculture Department of Arkansas**

It is the policy of the ACA to work closely with the Agriculture Department of Arkansas to promote agriculture and assist in commodity marketing programs. The ACA supports raising the awareness of the citizens of Arkansas about the importance of agriculture to the state's economy. The ACA will assist in the development of marketing strategies to enable the producer to receive a fair market price. Development of alternative fuel production and use is just one example of added value to oil seed production that the Agriculture Department should explore.

The Arkansas Department of Agriculture should continue to work directly with farmers in Arkansas and seek their advice in the future. The ACA would like to work with the Department of Agriculture to educate members of the state legislature on the functions and purposes of the state commodity promotion boards.

### **Arkansas State Plant Board**

#### *Role in Chemical Permit Requests:*

The ACA believes the ASPB should work closely with the ACA in seeking permits for products to be used in Arkansas. The ACA would like the ASPB to review and approve beneficial new products at the earliest moment possible provided there is science based data supporting the need for such a product. Products that will assist farmers in mitigating damages from threatening

pests from bugs to weeds should take a high priority. The ASPB should take considerable steps to penalize and discourage the misapplication of agricultural chemicals that may cause harm to off-target crops. The ASPB should also take considerable steps to educate and train inspectors and users of proper use of such chemicals. The ACA encourages FMC to change their label for Command so that rice farmers will be able to utilize the chemical without fear of violating the label restrictions for use.

### **Check-off/Commodity Support Programs**

The ACA continues to support mandatory check-offs for cotton, soybeans, rice, wheat, and corn and grain sorghum in Arkansas. The ACA strongly supports continuing its statutory authority to nominate members to the promotion boards. In addition, the ACA believes the promotion boards should continue to represent grower interests by requiring all board members be farmers.

The ACA supports the programs of Cotton Incorporated, the National Cotton Council, Arkansas Soybean Association, the Arkansas Soybean Promotion Board, the United Soybean Board, the Arkansas Rice Research Board, the Arkansas Wheat Promotion Board, the Arkansas Wheat Growers Association, the Arkansas Corn and Grain Sorghum Board, the United Sorghum Checkoff Program, and the Soil Test Review Board. The ACA opposes a policy of allowing an individual to simultaneously serve on the USB and on the American Soybean Association Board.

The ACA urges Cotton Incorporated, with the assistance of land grant colleges, USDA, and other public scientists, to continue developing a national cotton breeding program with the following objectives: Develop new cotton varieties with 1) higher, more stable yields to enable cotton producers to earn a profit growing cotton, and 2) improved, more uniform fiber properties to enable cotton spinners to utilize new spinning technologies for more effective competition with imports.

### **Taxes**

The ACA favors maintaining the sales tax exemptions and income tax deductions/credits presently made available to Arkansas farmers. Such exemptions and deductions/credits should be expanded where possible. The ACA supports the tax cuts provided in the 89<sup>th</sup> Arkansas General Assembly that reduced taxes for bale wrap supplies, replacement parts for equipment, and sales and use taxes for energy used in aquaculture, grain drying, rice milling, soybean oil milling, and cotton ginning.

### **Boll Weevil Eradication Board**

The ACA supports a post boll weevil eradication maintenance program with assistance from State surplus revenues. The Council also supports federal financial assistance for boll weevil maintenance in Arkansas and all cotton producing states.

The Boll Weevil Board should reduce to the maximum advisable extent overhead costs and fees collected during the post-eradication period while also maintaining enough resources to respond to a future outbreak. The ACA believes that the Arkansas Boll Weevil Eradication Board should work with neighboring states and the National Cotton Council to prevent a re-infestation.

### **University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture**

Maximum development of the agricultural potential in any state is dependent on a strong Land Grant institution. A successful College of Agriculture must maintain the interest and support of farmers. The ACA will continue to improve communications with the University in order to sharpen farmer interest in research, extension and teaching activities. The ACA pledges its full support toward making Arkansas' Land Grant College the best possible.

The ACA urges the University of Arkansas and Arkansas State University to engage in research aimed at protecting the right of farmers to continue to use pesticides, fertilizers, growth regulators, etc.

The ACA encourages members to consider giving gifts to the University of Arkansas Agriculture Development Council's Foundation. Such gifts enhance the University's abilities to serve the agriculture industry into the future through education, research and extension efforts.

*Extension Services:*

The ACA supports the concept of five research and extension centers being developed by the University of Arkansas, Division of Agriculture.

The ACA urges the Experiment station and the Cooperative Extension Service to continue addressing real-life, on farm problems, such as herbicide resistant weeds. It is imperative these problems be given top priority.

The ACA recommends that the Cooperative Extension Service begin to refocus and restructure itself so as to best serve commercial agriculture. To this end, the ACA requests that the Arkansas Agricultural Experiment Station and the Cooperative Extension Service, when formulating recommendations about pesticides concerning registration, emergency use permits or any recommendation which involves policy considerations, to consult with the Agricultural Council of Arkansas and other organizations before making recommendations.

The ACA is concerned about employee morale among extension staff, and we recommend that the Division of Agriculture leadership attempts to work with its employees to ensure that rules related to vehicle use, per diem reimbursements, or other expenses not be overly cumbersome.

*Research:*

The ACA would like for the University to continue its research efforts on behalf of the promotion boards.

**Tourism**

The ACA supports efforts of the State of Arkansas to promote agri-tourism throughout Arkansas. To the extent possible, the ACA would like to participate in these efforts.

The ACA supports recently passed liability protection for farms providing the public with agri-tourism opportunities. This law may need to be amended to provide additional protections.

The ACA supports efforts to generate tourism opportunities in Eastern Arkansas and interest in agriculture history and rural arts.

### **State Water Plan**

The ACA recommends that the Arkansas Natural Resources Commission and other relevant agencies working on the State Water Plan consult with the ACA as they develop the State Water Plan.

The ACA believes that the State Water Plan should include incentives and plans to support surface water use for irrigation. The ACA also believes the State Water Plan should not create restrictions in use of ground or surface water for irrigation. The Water Plan should provide policy recommendations for incentivizing precision agriculture and efforts to reduce energy and water use on farms.

The ACA believes the Arkansas Department of Agriculture and the Arkansas Natural Resources Commission should work to ensure that the State Water Plan does not negatively impact Arkansas farms. The ACA believes these agencies should include recommendations in the State Water Plan that benefit the farmer and the environment. Such recommendations may require policy or law changes from the legislature or relevant state and federal agencies.

### **Education**

We support all Arkansas institutions of higher learning, especially those which contribute to agricultural research and education. All levels of education in Arkansas should consider required learning of the importance of agriculture in Arkansas.

## **TITLE V – Commendations**

### **Arkansas Congressional Delegation**

The Council extends its sincere thanks and appreciation to the Arkansas Congressional delegation from Arkansas and members of our State Administration for their leadership and effective work on behalf of agriculture and the nation.

### **Arkansas General Assembly**

The ACA commends members of the Arkansas General Assembly who supported efforts to reduce the tax burden on during the 89<sup>th</sup> Session in 2013. The ACA will continue to applaud those who support these tax policies in the future.

### **Agricultural Council of Arkansas**

The membership is grateful to the officers; directors and committee members who have given of their time and efforts on behalf of this organization.

### **Herrick Norcross**

The ACA recognizes the important contributions that Herrick has made to the Agricultural Council of Arkansas, the State of Arkansas, and the United States. We appreciate his service to this organization as President and Board Member. We appreciate his service to state promotion boards and the National Cotton Council.

### **Robert McGinnis**

The ACA appreciates Mr. Robert “Bob” McGinnis for his service to agriculture, the State of Arkansas, and the United States. We especially thank him for his exemplary service in the Agricultural Council of Arkansas, the Arkansas General Assembly, the National Cotton Council and Cotton Incorporated.

### **Representative Joe Jett**

The ACA appreciates the work of Representative Joe Jett in his efforts to lower tax rates for the agriculture industry in Arkansas. As a farmer, pilot, and legislator, he has shown exemplary leadership for the agriculture industry, his district, and the State of Arkansas.

### **Senator Jonathan Dismang**

The ACA expresses appreciation to Senator Jonathan Dismang for his efforts to lower tax rates for the agriculture industry in Arkansas. As the Senator from District 28, Senator Dismang played a critical role in helping to pass multiple bills to reduce tax rates on agriculture, including a bill he sponsored to reduce sales and use tax rates on energy used for grain storage and drying. His leadership was instrumental in ensuring these bills became law in the 89<sup>th</sup> General Assembly.

### **Speaker Davy Carter**

The ACA expresses appreciation to Speaker of the House Davy Carter for his efforts to lower state taxes on the agriculture industry in Arkansas. As the Speaker of the House, Speaker Carter shepherded multiple tax cut bills through the State House in the 89<sup>th</sup> General Assembly. Many of the tax reductions directly benefited multiple segments of the agriculture industry in Arkansas.

### **Dale Hall of Ducks Unlimited**

The ACA expresses appreciation to Ducks Unlimited Chief Executive Officer, Dale Hall, who has worked diligently to highlight the benefits of rice production in providing food and habitat to migrating waterfowl and other animal species. Mr. Hall, who also served as Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, has shown a lifelong commitment to wildlife, agriculture, and conservation. We thank him for his support for the Arkansas agriculture industry.

### **Mr. Stanley Eldon Reed**

The ACA honors the life of Mr. Stanley Eldon Reed of Marianna, Arkansas. We are forever grateful for his lifelong commitment to agriculture and his impact on the agriculture industry. Reed, a successful farmer, attorney, and businessman, served in many capacities to help improve the standing of agriculture in Arkansas. We especially thank him for his contributions to the Agricultural Council of Arkansas, where he participated as a member of the Board of Directors for many years.