



Policy Resolution 2026-06

Western Agriculture

A. BACKGROUND

Farms and ranches are important contributors to the economies and quality of life of western states. Among other important values, western agricultural lands are primary sources of open space, wildlife habitat, water supplies, and diverse rural economic opportunities in the recreation, food and nutrition, fiber, energy and bio-based product industries. While united with a common history of agricultural production and culture, the western states and territories have variations in soil, climate, terrain, commodities, production practices and water availability.

B. GOVERNORS' POLICY STATEMENT

1. Western Governors support funding for the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Market Access and Foreign Market Development Programs and Small Business Administration (SBA) State Trade Expansion Program to promote opportunities for western producers to increase export revenues and encourage trade agreements that maximize benefits for the West's farmers and ranchers. Western Governors support adjustments to update funding amounts which have not accounted for inflation since 2006.
2. Western Governors support adequate funding for the USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant Program, which provides critical research, education, and promotion tools to fruit, vegetable, tree nut, dried fruit, horticulture, viticulture, and nursery crop (including floriculture) producers with an annual re-evaluation of funding formulas and eligible crops.
3. Western states are experiencing severe volatility in farm net income, insurance prices, capital investment and recurring input costs, and farm prices. Western Governors support a farm safety net that recognizes past deficit reduction contributions of the agricultural sector and maintains funding for other key programs that address commodities, alfalfa and hay production, conservation, crop insurance, livestock indemnity, forage, emergency assistance, research, energy, and export promotion. These programs should reflect contemporary values of land, crops, and livestock.
4. Western Governors encourage the expansion of federal programs, including USDA programs that can meet the unique educational, training, technical, and financial needs of rural, as well as new, beginning, underserved, urban, and veteran farmers and ranchers. We also support other USDA programming that can help these producers develop and expand business opportunities.
5. Western Governors emphasize that the agriculture industry has a growing need for workers with science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) skills, especially rural professionals with advanced training, including large animal and production veterinarians and legal, financial, and planning experts. We support efforts to develop a diverse and skilled agricultural workforce, by increasing awareness of career opportunities, expanding

education and training programs, offering continuing education for current producers, and other means, in order to meet the needs of this increasingly high-tech industry.

6. Western Governors support the expansion of research-, implementation-, and disaster-related funding to address drought, flooding, catastrophic wildfires, a changing climate, the effects of smoke on crops and livestock, and extreme weather risks facing western producers. Loss-adjustment procedures should be conducted in a timely manner and should account for contemporary market discounts that may occur due to natural disasters.
7. Western Governors encourage the effective use of Cooperative Extension Services, Agricultural Experiment Stations and other partnerships to deliver practical tools, technologies and information to farmers, ranchers and private landowners. We support Congressional and Administration efforts that provide support to the Cooperative Extension Services and Agricultural Experiments Station networks as they address research, staff capacity, and agricultural and food system challenges associated with public health issues and supply chain disruptions. Western Governors also support efforts which enable Extension Services and Experiment Stations to collaborate with the private sector for workforce solutions, and compete with foreign countries to advance bioeconomic and agricultural research.
8. Cooperation between federal, state, and tribal governments is essential for food safety, a sustainable food supply, and public health. Programs which contribute to the coordination of policies, sharing of best practices, integration of traditional ecological knowledge, and the support of tribal fisheries and producers should be fully supported by the legislative and administrative actions of the federal government.
9. Western Governors emphasize the importance of supporting the growth of the precision agriculture sector and highlight the substantive policy recommendations contained in our policy resolution addressing broadband connectivity issues.
10. Western Governors support funding for federal programs that provide assistance to agricultural cooperatives across the West. These include USDA Rural Cooperative Development Grants and Value-Added Producer Grants, and programs administered by the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service and National Institute of Food and Agriculture. Western Governors also support adjustments to these programs which improve accessibility by small producers.
11. Nutrition assistance programs should provide adequate and timely funding to states, and should have stable and predictable regulatory frameworks. This includes fair and consistent application of federal regulation changes across all western states. Changes to federal statutory or administrative requirements can have significant effects on states' abilities to fund and manage these programs. Western Governors urge Congress and federal agencies to consult with states about the effects of proposed changes prior to and after implementation. Federal assistance should provide flexibility for states to use locally sourced agricultural products, respond to unique economic and emergency situations, and serve all eligible participants. Western Governors recognize the importance of program transparency, efficiency, and accountability, and encourage Congress to appropriate adequate funding and federal agencies to maintain experienced federal staff to support states' administration of these federal nutrition programs.

12. Existing federal assistance options that help build connections and reduce geographic and regulatory barriers between growers with surplus products and food insecure families lack the flexibility to nimbly address needs in many western communities. Western Governors support Congressional and Administration efforts to provide states with flexible emergency funding to purchase goods from local producers who lack a market for their surplus crops, distribute and process those products, and provide them to food banks and nutrition assistance programs who are facing increased demands.
13. Western Governors encourage USDA to coordinate with state and federal agencies, tribes, and local governments to address food insecurity challenges. This coordination should include expanding market access for small and tribal producers, incorporating additional commodities, and increasing flexibility for state implementation of federal programs. Western Governors support federal actions that empower state-led food purchasing programs designed to mitigate food insecurity and improve public health. Strong partnerships across federal, state, tribal, and local agencies and non-governmental organizations are essential to expanding storage and distribution capacity to ensure that food is not wasted due to logistical constraints.
14. Western Governors support legislative measures that provide states with access to flexible funding to respond to urgent and emerging issues in the agricultural economy and food supply and distribution chains. Additionally, we support legislative efforts that: reduce instability in value-added food supply systems; increase food banks and nonprofits' capacity to address growing nutrition demands; prepare for potential supply disruptions; and promote the ability of producer and business cooperatives, state departments of agriculture, and Cooperative Extension Services to strengthen local food networks.
15. Western Governors support federal, state, territorial, local, and tribal efforts to detect and monitor animal and plant disease outbreaks, and develop and implement emergency plans to minimize the effects that these diseases have on western agriculture. Additionally, federal agencies should work together with states, territories, and tribes to continue the development and deployment of the National Animal Vaccine and Veterinary Countermeasures Bank and National Animal Disease Preparedness and Response Program, and indemnification efforts for Foreign Animal Diseases to support these efforts.
16. Western Governors recognize that the Farm Bill includes titles and issues not contemplated in this resolution. We encourage Congress and the Administration to pass a Farm Bill that does not omit titles which are traditionally included, and without further delay. We encourage Congressional committees, federal agencies, and the executive branch to review Governors' existing policy resolutions addressing national forest and rangeland management; species conservation; incentive-based local, state, and regionally shaped voluntary conservation programs; biosecurity and invasive species management; rural development; and broadband connectivity.
17. The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) is a vital tool for producers to protect habitat and restore riparian areas. To ensure its continued effectiveness, Congress and the Administration should continue to work with Western Governors to address several issues:
 - The focus on high rental rate lands often overlooks areas most in need of conservation, and falling soil rental rates based on the National Agriculture Statistics Service's data

further limits the program's impact. Allowing states to propose state-centric rental rates, with Farm Service Agency guidance, would better target conservation priorities.

- The loss of waiver language in the 2018 Farm Bill, which allowed counties to exceed the 25 percent cropland cap for State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement, has hindered imperiled species conservation. Waiver language should be reinstated in the next Farm Bill.
 - Rising practice installation costs make the \$50,000 payment cap increasingly restrictive, and raising this cap to reflect inflation is essential.
 - Enrollments are now at the current national CRP acre cap of 27 million acres. Due to the importance of CRP to conservation, Western Governors propose that the acre cap be raised in the next Farm Bill.
18. Foreign ownership of agricultural land, especially near critical infrastructure, is a growing concern for Western Governors. The loss of production capacity for domestic agriculture, export of agricultural products grown using American resources, and threat to national security requires cooperation between federal, state, local, and tribal governments to address. To this end, agriculture agencies and Congress should cooperate to ensure that agricultural land is being used to support the American economy and is not exploited by foreign entities.

C. GOVERNORS' MANAGEMENT DIRECTIVE

1. The Governors direct WGA staff to work with Congressional committees of jurisdiction, the Executive Branch, and other entities, where appropriate, to achieve the objectives of this resolution.
2. Furthermore, the Governors direct WGA staff to consult with the Staff Advisory Council regarding its efforts to realize the objectives of this resolution and to keep the Governors apprised of its progress in this regard.

This resolution will expire in June 2029. Western Governors enact new policy resolutions and amend existing resolutions on a semiannual basis. Please consult <http://www.westgov.org/resolutions> for the most current copy of a resolution and a list of all current WGA policy resolutions.