

Amendments to Statement of Principles on Agriculture

Summary: The ALEC Agriculture Principles outline a framework for agricultural policy that emphasizes free markets, reduced regulatory burdens, science-based decision-making, and expanded opportunities for agricultural commerce. The principles support policies that strengthen agricultural productivity, protect private property rights, encourage innovation and high-yield farming, and empower states and private landowners to address agricultural and environmental challenges. They also advocate for right-to-farm protections, responsible animal welfare practices, and limiting government intervention that could hinder the competitiveness of American agriculture.

Introduction

The proper role of government involvement in agriculture is to limit and remove barriers for agricultural production, trade, and consumption throughout our innovative food system. In developing public policy options for agriculture, forestry, and related sectors, policymakers should recognize that the United States currently possesses the safest, highest quality, and most innovative food system in the world.

Global demand for agricultural and forest products are expected to increase substantially in the coming decades, and legislators should seek policy options that will allow our system of high-yield, modern agriculture to flourish in order to help meet this demand while meeting environmental and land use challenges. ALEC also recognizes that agricultural productivity is an essential counterpart to robust economic growth. As Thomas Jefferson wrote in a 1787 letter to George Washington, “[a]griculture is our wisest pursuit, because it will in the end contribute most to real wealth, good morals, and happiness.”

Reduced Barriers to Agricultural Commerce

Agricultural markets are global and the United States represents one of the largest and most efficient agricultural economies in the world. As a net exporter of agricultural goods, legislators should focus on expanding market access and removing barriers to food trade in ways consistent with international obligations. Enhancing productive commerce in this sector reduces consumer prices, increases prosperity, and provides opportunities for American producers.

Free Markets, Competition, and Reduced Regulatory Burdens

Consistent with existing antitrust requirements, ALEC opposes unnecessary government imposed restrictions on agricultural businesses, including company structure, operation size, business diversification, coordination, or marketing methods. The vast majority of U.S. farms ([95 percent in 2022](#)) (~~98 percent in 2007~~) are family-owned. Considering both the limited resources of state and federal agencies and the disproportionate impact of burdensome regulations on small farmers and ranchers, care should be taken to avoid unnecessary rules and bureaucratic hurdles for producers competing in our global agriculture environment. ALEC encourages policies that avoid market distortion through the selection of winners-and-losers, including government preferences and support. As Senator Barry Goldwater explained, “[farmers] have a more intimate knowledge than most of us of the consequences of unlimited government power, and so, it would seem, a greater interest than most in returning agriculture to freedom and economic sanity.”

Science-Based Decision Making

Processes for safety regulations should incorporate a least restrictive approach for ensuring public safety and confidence, economics, definitive risk data, and food security.

Legislators should look skeptically upon reliance on the precautionary principle or hazard-based regulations as well as. Risk assessments should not be based on speculation, anecdotes, statistical correlation, and nonreplicable or non-independent studies. Instead, a science-risk-based approach, founded in sound science, that involves cost-benefit analysis, publicly available and scientifically validated data, ~~cost-benefit analysis and scientifically validated data~~ should be part the foundation of any state risk assessment.

Animal Welfare

ALEC agrees with basic animal care principles that maintain the wellbeing and health of animals used for food, companionship, clothing, recreation, assistance, and medical research, but opposes extremist attempts to establish animal rights as a public policy objective. There are significant human costs to the animal rights movement's attempt to destroy human exceptionalism and along with it our system of animal husbandry and tradition of pet ownership. Similar to ALEC efforts related to animal and ecological terrorism and environmentally corrupt organizations, ALEC's principles include a commitment to transparency and honesty among these groups and their allies.

Stewardship

ALEC supports the establishment of policies and incentives to empower private landowners and agricultural producers to enhance stewardship efforts.

State Role

While much attention is paid to federal farm bill deliberations, states have a unique and critical role to play in the administration of agriculture programs and policies. The United States Department of Agriculture noted in a 2004 report that "a central agency administering a program at the national level may lack the information needed to accommodate State-level difference." While states should seek regulatory uniformity in order to not unnecessarily impact producers, opportunities to empower state officials to creatively address agriculture and food issues should be fully explored. As declared in The Federalist No. 17, the "supervision of agriculture and of other concerns of a similar nature...are proper to be provided for by local legislation, can never be desirable cares of a general jurisdiction." Furthermore, the federal government should avoid intruding on state sovereignty over intrastate agriculture matters and the proliferation of local agriculture regulations should be discouraged.

Right to Farm

Recognizing the essential role of agriculture in our economy, ALEC supports protection of generally accepted agricultural and management practices from public or private nuisance suits.

The Value of High-Yield Farming

Our modern, high-tech, and high-yield agriculture system, a product of the 20th Century's Green Revolution, is critical to provide food to billions while minimizing damage to natural habitats and biodiversity. As stated in the Declaration in Support of Protecting Nature With High-Yield Farming and Forestry, "additional high-yield practices, based on advances in biology, ecology, chemistry, and technology, are critically needed in agriculture and forestry not only to achieve the goal of improving the human condition for all peoples but also the simultaneous preservation of the natural environment and its biodiversity through the conservation of wild areas and natural habitat." State efforts should support innovation and avoid restrictions on new tools and methods.