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*Advocating for Agriculture*

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**INF  
B**

**2021**

**POLICY**

**DEVELOPMENT**

**HANDBOOK**

## POLICY DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

### Q. What is policy?

A. Policy is basic principles by which Farm Bureau is guided. The policy process establishes the majority opinion of members as the guide for engaging in public policy discussions with appointed and elected officials. Policy is established through local discussion and action.

### Q. Why do we create policy?

A. We create policy in Farm Bureau to ensure that the voices of members are heard. As a general agriculture organization, Farm Bureau works to promote all aspects of agriculture. By creating policy stances, Farm Bureau can impact the regulations and statutes that affect Farm Bureau members.

### Q. Where can I find Farm Bureau's policy?

A. Farm Bureau policy is compiled and organized into the policy books. The policy books are available on the [Voter Voice app](#) and the Farm Bureau website.

<https://www.infarmbureau.org/public-policy/policy-development/policy-development-resources>.

*INFB 2021 State Policy Book* [https://www.infarmbureau.org/docs/default-source/document-library/policy-development-resources/infb-2021-state-policy-book.pdf?sfvrsn=a8f5a4e8\\_2](https://www.infarmbureau.org/docs/default-source/document-library/policy-development-resources/infb-2021-state-policy-book.pdf?sfvrsn=a8f5a4e8_2)

*AFBF 2021 National Policy Book* [https://www.infarmbureau.org/docs/default-source/document-library/policy-development-resources/afbf-2021-national-policy-book.pdf?sfvrsn=4f0bbe8\\_2](https://www.infarmbureau.org/docs/default-source/document-library/policy-development-resources/afbf-2021-national-policy-book.pdf?sfvrsn=4f0bbe8_2)

### Q. What are policy advisory groups?

A. Policy advisory groups (PAG) are work groups of Indiana Farm Bureau members with knowledge, experience and interest in key issues. The PAGs are designed to investigate complicated issues and provide detailed input for the policy development process. INFB has established PAGs for education, food systems & diversified agriculture, government & fiscal policy, livestock & animal care and property rights.

### Q. How is policy created?

A. The policy process begins at the county level through local discussion. Action at the local level may be supplemented with information from the PAGs. After recommendations are submitted, they are reviewed by a resolutions committee and the delegate body. Each county runs their process a little differently, but the main points should always be hit:

- Discussing issues with the county voting membership.
- Creating policy recommendations.
- Voting on recommendations.
- Submitting them to the state.

The policy development process is illustrated on the next page.

## POLICY DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

### When should you get involved in the policy development process?

If you have an agricultural problem or a challenge that you think INFB should tackle, the next step is to review language in the policy book (Local, INFB or AFBF). If the issue is not addressed or language in the policy book does not reflect the current business environment then it is time to begin the policy development process.



### Vetting the issue/idea through discussion and research.

Now that you have an issue/idea, you need to discuss it with other INFB voting members. You can bring the issue/idea to the attention of your county leadership and policy development chair. If you don't already have a solution, you and your county may need to do a little research.



### Recommending a solution.

Your county will vote on all the policy recommendations they want to endorse. It is important to note whether the policy is local, state or federal in nature. Local recommendations should be put into a local policy book for action at the local level. The INFB Resolutions Committee reviews all state and national recommendations.



### Resolutions Committee

The state resolutions committee is made up of one county president from each of the 10 INFB districts and several at-large members representing a PAG or state committee. The committee reviews all policy recommendations submitted by the counties, state committees and PAGs, and then submits the recommendations to the delegate body.



### Delegate Session

Each county is allowed a specific number of delegates based on county membership levels. Delegates represent their county during a full day of discussion on the recommendations in August. After all policies have been reviewed, a vote is taken to accept the INFB policy book. In December, a final delegate session is held during the state annual meeting to discuss issues that have arisen or significantly changed since the August session.



### Making it count.

Once the resolutions have been passed, they are the policy stances INFB members are expected to implement. Each member is in charge of making sure that local, state and national policy resolutions are discussed with appropriate elected and regulatory officials. Working to implement the INFB policy means we are an effective organization ready to tackle issues and challenges for the agriculture community.

### **Q. How do we identify issues for policy development?**

A. There are many ways to identify issues which are important to Farm Bureau members. Not all of these will likely be used every year by every county but they are tried and trusted methods for gathering information:

- Invite local officials to a meeting to discuss issues they think need to be addressed locally.
- Ask members of the General Assembly and Congress what they see on the horizon.
- Follow discussions taking place in other organizations.
- Read agriculture-related publications, including the *Hoosier Farmer* and *Dispatch*, to identify emerging issues.
- Participate in district issue surfacing meetings.
- Invite farmers to a breakfast or lunch to talk about issues concerning them.
- Regularly review issues in the policy book to see if improvement can be made.
- Schedule a policy meeting and invite members to participate in discussions.
- Survey members to identify their concerns.
- Work with PAGs to identify emerging issues.

### **Q. What's the best way to get input from voting members?**

A. Every county policy development process is a little different. There is no absolute right way to get members to engage. However, it is doubtful that you will get member input if you don't ask for it. Make specific requests of members to participate in meetings. Rather than just sending a postcard with a meeting date, contact members directly. Tell them you would really like their opinion and ask them to come to a meeting to discuss things that are important to their farming operation. Many counties have had success by asking non-board members to participate on policy development committees or attend meetings to identify and discuss issues. Several counties also use surveys to identify issues that create concern for members.

No matter how the county process is done, it is critical that all voting members have an opportunity to voice their opinion and participate in the discussion. If a county needs assistance in improving policy development, work with a regional manager or a member of the public policy team.

### **Q. When should a policy discussion be held?**

A. Policy issues can pop up at any time. It is best to discuss them when members are talking about the issues on their own. In other words, if farmers are talking about it at the coffee shop and the elevator, it should also be discussed at Farm Bureau meetings. County leadership should regularly select sections of the policy book for review and discussion. Regular review and discussion of the policy book will ensure that policy development meetings are productive and efficient. Many counties in the state now hold a separate policy development meeting in addition to their annual meeting. County policy development meetings usually take place between November and June.

### **Q. How can we get information on an issue?**

- A. Once an issue is identified, it is likely that more information will be needed in order to develop a policy recommendation. There are many resources to get factual information:
- Members may have existing knowledge.
  - Members conduct research.
  - Outside experts such as elected officials can act as resources.
  - Farm Bureau staff can provide researched information for most issues that are identified before meetings.

### **Q. What is the proper format for a policy recommendation?**

- A. The existing policy book is concise and straight forward in how the policies are written. To continue to make the book easier for members, staff and elected officials to use and maintain statements that can be acted upon, the delegates ask that the policy be formatted in a "we support" or "we oppose" format. By using this format, each statement is something upon which action can be taken rather than simply a statement of beliefs. Here is an example of the appropriate format of a recommendation:

#### **3.G) GRAIN PRICING AND GRADING STANDARDS**

##### **i. We support:**

- (1) Water to suppress dust on grain as a bona fide method of dust control when used in approved and monitored dust control systems.
- (2) Revised grain standards that reflect the economic values of the grain.
- (3) Grain grading as an open process with opportunity for producer interaction and an appeal prior to dumping the product.
- (4) The ability to provide identity-preserved grains.
- (5) Blending grains of different qualities or moisture within a narrow range.
- (6) Grain quality and standards testing being uniform, science-based, and include testing for toxins.

##### **ii. We oppose:**

- (1) Blending in foreign material after it has been removed. Anything in excess of one percent should be listed as dockage.
- (2) Government mandated identity tracking of grain.

### **Q. How should we present issues to our members at a county annual meeting?**

- A. Hopefully a lot of member input has been gained along the way and the recommendations are clear and easily understood. The reality is, there will more than likely be questions or differences of opinions. It is important to the integrity of the process that each policy recommendation is explained to the members and they have an opportunity to debate the issue. If members have made the effort to attend a meeting, they should be given the opportunity to be heard. However, that does not mean that any individual should be allowed to provide misleading information or interrupt the process. Members should also have the opportunity to vote for or against each recommendation, not all of the recommendations as one.

**Q. Our county uses a survey of membership to get their opinion on the policy recommendations. How should we structure the survey process to get the best input from our members?**

A. In-person meetings provide the best opportunity for individuals to debate the merits of an issue, but circumstances may limit the ability to get members to a meeting. Surveys should not be used as a method to obtain votes for or against specific policy recommendations, but rather get the scope of impact an issue has on the broader membership. It is important that sufficient explanation regarding the issue is provided so that members understand the issue and can identify how it may or may not impact them. It is a good idea to allow the members to comment on an issue, as well. Prior to sending out the survey, the board needs to determine how they will review comments and whether feedback received in comments and subsequent board discussion can change whether a recommendation is forwarded on, even if it is supported by the membership's vote. Finally, it is advisable for the board to take official action in-person/virtual so that the record reflects whether the respective policy recommendations are forwarded to the resolutions committee.

**Q. Is our county required to submit recommendations?**

A. The opinion of members is important and the directors and staff value and respect the work of county Farm Bureaus in submitting recommendations. However, everyone recognizes that the existing policy book is fairly comprehensive. Rather than feeling compelled to submit new recommendations, members should review the book to make sure it says what needs to be said. If the county has gone through the policy development process and has not identified any new ideas that are better than existing policy, *it is OK to not submit any recommendations*. It is especially important for counties to thoroughly review the policy book to determine whether an issue is already addressed in policy, rather than to submit something that requires the resolutions committee to sort out. Staff can help you determine if something is already covered in policy.

**Q. Do policy positions stay in the book forever?**

A. Historically, positions were only removed from the policy book if a county recommended that they be deleted and that position was accepted by the delegates. Upon review of the policy book, the policy development task force determined that there are quite a few positions in the book that are no longer needed. In 2015, the task force recommended that policy be sunsetted after a period of years if no official action has been taken on it in the policy development process. The resolutions committee has been tasked with the decision to remove policy from the book if it has not had official action taken after seven years. Official action is considered as new and amended policies during each delegate session and new, amended or reaffirmed actions on policy recommendations from the county. If official action is taken on a policy or it is reaffirmed, it will not be removed from the book.

**Q. Who are the delegates?**

A. The delegates are selected by each county through a vote. The number of county delegates is determined by the county membership level.

Number of Voting Members	Number of Delegates
1 - 200	1
201 - 600	2
601 - 1,000	3
1,001 - 1,400	4
1,401 - 1,800	5
1,801 - 2,200	6

Delegates are charged with reviewing, discussing and voting on the policy recommendations from the resolution committee and bringing forward any new ideas not presented by the resolutions committee report.

**Q. What other responsibilities do delegates have?**

A. County delegates are also charged with knowing their county's position on pertinent issues and the recommendations that were sent to the resolutions committee. Delegates should always be involved in the county policy discussions in order to best represent the interests of their county Farm Bureau.

**Q. What is the resolutions committee and what do they do?**

A. The Indiana Farm Bureau Resolutions Committee is a representative group of Farm Bureau members selected to be the go-between of all Farm Bureau members and the voting delegate body. The committee reviews all the policy recommendations submitted by county Farm Bureaus, State Young Farmers & Ag Professionals Committee, Collegiate Farm Bureau Chapters, districts and PAGs, and then makes recommendations of policy positions that move forward for a final vote by the delegate body.

**Q. What is the make-up of the state resolutions committee?**

A. The resolutions committee is made up of district and at-large representatives. There is also one representative from the State Young Farmers & Ag Professionals Committee and one representative from a Collegiate Farm Bureau Chapter, along with two consultants from the board of directors and one consultant from the District Education Outreach Committee.

Consultants do not have a role in policy setting; they simply are there for opinions and input when asked. The representatives from the State Young Farmers & Ag Professionals Committee and Collegiate Farm Bureau Chapter are considered at-large members with full voting rights.

**Q. What is the difference between at-large and district committee members?**

A. Resolutions committee members are made up of two groups, at-large and district representatives. District representatives are selected by the district to represent their district. These members are always county presidents. At-large members are selected from the PAGs to serve on the resolutions committee.

The members of the resolutions committee are chosen for their various roles held in Farm Bureau and the diversity of their experiences to give the committee a more rounded knowledge base. District representatives have the potential to represent Indiana Farm

Bureau at the American Farm Bureau Federation policy setting session in January. At-large members are not eligible.

**Q. Why do we hold our policy setting session in August?**

A. The delegate session is held in August to get ahead of the legislative schedule. Since the legislative session in Indiana begins in January, it is important that we have our policy positions prepared in advance. It also allows time for bills to be drafted for legislation.

**Q. Why do we still hold a December meeting if we pass policy in August?**

A. We primarily hold a December delegate session during the state annual convention to conduct official business of the organization, such as officer elections. However, our process allows for any alterations, amendments or additions that need to be made to our policy. Delegates and the resolutions committee are allowed to bring forth policy recommendations on items that have arisen or significantly changed since the August session. Such policy recommendations must be submitted to the resolutions committee for review prior to November 1.

These policies will be reviewed by the resolutions committee during a scheduled conference call in November to determine if they meet the criteria to be included in the agenda for the annual meeting delegate session. In order to consider any policy changes not included on the agenda by the resolutions committee during this session, a two-thirds majority "aye" vote on the delegate floor is first required to suspend the rules.

**Q. How many policy recommendations are usually received?**

A. Typically, recommendations from counties and the PAGs average between 500 and 700 policies. On average, around 200 of those will be sent to the delegate body for review. This includes INFB and AFBF policy recommendations.

**Q. How do you decide where to put policy?**

A. By recommendation type and action.

RECOMMENDATION TYPE:

- **State** - Created for action at the state level. Affects the entire or large portion of voting members and can only be resolved, or best resolved, by legislative action by the General Assembly or regulation by a state regulatory body.
- **National** - Created for action at the national level. Affects entire state of Indiana and can best be resolved by congressional legislative action or a federal regulatory action. These recommendations voted on by delegates are sent as recommendations to AFBF for consideration in the national policy development process.
- **Local** - Created for action at the county level. Does not affect other counties or is an issue best resolved within county government structures.
- **Internal** - Created for action by the Indiana Farm Bureau Board of Directors. Requires immediate attention, internal debate and discussion, or is a direct request for action by the board or staff.

## RECOMMENDATION ACTION:

- **New** – Refers to adding completely new policy language.  
*Q: Is there a solution included in the language?*  
If yes, is the solution:
  - Realistic?
  - Feasible?
  - Fitting for Farm Bureau?
  - Needed in regulation or statute?
  - Well defined and well explained?
  - Not in Farm Bureau policy elsewhere?
- **Reaffirm** – Meant for highlighting current policy that requires further action to achieve.  
*Q: Is this a policy that Farm Bureau should add to its priority list for next year?*
- **Amend** – Action for changing policy language or intent that is currently found in Farm Bureau policy.  
*Q: Are you altering policy?*  
If yes, do you want to:
  - Change language?
  - Add language to an existing sentence?
  - Change the intent of the current Farm Bureau language?
  - Eliminate a piece (wording) of current language?
- **Delete** – Removing sentences or complete sections.  
*Q: Should the policy be removed from the book?*  
Is the policy:
  - No longer an issue?
  - Unrealistic?
  - No longer feasible because of current rules/statutes?
  - Not well described or unclear?

## **Q. How do you submit policy?**

A. Policy recommendations should be submitted to the home office within two weeks of your final recommendation vote/decision.

Submissions will be electronically filed by your regional manager with the home office in order to be accepted for review by the resolutions committee. Submissions are due to the state office by June 1. Contact Wanda Hunter at [whunter@infb.org](mailto:whunter@infb.org) or 317-692-7812 with questions.

## **DATES TO KNOW FOR 2021:**

- June 1 – policy recommendations due
- Aug. 3-4 – state resolutions committee
- Aug. 28 – delegate session
- Nov. 1 – second policy submission deadline
- Dec. 9-11 – state convention – second delegate session

# POLICY DEVELOPMENT WORKSHEET

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Meeting location: \_\_\_\_\_

Attendees: \_\_\_\_\_

## Policy suggestions:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

Reasoning: \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

Reasoning: \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

Reasoning: \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

Reasoning: \_\_\_\_\_

## Next steps:

- Do any of these need further research?
- Do these match current policy at the state, national or local level?
- Will this be a new policy, reaffirmation, amendment or deletion?
- Where would these recommendations be located in the policy book?

Please submit policy recommendations to the home office within two weeks of your final recommendation vote/decision.

## **COUNTY FARM BUREAU POLICY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE SUGGESTED ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

**Purpose:** Prepare and present policy recommendations to be submitted for consideration by the membership at the county annual meeting. The committee may wish to hold a county-wide meeting of the membership to hear members' concerns and opinions.

**Preferred Interests:** Members of this committee should be interested in local, state and national legislative and regulatory policy and policy impacts on agriculture. Some members of the policy development committee should be members of the policy action committee(s) and engaged in policy implementation. Their involvement will improve the policy development process. This committee should also seek expertise from broad sources and work to include a representative sample of the county Farm Bureau membership in the discussion and approval process.

**Communications:** As a member of the policy development committee, you will receive suggested discussion topics for consideration during your policy development process. This information is only a suggestion and should not limit your discussion of other policy issues. Additional education and training opportunities may be presented throughout the year.

### **Responsibilities:**

- Develop a timeline of events for the year that is consistent with the state PD process.
  - Work with committee members to determine a plan of action for accomplishing goals.
  - Consider meetings with experts in the areas in which you anticipate policy issues.
  - Delegate tasks to committee members – chair.
- Develop policy recommendations for consideration by the county FB voting membership.
  - Local policies should be used for local implementation.
  - State and national recommendations are forwarded to INFB for consideration by the state resolutions committee.
- Provide a regular report to the county board of directors on committee activities (written or verbal) – chair.
- Ensure committee members understand their roles and expectations – chair.
- Arrange for the committee to evaluate its work to determine whether it did what it had set out to do, what worked and what didn't work.
- Be willing to participate in training programs.

### **Suggested Activities:**

- Three meetings are suggested, but more may be necessary.
  - Meeting one – brainstorming and assigned topics.
  - Meeting two – speakers, deliberation and draft policies.
  - Meeting three – presentation of policy recommendations to the membership for approval.



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