



Indiana Farm Bureau®
Advocating for Agriculture



2023 Legislative Priorities

INDIANA FARM BUREAU

Rural Viability for Our Communities

It is the mission of Indiana Farm Bureau to advocate for agriculture and our communities. Both are in rural areas where less population and tax base limit public investment and growth. We will advocate to bridge the rural urban divide by supporting initiatives that improve quality of life and quality of place, provide off-farm employment and remote working opportunity and most important keep the next generation on the farm. Nurturing our communities helps our members cultivate a thriving ag ecosystem.

- **Rural infrastructure**

- A rural economy must include robust infrastructure to support agriculture, economic activity and quality of life for those living outside an urban/suburban core. We support expansion of future-facing broadband infrastructure, improvement of roads and bridges and development of workforce housing as necessary building blocks for vital and prosperous rural communities.

- **Strong and responsive local public health systems**

- Public health systems are essential to protecting and improving the health of citizens across Indiana, especially in rural areas. According to the report of Governor Holcomb's Public Health Commission, Indiana ranks 48th in state health statistics. Life expectancy in Indiana varies as much as 10 years between counties. The report offers recommendations to provide funding to counties that opt-in to a framework aimed to provide consistent, quality public health services and to develop the workforce to provide those services. We support the Commission's estimate that an ongoing annual state appropriation of approximately \$240 million would be needed to supplement county funding to reach the average national per capita spending for public health. The report also examines the deficiencies in the EMS network and emergency workforce, especially in rural areas which is very much needed.





- **Expanded workforce opportunities**
 - INFB continues to support strong career and technical programs that prepare the workforce of the future, the needs of the ag economy, and off-farm employment. Local communities need state funding to provide robust opportunities so that students can learn emerging technologies for future careers.
 - Early childhood education along with quality childcare are essential to supporting workers' availability. Data shows that there is a serious shortage of these programs in rural areas. Attempts to stabilize the rural population and attract new workers and their families will depend on services and quality of life investments that support families and workers. Keeping and attracting younger generations to the farm requires intentional focus on quality educational opportunities from "pre-pre-school" through high school.
 - Immigrant workers are a fact in rural Indiana. Temporary immigrant workers who need to drive are limited to on-farm vehicle operation. INFB supports a system to provide Driver Cards for immigrant workers who need to drive on a public road or highway. Driver Cards would allow these individuals to purchase insurance, but would have no relationship to citizenship status.
- **Public safety and emergency services**
 - Fire and emergency services in rural areas are at a crossroads where the availability of volunteers will not meet the needs of volunteer departments. Volunteer numbers are shrinking due to work and personal commitments. We support exploration of methods to fund and staff fire and emergency services.

Taxation and State Fiscal Policy

Controlling tax burdens is consistently a priority for Indiana Farm Bureau because the accuracy level of tax assessments and increasing tax burdens directly impact farmers' bottom lines. Farming is a capital-intensive business that depends on land and equipment, both of which are subject to Indiana property tax.

Property Taxes

- **Protect farmland formula**
 - In 2016, INFB successfully advocated for a revised farmland assessment formula. The farmland base value formula more accurately captures net income per acre that is then capitalized using ag borrowing rates from the federal reserve. Averaging the lowest five of the six most recent years mitigates swings in taxable value that could otherwise occur when net farm income fluctuates dramatically. INFB will defend this formula and proposals that would shift taxes to agriculture.
- **Business personal property tax that is replaced by the state**
 - Personal property tax is also a bottom-line issue. INFB members support reductions or elimination of business personal property tax as long as the revenue lost by schools and local government is permanently replaced by the state and there are no shifts to farmland taxes.
- **Assessment uniformity**
 - INFB seeks laws and a regulatory system that require assessment uniformity between classes of property and across all taxing districts particularly as it relates to farmland, farm buildings and structures.

State Budget

INFB supports state and local investments that promote opportunities for agriculture and improve our rural communities.

- **Broadband expansion**
 - We support continued investments to expand high-speed broadband to the last mile and last acre. Broadband is needed for every facet of modern life and agriculture enterprises where precision technology is advancing at an incredible pace. Federal funds coming to Indiana should be allocated in a framework that is

State Budget, cont.

more stringent than federal rules. State-administered grants should promote competition among service providers to lower costs and not punish areas where previously awarded federal grants essentially hold Hoosiers in internet limbo.

- **Indiana State Fair**

- INFB supports the six-part investment package requested by the Indiana State Fair totaling about \$80 million. This proposal will complete the transformation of the fairgrounds so they can be used year-round. These investments will enhance flexibility of the grounds and structures for agricultural expositions and entertainment events and create a world-class educational campus where school kids can learn where their food comes from and how it nourishes their bodies.

- **Purdue University agriculture**

- Purdue Cooperative Extension is an important and valued support system for agriculture. Their requests for additional funding will allow recruitment of quality extension staff for counties across the state and fund valuable research farm activities that primarily advise cropping practices specific to regions across Indiana. INFB also supports Purdue's request for additional funding to renovate the Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory and improve its client-facing software.

- **ISDA and Indiana Grain Buyers Warehouse Licensing Agency**

- The Indiana State Department of Agriculture (ISDA) has three primary budget requests for this coming session: restoration of funding to the Division of Soil Conservation and an increase for the Clean Water Indiana Fund; a first-of-its-kind appropriation for the Indiana Grain Buyers and Warehouse Licensing Agency (IGBWL) to improve staffing and audit software; and restoration of funding to the Indiana Grown Program. We support restoring funding that was cut during COVID-19 to this critical work particularly because we know the value of the conservation practices implemented on farms through the Division of Soil Conservation and the importance of the regulatory functions of IGBWL.

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- **Board of Animal Health**

- INFB supports budget increases requested by the Board of Animal Health (BOAH) to implement the merger with the Board of Veterinary Medicine, to upgrade employee compensation and to add a highly qualified staff to expand their capacity. In particular, we support additional funding for more meat inspectors at BOAH.
- With strong continued demand for local meat processing, we support grants for the expansion of local meat packing businesses similar to grants provided by ISDA via CARES funding during the pandemic. For the next biennium, INFB proposes a substantial increase to the amount of previous grants. This investment will increase processing appointments available to Indiana livestock producers and locally sourced meat products to Indiana consumers.

Energy and Environment

- **Maintaining property rights protections for subsurface CO2 sequestration**

- Members of Indiana Farm Bureau will remember our victory during the 2022 session when they successfully stopped a subsurface sequestration pilot program that would have denied notification and compensation to landowners for the use of their pore space – a violation of their property rights. We expect similar legislation to be filed again this session and we'll need your help again to ensure these projects are conducted in a way that upholds and protects property rights.

- **Wind and solar**

- Last year, the members of Indiana Farm Bureau amended our state policy book to clarify that, while we remain supportive of all sources of energy generation, all siting decisions must remain local.





Food Security

Indiana Farm Bureau's vision is to cultivate a thriving agricultural ecosystem to strengthen the viability of Indiana agriculture. Production agriculture faces pressures from several directions, ranging from continuous urban and suburban sprawl to federal regulations that dictate reporting greenhouse gas emissions. Additionally, a growing list of bottom-line issues jeopardizes our members' ability to farm and produce food for the world. The over-arching concept of "food security" is to keep farmers farming, and we'll work on priority issues that ensure they can.

- **Farmland preservation**
 - Indiana and other Midwest states are uniquely blessed with the most productive farmland in the world. Preserving farmland to feed the world is more than a worthy goal. The American Farmland Trust recently published "Farms Under Threat" which documents the loss of farmland and projects the loss into the future. Green-field development almost always occurs on farmland. Sprawling development is easier than using land that can be reclaimed using smart growth strategies, but it requires additional investment in roads, sewers, water and other utilities. We support incentives to use smart growth strategies and comprehensive planning that considers the preservation of Indiana farmland.
- **Environmental, social and governance standards**
 - While AFBF and INFB continue to fight back on greenhouse gas emissions reporting requirements being promulgated by the Securities and Exchange Commission, it's important to note that states can act too. We support legislation that would prevent discrimination by financial institutions against production agriculture for not reporting emissions pursuant to the SEC rule.



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