AGRICULTURE

BIO-BASED RENEWABLE PRODUCTS

The Partnership supports federal programs to promote and assist in research, development and commercialization of biofuels and bio-based materials. Achieving widespread use of biofuels in America will require a range of biofuels from a variety of feedstocks. This will mean expanded production of today's biofuels — ethanol and biodiesel. It also will require consistent Congressional support for research, development, demonstration and commercialization to improve existing biofuels, as well as the next generation of biofuels, including those from cellulosic feedstocks and new fuel such as biobutanol. The Partnership supports incentives for the full range of biofuels and feedstocks. The Partnership also supports incentives to assist with market development, commercialization and/or demonstration projects that bring new non-fuel bio-based products to market that further help reduce dependence on fossil fuels while advancing rural development.

To this end, The Partnership supports:

- Protecting the current Renewable Fuels Standard (RFS), provided feedstocks markets can support it.
- Reinstating the biodiesel blenders tax credit, with a multi-year extension.
- Enacting the Domestic Fuels Act to protect retailers from liability.
- Reauthorizing and funding the Farm Bill's Rural Energy for America Program's (REAP) grant initiative for the installation of blender pumps.
- Enacting an Open Fuels Standard to secure true consumer fuel choice.
- Creating a production tax credit for bio-based materials.
- Full funding for loan guarantee and grant programs to accelerate the commercialization of cellulosic biofuels.
- Encouraging investment incentives in infrastructure to support a renewable fuels pipeline.

BIOTECHNOLOGY

The Partnership supports policies that support the continued development and expansion of biotechnology. The Partnership's objective is to maintain the position of American business as a leader in biotechnology and promote the potential applications of biotechnology in food, feed, textiles, medical applications and manufactured products. Through innovation in agriculture, medicine and manufacturing, biotechnology is having a revolutionary effect on our quality of life. To keep our competitive edge, The Partnership supports the rigorous enforcement of science-based and nationally-uniform federal regulations to sustain public confidence in these products. The Partnership urges the federal government to advocate for science-based regulations with governments around the world. The Partnership also urges the federal government to ensure that innovative and promising biotechnology products are approved in a timely manner.

2019 FEDERAL POLICY AGENDA

USDA/NIFA FUNDING

The 2018 Farm Bill included an authorization for a coordinated research initiative known as Genomes to Phenomes. It is widely acknowledged that obtaining phenotype information is now the limiting step in converting genomic information into useful improvements in agriculturally important species. Significant research is needed to fully characterize the phenotypes, which are collectively known as the “phenome” of major crop and livestock species. Understanding the relationships between genes and trait phenotypes will eventually allow farmers to enhance production by identifying optimal combinations of genetics and management practices. This Genomes to Phenomes initiative will develop tools and knowledge to allow for the analysis of phenotypes across a diverse array of agriculturally important species, and help individual farmers make better management decisions and achieve higher stable productivity.

CENTRAL IOWA BIOSCIENCE INNOVATION CENTER

The Partnership supports the creation of an Iowa Bioscience Innovation Center in Central Iowa. The Administration is proposing investing federal funding to create a network of manufacturing innovation institutes across the country. Through executive authority, the Administration plans to launch three new institutes, which are partnerships among business, universities and community colleges and government to develop and build manufacturing technologies and capabilities that will help U.S.-based manufacturers create good jobs. The Partnership recommends that one of these pilot innovation institutes focus on plant science bio-manufacturing.

FEDERAL CROP INSURANCE PROGRAM (FCIP)

The Partnership opposes cuts to the crop insurance program. Iowa producers rely on the FCIP to provide a safety net and to manage their risk. Across the U.S., more than 290 million acres of farm ground were protected through FCIP in 2016, including 22 million acres in Iowa, protecting $11 billoin worth of crops in the state. In that same year, Iowa famers received $52 million in indemnities for production and/or revenue losses. There also are more than 7,000 agents in the state licensed to sell the policies and another 700 people are employed directly by the companies in underwriting, billing and other jobs. Two of the 15 companies that handle the insurance nationwide are based in Iowa. Accordingly, ensuring a successful crop insurance program is vital to Iowa’s economy. With the passage of the 2018 Farm Bill, the next step will include the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) negotiating a new Standard Reinsurance Agreement (SRA). Further cuts on top of the $6 billion cut in the 2011 SRA could detrimentally undermine the products and services available for farmers.

CONSERVATION

The Partnership supports expanding conservation programs that address environmental challenges including soil erosion, water quality and wildlife habitat, such as the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). Crucially, conservation programs should empower farmers and land managers to make environmentally-compatible land and water management improvements without worsening the competitive posture of American agriculture. Therefore, The Partnership supports:

- Continuation and expansion of the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP), which targets funding for USDA conservation cost share programs to high-need areas, leverages funding for greater impact, encourages public-private partnerships across the agriculture sector and engages USDA with private sector agriculture organizations and businesses.

- The precision conservation pilot program, which aims to improve soil health and water quality by targeting conservation practices, increased adoption of innovative and effective conservation practices by agricultural producers and the collection of data to measure the effects of precision conservation practices.

- Sustained levels of funding for the Agricultural Research Service (ARS) lab in Ames, which is a necessary program that provides critical research to the agricultural sector and conservation programs. The ARS is the USDA's chief scientific in-house research agency on farming productivity, sustaining natural resources and addressing food safety and nutrition priorities.

- Sustainable agriculture research and a shared vision of support for innovative public research that farmers and the farm economy require to remain vibrant into the future.

- Conservation measures such as crop rotations, no till, cover crops, etc., build soil health and deliver many public benefits including reduced erosion, improved water quality, increased carbon levels in the soil and additional wildlife habitat. Therefore, The Partnership supports continuing the existing law regarding conservation compliance as a requirement to receive federally subsidized crop insurance in the 2018 Farm Bill.

RURAL BROADBAND

The Partnership supports federal investment in rural broadband that will provide farmers and producers the tools necessary to maximize yields, provide efficiencies and empower connectivity to markets throughout the world.

By 2050, the U.S. population is projected to increase to nearly 400 million people, and rising incomes worldwide will translate into historic global growth in food demand. To feed the world, American producers will need to harness innovation to increase output across American farmlands. In addition to increased crop yields, technological innovation can improve crop quality, nutritional value, sustainability and food safety. At the core of these developments that will further grow the rural economy is the expansion of STEM education, research, regulatory modernization and infrastructure. Leveraging these innovations in an increasingly data-driven economy will also require further development of rural data management capabilities.

In today's information-driven global economy, electronic connectivity, or e-connectivity, is not simply an amenity — it has become essential. E-connectivity is more than just connecting households, schools and healthcare centers to each other as well as the rest of the world through high-speed internet. It is also a tool that enables increased productivity for farms and factories. E-connectivity is fundamental for economic development, innovation, advancements in technology, workforce readiness and an improved quality of life. Reliable and affordable high-speed internet e-connectivity will transform rural America as a key catalyst for prosperity.