

2021 POLICY PRIORITIES



AGRICULTURAL
RETAILERS
ASSOCIATION

TRANSPORTATION & BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE

- Transportation infrastructure (highways, bridges, locks and dams, rail, harbor and ports) and rural broadband deployment are essential needs for rural communities.
- Federal investment, public-private partnerships, easing regulations and revising outdated statutory requirements will ensure efficient use of funds and timely completion of projects.
- The Hours of Service (HOS) regulations have a number of underlying issues that have imposed unnecessary costs and burdens on the agricultural industry with minimal safety benefits.

ARA POSITION

- Support expanded funding opportunities for rural broadband and transportation infrastructure projects while lessening regulatory burdens.
- Support Hours of Service (HOS) reforms for drivers of agricultural operations and short haul operations
- Support an HOS pilot program for transporters of farm supplies that are allowed to operate up to a 200 air mile radius.

CLIMATE CHANGE/SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

- ARA is a member of the Food & Ag Climate Alliance, a coalition consisting of organizations representing all sectors of America's agricultural industry as well as forest owners, the food sector and environmental advocates working together to define and promote shared climate policy priorities.
- Ag retailers and their farmer customers are on the frontlines of climate impacts and an integral part of the climate solutions.
- To achieve this objective, ARA is a leading voice in the Sustainability Programming for Ag Retailers and CCAs (SPARC) Initiative.
- By providing voluntary, incentive-based tools to farmers, ranchers and forest owners, they are able to maximize the sequestration of carbon and the reduction of other greenhouse gas emissions, as well as increase the resilience of the land.

ARA POSITION

- Support the development and oversight of private sector markets for GHG credits.
- Promote public and private sector tools to incentivize farmers, ranchers and forest owners to prioritize and scale climate-smart practices through USDA-NRCS conservation programs including the promotion of soil health as well as GHG mitigation and adaptation.
- Offer incentives for farmers to reduce energy consumption, increase use of on-farm renewable energy, and make continued progress toward reducing the lifecycle GHG emissions of agriculture- and forestry-based renewable energy.
- Increase federal investment in agriculture, forestry and food-related research substantially and continuously.
- Support the Growing Climate Solutions Act

AG LABOR/WORKFORCE NEEDS

- The agricultural community is dependent on a sustainable workforce now more than ever.
- Every farm worker engaged in high-value labor intensive crop and livestock production sustains two to three off-farm jobs.
- The current H-2A ag guest worker visa program needs major statutory reforms if it is to be a workable solution for all of the agricultural industry.
- Current federal minimum age (21) requirements to obtain a CDL has a negative impact on driver recruitment efforts. Businesses are not able to hire young adults (ages 18 to 20) making an initial career choice.

ARA POSITION

- Support the establishment of a comprehensive immigration reform policy that provides for a new, usable ag guest worker visa program with a reliable verification system, secures the borders, and provides current farm workers the opportunity to apply for legal status through the sponsorship of an eligible agricultural employer.
- Support legislation like the “Drive Safe Act” to create a pilot program for short haul drivers between the ages of 18 to 20 transporting farm supplies and / or agricultural commodities to increase the available number of commercial drivers.

FOOD EQUITY

- Food equity is a concept that all people have the ability and opportunity to grow and consume healthy, nutritious and affordable food. Access to healthy food is essential for a healthy life.
- Maintaining the ability to grow and produce food is at the heart of our food system.
- This effort is led by America’s agricultural retailers working with their farm and ranch customers. Every item that consumers eat in the United States and around the world starts out being grown or produced and eventually makes its way to our plates.
- It is critical for the federal government to make decisions based on sound science, peer-reviewed data and by following a risk-based approach. Farmers need to have access to critical crop input supplies (pesticides, fertilizers, seed) and precision agricultural technologies.
- FIFRA provides for the federal regulation of pesticide distribution, sale, and use and establishes stringent safety standards and oversight.
- U.S. agriculture remains the leader in innovation for planting breeding innovation due to clear, predictable, and science-and risk-based regulations.
- New innovations in plant breeding provides benefits such as reducing CO2 emissions, dramatically increasing crop productivity, providing more food to remote communities, and decreasing food waste.
- For healthy and productive growth of nutritious food, plants also require essential nutrients in the soil. Fertilizers and biostimulants serve as a supplement to the natural supply of soil nutrients, build up soil fertility to help satisfy the demands of crop production, and compensate for the nutrients taken by harvested crops.

ARA POSITION

- Protect farmers’ essential tools (i.e. seeds, pesticides, fertilizers, biostimulants, precision ag technologies).
- Government decisions need to be based on sound science and risk-based, peer reviewed data.
- Exporting US ag products and technologies.
- Supporting U.S. agribusinesses and farmers as essential operations.
- Minimize food waste and loss.
- Maintain farm safety-net programs, including crop insurance and disaster assistance.
- Invest in research and development to enhance crop yields and improve plant health.

ECONOMIC GROWTH AND TRADE

- Support and advocate for pro-growth economic policies that will aid in our members finding a more business-friendly marketplace in which to operate.
- The estate tax has long been seen as a detriment to our member business and, as such, we support its full repeal.
- ARA has also been supportive of a workable sale and use tax collection system to shield retailers and farmers from burdensome tax compliance requirements and we continue to support efforts to streamline these requirements.
- Protect provisions of interest such as the fertilizer deduction for farmers' tax credit and the Section 199 Domestic Production Activities Deductions.
- ARA is also confident that the free and fair trade of agricultural products, equipment, and crop inputs will be met with support.
- federal energy policies to increase domestic natural gas production, the reduction of U.S. manufacturing costs for crop input materials and promote the development and use of renewable fuels.

ARA POSITION

- Support needed tax reforms, domestic energy production, and fair trade agreements.
- Support creative solutions that pairs federal investment with state/local government and private sources of capital to raise the necessary funds to get the job done.

FARM BILL

- Agricultural retailers and distributors play a vital role in the success of the nation's food security.
- These businesses are responsible for getting the right crop inputs to their farmer customers at the right time, which can be difficult in the short timeframe farmers have to plant.
- Retailers also provide their farmer customers with crop consulting services and custom pesticide and fertilizer application services.

ARA POSITION

- Preserve the crop insurance program, and like important safety nets; improve preventative planting dates.
- Codify the definition of "retail facilities" using the "fifty-percent" rule as it has been since the inception of the PSM regulations.
- Maintain current acreage dedicated to Conservation Programs (CRP/ CSP) and protect working lands.
- Support for the statistical survey work carried out by the National Agricultural Statistical Service (NASS) in support of the Conservation Effects Assessment Project (CEAP) administered by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

For questions or comments regarding issues and policy relevant to agricultural retailers, distributors and suppliers, please contact the Agricultural Retailers Association public policy staff.

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