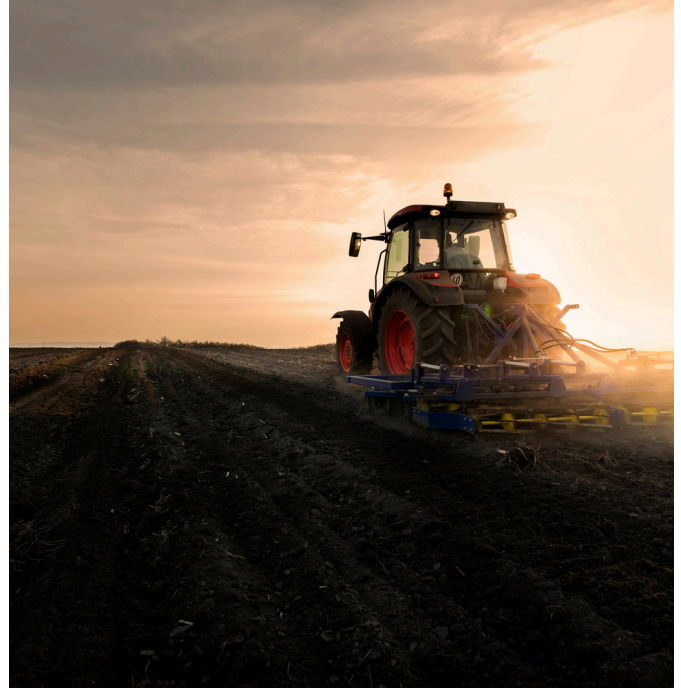


# ONE COUNTRY

## AGRICULTURE AND ENERGY

Two of our nation's strongest industries that contribute to domestic self-sufficiency and worldwide exports are agriculture and energy, which have been the backbone of rural America's economies for centuries. Critical to this continued success is supporting the programs and policies that recognize the contributions from rural workers and producers, value the rich resources these regions provide, and move us all forward through modernizing industry as we work to better acknowledge the challenges facing our planet.

This includes delivering a Farm Bill, expanding clean energy investments, growing our rural education opportunities for the next generation, and creating a space for equity. In the face of repeated adversities, resilience and innovation are key elements of the response from rural areas and they have continued to deliver for America. We need to appreciate and support that spirit for our country's success.



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# Supporting a New Farm Bill

Pure and simple, Congress needs to deliver a new five-year Farm Bill to rural America. This is must-pass legislation that should not be a question mark and jeopardize our country's largest rural production economy. Rural America deserves better. But these programs don't just directly support producers - these are also nutrition and infrastructure support programs that improve health, education, and workforce development across rural areas.

Rural America needs a Farm Bill that supports and strengthens the farm safety net, provides support for new and beginning farmers, provides a helping hand to farmers that have been underserved in the past, and prioritizes working farmers over investors and foreign entities.

Rural America needs a Farm Bill that helps working families with strong supports for nutrition programs that ensure families have food on the table, no child goes hungry, and nutritious foods are available in food deserts to improve health outcomes in underserved communities.

Rural America needs a Farm Bill that improves quality of life by improving access to health care, lowering costs for working families, investing in economic development and education, and diversifying the rural economy to create more jobs.

The proposed Rural Prosperity and Food Security Act would deliver on many of these goals. Now Rural America needs Congress to act and pass this important legislation. Rural America cannot continue surviving on a Farm Bill that expired two years ago. The time for Congress to act is now.



## What to Say

- Rural America cannot be put on the back burner. It is time to pass a 5-year Farm Bill.
- The extreme rightwing insistence on destroying nutrition programs is harming family farmers and smaller producers.

## Endorsements

### [The Rural Prosperity and Food Security Act of 2024](#)

This legislation focuses on keeping farmers farming, families fed, and rural communities strong. It includes over 100 bipartisan bills and keeps the successful Farm Bill coalition together so that a bill can get across the legislative finish line in 2024. This act makes investments to strengthen the farm safety net, helps families working hard to make ends meet, and improves the quality of life in rural communities. Additionally, this act would ensure that SNAP reflects the realities of how Americans buy and prepare food.

# Clean Energy

Rural America holds the keys to America's clean energy future. From growing renewable biofuels to being the center of an expanding domestic production for chips and other components to support wind and solar installations, Rural America can power America's future.

Rural communities are at the forefront of biofuel production, which is a key component of America's clean energy strategy. As of 2023, U.S. biofuel production capacity reached 23.8 billion gallons per year, with ethanol production at 17.8 billion gallons per year and biodiesel at 2.1 billion gallons per year. This significant production capacity is largely centered in rural areas, where crops like corn and soybeans serve as primary feedstocks for ethanol and biodiesel, respectively. The bioeconomy supports more than 550,000 jobs in the U.S., contributing over \$50 billion to the country's GDP and displacing 700 million barrels of oil annually.

Rural America is also becoming increasingly important for the domestic production of components essential for wind and solar energy installations. The CHIPS and Science Act of 2022 has spurred nearly \$50 billion in additional investments in American semiconductor manufacturing, much of which is expected to benefit rural areas. This act provides \$52.7 billion for semiconductor research, development, manufacturing, and workforce development, with \$39 billion specifically allocated for manufacturing incentives. As the demand for materials used in wind turbines and solar panels grows, rural areas are well-positioned to host new manufacturing facilities and supply chains.

Rural communities are also seeing significant growth in utility-scale solar and wind energy projects. Between 2012 and 2020, more than 90% of large-scale commercial wind turbines and 70% of solar farms in rural areas were installed on agricultural land. This trend not only provides clean energy but also offers new economic opportunities for rural landowners. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is actively supporting this transition, announcing in June 2024 that it is partnering with rural Americans on hundreds of clean energy projects to lower energy bills, expand access to clean energy, and create jobs for U.S. farmers, ranchers, and agricultural producers.

## What to Say

- Rural America can power America's clean energy future through its abundant renewable energy options and clean burning biofuel solutions.
- America cannot wait longer to act. The impact of climate change is already being felt across the country, especially in rural areas with increased extreme weather events.
- Embracing a clean energy future would unlock tremendous economic opportunity in rural America.

## Endorsements

### Clean Energy Victory Bond Act of 2023

This bill proposes the issuance of Clean Energy Victory Bonds by the U.S. Treasury, with proceeds used to fund various clean energy projects and initiatives across federal, state, and local levels.

### Clean Energy Victory Bond Act of 2023

This bill aims to develop and expand career and technical education programs in renewable energy fields by authorizing grants for curriculum development and facility improvements.

# Expanding Transmission Infrastructure and Building Grid Resilience

Rural America can produce abundant clean energy to power America's future. However, that production will go to waste without an energy grid that can efficiently and consistently transmit that power to consumers.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has seen record-breaking demand for funding to advance affordable and reliable clean energy in rural areas through programs made possible by the Inflation Reduction Act. For the Empowering Rural America (New ERA) program alone, USDA received 157 proposals from nearly every state for more than 750 high-quality clean energy projects in rural communities. This demonstrates the readiness of rural electric co-ops to invest in clean energy.

To fully harness the clean energy potential of rural America, major upgrades to the grid are necessary. Some studies suggest a 60% increase in peak demand by 2050 will be required to meet growing electricity needs. New transmission lines will be crucial to carry electricity from areas where renewable resources are most plentiful to distant load centers. The electrical grid will also need to be modernized to handle the intermittent nature of wind and solar power to incorporate storage solutions, demand response systems, and improved grid management technologies. Without these upgrades, the abundant clean energy produced in rural areas may not be efficiently utilized, limiting its potential to power America's future.

## What to Say

- We must act now to build a modern electrical grid that can handle the energy production and energy demands of the coming decades.
- America cannot wait longer to act. The impact of climate change is already being felt across the country, and especially in rural areas with increased extreme weather events.
- To fully support a clean energy transition, we must have a modernized and resilient electrical grid.

## Endorsements

### Secure and Affordable Broadband Extension Act

This bill aims to appropriate additional funds for the Federal Communications Commission's "rip and replace" program and the Affordable Connectivity Program, while also implementing changes to improve the latter program's efficiency and effectiveness. Additionally, the bill requires the FCC to conduct a spectrum auction within two years of the Act's enactment. This auction would focus on specific frequency bands and previously auctioned licenses that have been or may be cancelled or terminated.

### Affordable Connectivity Program Extension Act of 2024

This bill extends and provides FY2024 funding for the Affordable Connectivity Program, which provides a monthly benefit that allows eligible low-income households to receive discounted internet service. The program also provides a one-time discount that may be used to purchase a connected device, such as a computer.

# University Cooperatives Extensions

The Cooperative Extension Service reaches almost every county in the country – urban and rural – to provide research informed non-classroom educational opportunities to any American. The Extension Service helps farmers and ranchers run more efficient and productive operations, aids families in planning nutritious meals and managing family budgets and provides educational opportunities for youths to prepare them for future success.

The Biden-Harris Administration increased funding for cooperative extension programs. The American Rescue Plan (ARP) provided \$75 million in additional funding for Cooperative Extension and USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) to support farmers, ranchers, and other stakeholders with education and research.

Additionally, the Biden-Harris Administration expanded climate-smart agriculture programs. USDA has leveraged cooperative extension networks to provide more education and technical assistance to farmers and ranchers on implementing climate-smart agricultural practices. In 2023, NRCS enrolled nearly 5,300 additional producers in conservation programs across all 50 states, enabled in part by expanded cooperative extension outreach.

Finally, the Biden-Harris Administration increased programs focused on equity and underserved communities. USDA invested \$70 million in 139 partners as part of the 2023 Equity in Conservation Outreach Cooperative Agreements to help cooperative extension and other partners better reach underserved producers and communities.

## What to Say

- The Cooperative Extension Service is key to providing guidance and resources to farmers and ranchers to ensure productive harvests and climate resiliency.
- Cooperative extension programs educate over 6 million children every year to help create a future workforce in agriculture and natural resources.
- Cooperative extension services help close the opportunity gap for underserved communities.

## Endorsements

### Improving Coordination of Agriculture Research and Data Act

This bill directs the Department of Agriculture (USDA) to establish an Agriculture Climate Scientific Research Advisory Committee and a Rural Climate Alliance Network. The advisory committee, within USDA's Office of the Chief Scientist, must review and make recommendations on the agency's long-term and short-term national policies and priorities

### Agriculture Resilience Act of 2023

This bill establishes, expands, and revises multiple programs and activities of the Department of Agriculture (USDA) primarily to reduce carbon emissions from the agriculture sector.