



State Policy Development Meeting
November 7, 2018
Meadow Hall, Meadow Event Park
Doswell, VA

REGISTRATION & REFRESHMENTS	7:30 am
CALL TO ORDER Easton Loving, Vice Chair 1) Anti-trust Avoidance Statement 2) Introductions	8:00 am
REVIEW OF POLICY PROCESS AND UPCOMING ISSUES Note: Small groups of members will each discuss and develop recommendations for entire DRAFT State Policy	8:15 am
BEGIN WORKING ON STATE POLICY	9:00 am
FINALIZE STATE POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS Note: All attendees discuss and finalize recommendations for selected DRAFT State Policy issues based upon Break-Out Group discussions.	11:00 am
ADJOURNMENT and Networking Lunch	12:00 pm

Meeting Sponsors:

Estes Company
Ag & Agronomy Services
Jim Riddell
Farm Credit
First Bank & Trust Company

Refreshment Sponsors:

Fleet Brothers Equipment
Virginia Poultry Federation
Virginia State Dairymen's Association

Antitrust Avoidance

You are reminded that various state and federal laws prohibit the exchange of information among competitors regarding matters pertaining to price, refusals to deal, market division, tying relationships and other topics which might infringe upon antitrust regulations, and that no such exchange or discussion will be tolerated during this meeting. These guidelines apply not only to the formal meeting sessions, but to informal discussions during breaks, meals or social gatherings.

Guidelines for State Policy Development

PURPOSE OF MEETING

- Provide feedback, input, and guidance to the Council's Board of Directors and staff as to the Council's positions on issues impacting the agribusiness industry.
- Educate fellow industry members on the importance of a variety of issues impacting agribusinesses.
- Prepare for the coming General Assembly session and future regulatory actions.
- Highlight issues of critical importance for prioritization by the Board of Directors.

ROLE OF PARTICIPANTS

1. Review policy statements to ensure that they are:
 - a. Current
 - b. Accurate
 - c. Reflective of the "consensus position" of the Council's membership
2. Make necessary changes, additions, or deletions to State Policy to reflect your groups' opinions.
3. Provide feedback on issues of interest to your commodity sector.
4. Seek consensus position on issues that will benefit the Council's membership and entire agribusiness industry.
5. Move efficiently through the Policies. If your group gets stuck on an issue, come back to it at the end of your discussions.
6. Don't worry about "word-smithing" a statement now, but ensure that the agreed upon position is clear.
7. If you are not familiar with something, ask! Facilitators, other participants, and staff are available as a resource.

(OVER)

Guidelines for State Policy Development

CONSIDERATIONS FOR NEW POLICIES OR POSITIONS

- What issue is being addressed?
- Who is expected to act on the issue? (General Assembly, Local governments, Governor, Regulatory agency, others?)
- Who is impacted? (specific industry sector, agribusiness industry, citizens, commonwealth) Specifically how? Positive or Negative?
- Are there conflicts within the agribusiness industry on this issue?
- What is a consensus position?

VIRGINIA AGRIBUSINESS COUNCIL

DRAFT 2018 POLICY ON STATE ISSUES

PROPOSED ADDITIONS ARE UNDERLINED
PROPOSED DELETIONS ARE ~~STRUCK THROUGH~~
QUESTIONS RE: POLICY ARE **HIGHLIGHTED**

General Industry Policies

Agribusiness Workforce

- The Council supports policies that create a skilled, affordable, and accessible workforce, including legal foreign workers, for the agribusiness industry. The use of legal foreign workers is vital to the operation of many agribusinesses and increasing the number of foreign workers allowed is essential to continuing the success of agribusinesses in Virginia.
- The Council believes that seasonal labor is work that is full-time, lasts for a reasonably consistent period of time each year, and recurs around the same time every year.
- The Council opposes state and local employment requirements, procedures, or penalties that create additional burdens or duplicative processes for employers, exceed federal requirements or are pre-empted by federal law, or would adversely impact businesses acting in good faith to comply with federal immigration laws.
- Specifically the Council urges Virginia Employment Commission and other state agencies to work with impacted industries and producers to determine prevailing practices for H2A and H2B in order to provide consistency in administering these programs.
- Recognizing the importance of workforce training to the entire agribusiness industry, the Council supports secondary, post-secondary, higher education, and other technical certification programs that will generate and maintain a qualified work force for agribusiness.
- The Council encourages the Virginia Employment Commission and other state and federal agencies to allocate resources to streamline the application and employee entry procedures result in a more expedient, less costly and legal labor availability so that employees can arrive to employers in a timely fashion.

Note: The Council also has policy concerning Foreign Labor in our National Policy document that will influence policy conversations about federal immigration proposals (i.e. H2C proposals, etc).

Agritourism

- The Council supports agritourism activities on farms and forest land for the purpose of economic development, recreation, entertainment, and education. Agritourism activities should not be subject to locally adopted or enforced restrictions or conditions except those that are based on statewide guidelines.
- The Council supports the Agritourism Liability Act and supports providing liability protection for inherent risk of agritourism activities on farms and forests.

Agriculture Animal Care Standards

- The Council supports responsible use of agriculture animals for human purposes, such as food, fiber, recreation, work, education, exhibition, and research conducted for the benefit of both humans and animals.
- The Council supports proper handling, nutrition, management, transportation, and animal health practices appropriate to the care and use of agricultural animals.
- The Council supports animal care decisions founded in scientific knowledge and professional judgment.
- The Council supports the advancement of animal care through scientific research and education.
- The Council opposes state and local actions which are burdensome, unreasonable, and not based on scientific research and that adversely impact animal agriculture producers.

Agriculture Animal Care Standards (Enforcement)

- The Council opposes further expansion of animal care investigations by untrained, unsupervised citizen volunteers.

- 40 • The Council supports adequate funding and emphasis on timely training and certification established by the State
41 Veterinarian for Animal Control Officers and other law enforcement appropriate for animal agriculture.
- 42 • The Council supports mechanisms to limit taxpayer costs to pay for animals that have been abused.
- 43 • The Council believes current law provides adequate protection for agricultural animals and opposes any expansion
44 of enforcement beyond current animal welfare laws.
- 45 • The Council supports state and local law enforcement consulting with the State Veterinarian's office in
46 investigations involving agricultural animal care practices.
- 47 • The Council supports establishing the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) as the
48 lead regulatory and enforcement agency for animal care standards. VDACS should be provided sufficient resources
49 to implement regulatory standards and enforcement of animal care standards.

51 **Animal Damage Control**

- 52 • The Council recognizes the importance of biologically sound wildlife management, and supports improved wildlife
53 population control measures in order to reduce nursery stock, crop, and livestock depredation. Private sector
54 solutions, diverse local options, and improved coordination between federal, state, and local governments should be
55 included in plans to reduce nuisance wildlife populations which negatively impact the agribusiness industry.
- 56 • The Council supports a kill permit system through the Virginia Department of Game & Inland Fisheries that meets
57 producers' needs to protect crops and livestock in a timely manner, ensures consistency in the permitting process,
58 and provides for an appeal process.
- 59 • The Council supports current Virginia law which allows localities to create a permitting system for wolf and coyote
60 hybrids and for producers to receive compensation for damages to their livestock and poultry caused by wolf and
61 coyote hybrids.
- 62 • The Council supports law that provides livestock and poultry owners' remedies to protect their livestock and
63 poultry.
- 64 • The Council continues to have concerns about the reintroduction of elk in Virginia, recognizing the threats posed by
65 elk to agriculture through potential damages to crops, property, and spread of infectious diseases to livestock as a
66 result of reintroduction. The Council supports maintaining the population of elk in Virginia to the current controlled
67 management area of Buchanan, Dickinson and Wise counties with eligibility for elk to be harvested outside of this
68 management area during the appropriate regional or statewide deer season without implementation of a special
69 tagging system

71 **Animal Health**

- 72 • The Council supports efforts within the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (and on a
73 federal level) to preserve Virginia's USDA compliant standing for disease prevention and eradication programs (i.e.
74 Trichomoniasis, Tuberculosis, Brucellosis, Scrapie, Johnes Disease, and Pseudorabies), and enforce other animal
75 disease prevention and eradication programs. The Council recommends continued enforcement of regulations to
76 protect agricultural animals against the movement of animals of unknown health status into or within Virginia.
- 77 • The Council opposes the transfer of livestock programs from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Food and
78 Drug Administration and other federal agencies to Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
79 (VDACS) without appropriate funding for the transferred initiatives.
- 80 • The Council supports cooperation between state and federal agencies and the poultry industry in prevention of and
81 responding to avian disease outbreaks.
- 82 • The Council recognizes the food safety, public health, and economic threats associated with the shortage of food
83 animal veterinarians and supports efforts to recruit and train an adequate veterinary workforce to serve rural areas.
- 84 • The Council supports the State compensating owners and, when applicable, individuals contracted by the owners, of
85 animals and animal products that are destroyed by order of authorized personnel to control or eradicate an animal
86 disease outbreak.
- 87 • The Council supports updating Virginia law to establish a specific definition of a veterinarian-client-patient
88 relationship for prescriptive and treatment purposes separate and apart from the doctor-patient relationship. Suggest
89 deleting because such legislation passed in the 2018 legislative session.

91 **Animal Identification and Tracking System**

- 92 • The Council supports the continuation of a voluntary animal identification, registration and tracking system in
- 93 Virginia provided that producer data and information is adequately protected, the speed of commerce and trade is
- 94 not adversely impacted, or cost to producers is not significantly increased. Such a program should assist in managing
- 95 animal health and disease outbreaks, emergency management, protecting commerce, and maintaining a safe food
- 96 supply.
- 97 • The Council supports the existing Virginia Premise Identification program that provides GPS identification of
- 98 livestock operations and the commodities produced to assist state and federal veterinarians with proactive response
- 99 to a potential disease outbreak.

100
101 **Biotechnology**

- 102 • The Council supports responsible research, development, and use of bio-engineered products and technologies, to
- 103 benefit agribusinesses and significantly enhance quality of life for citizens.
- 104 • The Council opposes state-level requirements for mandated labeling of foods and products that are derived from
- 105 crops and plants produced through genetic engineering.

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107 **Center for Rural Virginia** - The Council supports the mission of the Center for Rural Virginia as a public-private

108 partnership to serve as a catalyst for the sustainable well-being of rural Virginia.

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110 **Commodity Assessments (Checkoffs)** - The Council supports both state and federal commodity assessment programs whose

111 focus is industry research and promotion, so long as they are directed and operated by industry members and supported by

112 the industry. (See Page 5, State Funding)

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114 **Conflict of Interest** - The Council supports current recusal practices and protecting against conflict of interests while

115 allowing producers to continue to serve on Soil and Water Conservation District Boards or other similar Boards.

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117 **Domestic Food, Fiber, and Fuel Supply** - The Council supports a secure, domestically-produced supply of food, fiber, and

118 fuel sources.

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120 **Economic Development**

- 121 • The Council supports efforts and programs to establish, expand, and retain traditional and emerging agriculture and
- 122 forestry operations, and assist in the growth of agribusinesses in Virginia.
- 123 • Economic development of agribusinesses should not be limited by locally adopted or enforced restrictions or
- 124 conditions except those that are based on statewide guidelines.
- 125 • The Council encourages state and local governments to actively involve agribusiness leaders in creating economic
- 126 development strategies and ordinances.
- 127 • The Council supports State and local economic development programs specifically focused on agribusiness
- 128 development, such as the Virginia Farm Business Development Program and the Agriculture & Forestry Industries
- 129 Development Fund (AFID), as tools to increase awareness of the economic benefits of agribusiness and encourage
- 130 growth in the industry.

131 • The Council supports adequate funding for the Virginia Agriculture and Forestry Industries Development Fund

132 (AFID) to incentivize job creation and economic development through the expansion and establishment of new

133 agribusinesses and the reinstatement of funds for the Farm Business Development Program.

134 • The Council supports the exemption of farm buildings and structures from the provisions of the Uniform Statewide

135 Building Code and supports reasonable and cost effective fire safety best management practices for agritourism

136 businesses holding events open to the public in farm venues.

137 • ~~The Council supports adequate funding for the Virginia Agriculture and Forestry Industries Development Fund~~

138 ~~(AFID) to incentivize job creation and economic development through the expansion and establishment of new~~

139 ~~agribusinesses and the reinstatement of funds for the Farm Business Development Program.~~

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141 **Emerging Technologies**

- The Council supports the use of emerging technologies, such as unmanned systems, for commercial purposes and related agribusiness development applications.
- The Council supports adequate standards for emerging technologies, such as unmanned systems, to address privacy concerns, protect private property rights, protect public health and safety, and to prevent unlawful search and seizure for enforcement activities.

Energy

- The Council supports a stable, affordable, and reliable supply of all forms of energy. To increase energy independence, reduce emissions, provide a stable market for Virginia commodities and agribusinesses, and reduce dependence on non-renewable fuels, the Council supports:
 - Maintaining a supply of commodities and availability of land for both energy and traditional uses, such as food, feed, and fiber
 - Production or conversion of agricultural and silvicultural products and by-products into renewable fuels and energy
 - Market-based solutions for renewable energy programs that recognize the challenges facing all sectors of agriculture and forestry
 - Construction of renewable fuel production plants and increased availability and use of renewable fuels where such activities create markets for agribusiness and benefits for energy users
 - Investment in research and use of incentives rather than mandates to encourage the production of renewable energy
 - Policies that encourage conservation and innovation in addressing energy supplies and costs
 - Oil and gas exploration off of Virginia's coast in compliance with environmental regulations
 - The Council supports the state minimizing the regulatory burden on utilities through state implementation of federal regulations.
- The Council supports policies that recognize the carbon neutrality of biomass.
- The Council supports updates to net energy metering, specifically for household net metering, that enables household consumers to use on-site renewable energy systems to offset all or part of their electricity use while ensuring that participants are fairly compensated, that electric utilities wholly recover the cost of distribution services they provide participants; and that non-participating utility customers do not disproportionately share of the cost of implementing household net energy metering.

Note: Given the net metering legislation that passed last year, does this paragraph need updating?

Farmers' Markets - The Council supports continued investment by the Commonwealth in farmers' markets and recognizes the significant value they add to products grown in Virginia.

Fence Laws - The Council supports protection from liability for livestock owners whose animals escape from a legal, well-maintained fence.

Food Safety

- The Council opposes the unregulated and uninspected sale of meat and meat products, dairy and dairy products, other "Potentially Hazardous Foods" as defined in the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Food Code, and other high-risk foods currently regulated by Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) or the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS).
- The Council supports maintaining compliance with federal food safety requirements that allow Virginia products to be sold and shipped interstate.
- The Council supports state based implementation of the Produce Safety Rule under the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) including inspection by Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) personnel with appropriate funding.
- The Council supports the proper inspection of food establishments, animal slaughter and meat processing facilities, and food processing facilities by Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) where necessary to protect public health, safety, and welfare or to comply with federal regulations.

- 194 • The Council supports efforts to increase the availability and access to U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) or
195 Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) inspected meat processing facilities for
196 producers, and efforts to address identified shortages of such facilities to meet local and state needs.
197

198 **Gubernatorial Appointments** - The Council supports the Governor making appointments in a timely manner, prior to
199 current terms expiring. Furthermore the Council supports appointing individuals who have industry experience, or
200 appropriate general knowledge, and who are committed to serving constituents and maintaining the vitality of agribusiness as
201 the largest sector of the Commonwealth's economy to positions impacting agriculture, forestry, or agribusiness.
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203 **Industrial Hemp** - With proper regulatory, registration, and law enforcement standards, the Council supports crop and seed
204 research, market development, and the production of industrial hemp as an option for Virginia producers.
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206 **Invasive Species & Noxious Weeds**

- 207 • To guard against the introduction of new invasive species or noxious weeds and manage existing invasive species or
208 noxious weeds in Virginia, the Council supports a commitment of resources for the Virginia Invasive Species
209 Working Group and coordination with the Virginia Noxious Weeds Advisory Committee.
- 210 • The Council supports the creation of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Virginia Department of
211 Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) and the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation to
212 facilitate further coordination between invasive species and noxious weed control efforts.
- 213 • The Council opposes the labeling of widely used and economically important plant forage species and ornamental
214 plants as "invasive" or "noxious" without reasonable science-based evidence of their invasive status and the
215 potential economic impact of both the eradication and/or control of such species by the appropriate state body or
216 agency and the economic impact of controls on the growth and sale of "noxious weeds".
- 217 • The Council supports the funding of programs and resources to aid in the research and eradication of invasive pests,
218 plants, and diseases.
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220 **Land Use Assessment** - The Council supports and encourages localities to keep or adopt land use assessment for
221 agricultural, horticultural, forest, and open space uses, believing that land should be assessed on its use rather than its
222 potential value, and supports enforcement efforts to curb abuses of the program. The Council opposes any additional
223 requirements added to state law for land use assessment eligibility, such as mandated use of water quality best management
224 practices.
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226 **Right-to-Farm** - The Council continues to support the purpose of the existing Right-to-Farm statute, which removes the
227 conditional or special use requirement in an agriculturally zoned area for production activities of agriculture and forestry
228 operations. The Council believes the Act provides adequate public input into the location of agricultural operations.
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230 **Rural Infrastructure**

- 231 • The Council supports efforts which will ensure affordability, availability, and reliability of infrastructure to rural
232 Virginia without imposing undue burdens on existing providers to services to rural communities. This includes but is
233 not limited to sewer, water, road and bridge maintenance, electric service, telecommunications service, and high-
234 speed internet access.
- 235 • The Council supports efforts to expand funding for affordable broadband and high speed internet access to the entire
236 Commonwealth for the purposes of expanding business opportunities and precision agribusiness practices in rural
237 Virginia. This funding should be spread equitably among rural regions and among providers.

238 **Note: Broadband access is going to be a major topic of discussion this General Assembly session. Does the policy**
239 **document need to be more specific with regards to VAC's position toward broadband funding?**
240

241 **Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry** - The Council recognizes the benefit of the Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry
242 being fully engaged in Virginia's economic development efforts. The Council supports the Secretary of Agriculture and
243 Forestry's role for the enhancement, importance and influence of agribusiness in the Commonwealth, as the largest private
244 sector economic industry.
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246 **State Agriculture Youth Programs** - The Council supports continued funding for the State Youth scholarship programs
247 aimed specifically for our industry, such as the State Youth Shows and scholarship programs.

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State Fair of Virginia - The Council supports the State Fair’s mission of agriculture and forestry education and promotion and the efforts of industry organizations, state officials, and education and extension personnel to partner in implementing programs to meet this mission.

State Funding

- The Council supports adequate funding and staffing, and appropriate organization of State Agencies in order to effectively and efficiently promote and support the economic growth and development of Virginia agriculture and forestry.
- The Council opposes the transfer of special dedicated non-general funds (i.e. Commodity Boards, State Milk Commission, the Virginia Agricultural Council, the Virginia Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission, the Pesticide Control Fund, and the Reforestation of Timberland fund) to the general fund of the state treasury.
- The Council opposes unfunded mandates on the agribusiness industry and affiliated State agencies, land-grant universities, and Virginia Cooperative Extension. Mandates should be reviewed to assess the costs, impacts, and benefits to the Commonwealth and impacted industries
- The Council encourages critical assessment of budget reductions to ensure that core services to the agribusiness industry are preserved and that additional costs are not imposed on the agribusiness industry.

Virginia Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services

- The Council supports an effective level of funding for industry marketing programs including Virginia’s Finest, Virginia Grown, and domestic and international promotions.
- The Council supports the expansion of trade opportunities for the agribusiness industry in foreign markets through funding and resources for international trade offices and programs to promote the export of Virginia agriculture and forestry products.
- The Council supports funding to facilitate statistical commodity surveys that are not included in the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) agricultural census data including but not limited to turfgrass, aquaculture, equine, fruit trees, grapes, and greenhouse/nursery/Christmas trees.
- To guarantee fair trade, competitiveness, and product safety for the Commonwealth’s agribusiness industry, the Council supports adequate state funding for weights and measures, inspection, and grading programs that ensure the integrity of agricultural commodities, commercial animal feed, fertilizer, lime, seed, and other inputs.
- The Council supports adequate funding for the State Veterinarian’s office to provide necessary services to the agribusiness industry, enforcement of regulatory standards, and enhance animal disease monitoring and emergency response efforts.

Virginia Department of Conservation & Recreation

- The Council supports consistent and adequate funding for Soil and Water Conservation District operations and technical assistance to meet voluntary non-point source water quality standards and goals (see Environmental Policies, page 10, and Nutrient Management Program, page 12, for more information).

Virginia Department of Forestry

- The Council supports the required full state funding match for the Reforestation of Timberland Program which provides cost- share assistance to landowners for replanting and related management practices.
- The Council supports an effective level of funding to provide technical assistance to landowners, enhance the water quality program, and protect our natural resources and private property from forest fires.
- The Council supports optimization of state nursery production and planting levels that supports state wood market demands now and in the future.

Education, Outreach, and Research

- The Council supports adequate funding for education, outreach, and research services and programs (see Education, Outreach, and Research Policies, page 9, for more information).

Terrorism

- The Council supports strong effective systems to prevent, detect, and respond to acts of terrorism directed toward any facet of the agribusiness industry including research, production, processing, and distribution.
- The Council supports full enforcement of the law against persons who threaten or carry out violence and other extremist acts directed at scientists and agribusinesses.

Transportation

- The Council supports a state-wide transportation system that effectively addresses the diverse aspects of the agribusiness industry and the rural communities that depend upon it. The Council recognizes the importance of incorporating rail and ports into transportation solutions.
- The Council supports a viable, responsive rail transportation system which provides competitive rates for transportation of agricultural and forest commodities, supplies, and finished products.
- The Council supports State programs and investments to preserve the existing rail system, increase freight rail capacity, improve freight rail service, assist Virginia’s short-line railroads, and pursue inclusion of rail in national transportation policies and funding.
- The Council supports adequate resources for maintaining and improving the condition of rural roads and bridges.
- The Council opposes tolls solely on commercial truck traffic. In addition, the Council opposes the addition of tolls to interstate highways due to the increased cost, competitive disadvantage, and increased traffic on parallel rural roads.
- The Council supports a motor vehicle permitting system that allows for the efficient, cost-effective, and competitive transportation of agriculture and forest products, including provisions that recognize the need for a consistent overweight and oversize permitting system for agriculture commodities, farm animal feed, and forest products.
- The Council supports farm vehicle registration standards and a process that curtails non-farm abuses of the program and maintains the program for exclusive farm use. The Council recognizes that proper maintenance and use of unregistered farm vehicles is critically important to ensuring vehicle safety and avoiding abuse of the program.
- The Council supports maintaining the current mileage restrictions for farm use vehicles.
- The Council opposes bans and restrictions on roads for reasons other than safety.
- The Council opposes local road requirements which are more stringent than those enacted by the State.
- The Council supports appropriate signage on interstate highways, secondary highways, and scenic routes and promotions at Welcome Centers in Virginia to market agricultural commodity products and agritourism.
- The Council supports truck weight standards that are competitive with those of Virginia’s neighboring states, and supports Virginia participating in a federal pilot program to allow for increased truck weights on interstates.
- The Council opposes changes that would 1) create competitive disadvantages or disproportionate cost increases for shipping agriculture and forestry products through the Port of Virginia, 2) not include necessary performance standards and requirements, and 3) decrease or eliminate the effectiveness of a state oversight body of the Port of Virginia.
- The Council supports investments and management decisions to ensure viability of the Port of Virginia and its crucial role in exporting Virginia agriculture and forestry products.

Note: Two proposals for funding improvements on Interstate I-81 have been proposed by VDOT. One involves tolling which would allow for a “commuter fee”. Does the Council support the imposition of tolling using a “commuter fee”?

Note: VCA intends to raise the issue of Hours of Service for livestock drivers.

Commodity Specific Policies

Aquaculture

- The Council supports the recognition of cultured seafood, cage growing of oysters and clams, and aquaculture products grown for market as agricultural products.
- The Council supports the activities of the Aquaculture Advisory Board to assist industry expansion and development as enacted in the 1992 Aquaculture Development Act.
- The Council supports adequate funding for the work of research institutions in conducting marine and freshwater aquaculture and aquaponics research.

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- The Council supports the strict enforcement of current laws and penalties in cases of theft and/or willful destruction of fish and shellfish raised for sale and/or research and supports legislation to enact more stringent penalties for such acts as needed.
 - The Council supports the involvement of aquaculturists, along with the use of sound scientific documentation and independent research, in the development of any regulatory requirements on aquaculture facilities.

354 **Christmas Trees** – The Council supports the Commonwealth’s recognition of Christmas tree production as a key component
355 of our agriculture and forestry industries, and providing adequate resources for marketing and promotion of Virginia-grown
356 Christmas trees.

357 **Crop and Livestock Protection Products**

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- The Council opposes arbitrary decisions affecting the use of crop and livestock protection products in agriculture and forestry without adequate scientific proof of material detrimental effects.
 - The Council opposes the removal of essential crop and livestock protection products from the market until a reasonable, economical alternative product is available.
 - The Council opposes mandatory offsite notification prior to the application of crop protection products.

364 **Dairy**

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- The Council opposes the retail sale of unpasteurized milk and dairy products to the public. The Council opposes the retail sale of unpasteurized cheese and cheese foods unless properly aged according to Food and Drug Administration (FDA) standards and regulations.
 - The Council supports establishment of minimal contractual and food safety standards for herd-share agreements and opposes the use of herd-share agreements for the sole purpose of circumventing laws and regulations prohibiting the sale of raw milk directly to consumers.
 - The Council supports maintaining the Virginia Milk Commission and ensuring its structural integrity and effectiveness.

374 **Equine**

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- The Council supports the continued classification of equine as an agricultural animal or livestock and opposes the re- classification of equine as companion animals.
 - The Council supports funding the full percentage of racing commission funds dedicated to the equine industry as stated in Virginia code.
 - The Council supports the reinvestment of Virginia Racing Commission revenues to promote, sustain, and grow the Virginia horse industry.
 - The Council endorses ethical and professional transactions with regard to buying and selling horses and believes that under current contract law, the framework exists to enforce this.
 - The Council supports clarification to the Equine Liability Law to allow trainers or advisors to execute waiver of liability for a minor as a duly authorized representative of a parent or guardian.

385 **Note: The General Assembly looked at legislation last session to address the treatment of equine as companion**
386 **animals. Does this policy need revised?**

387 **Note: The General Assembly approved a bill last year reinstating horse racing and there are now regulations**
388 **approved by the Administration. Does the 3rd bullet need to be revised?**

391 **Forestry**

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- The Council supports incentives for voluntary retention of riparian forested areas.
 - The Council supports the purpose of the Private Forest Land Conservation Act as passed by the 1997 General Assembly. The Council believes that the Virginia Department of Forestry and private landowners can best determine proper forest management and land use decisions, and should not be limited by local ordinances.
 - The Council supports the economic and environmental sustainability of Virginia's forest resources through private forest management choices. The Council encourages expanding the markets for the sale of forest products.

- 398 • The Council supports state policy that encourages pine planting and hardwood regeneration on non-industrial
399 private forest lands.
400 • The Council supports increased awareness, program development, and research for the control of forest insect pests
401 and diseases, and invasive plants.
402 • The Council supports green building rating systems and procurement policies that do not disadvantage or unfairly
403 restrict Virginia wood materials.
404 • The Council supports forest certification systems that do not disadvantage or unfairly restrict Virginia wood
405 materials and incentives to offset significant certification costs to forest landowners.
406 • The Council supports legal and educational solutions for addressing timber trespass and timber theft. The Council
407 opposes additional notification requirements to adjacent landowners for silvicultural activities.
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409 **Note: The Council believes timber theft legislation will be introduced this year.**

410 **Horticulture/Turfgrass** - The Council supports the recognition of horticulture, nursery products and managed landscape and
411 turf agricultural practices as key components of the agriculture industry at both the state and local level.
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413 **Pollinators-** The Council supports Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) working with
414 agribusiness stakeholders to determine and implement the Virginia Pollinator Protection Strategy in order to ensure healthy
415 pollinator populations without overly burdensome regulation.
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417 **Tobacco**

- 418 • The Council supports the efforts of tobacco companies to restrict the access of tobacco products to minors; however,
419 the Council opposes further restrictions or bans on smoking.
420 • The Council supports programs designed to promote common sense and common courtesy to resolve differences
421 between smokers and non-smokers.
422 • The Council supports the enforcement of restrictions on the sale of products manufactured by non-
423 compliant tobacco manufacturers.
424 • Although indemnification payments to tobacco producers have ended, the Council supports the continued agreement
425 between states and major cigarette manufacturers as a result of the Master Settlement Agreement (M.S.A.)
426

427 **Wine & Other Alcoholic Products**

- 428 • The Council opposes additional license fees or requirements, additional local taxes on the sale of alcoholic products
429 by farm breweries, farm distilleries, farm wineries, farm cideries, and farm meaderies and local ordinances that
430 prohibit or limit business practices of these farm-businesses an agricultural activity that are regulated by state and
431 federal laws.
432 • The Council supports the viability of the Virginia Winery Distribution Company to ensure affordable distribution of
433 Virginia wines to all markets.
434 • The Council supports the Virginia Farm Winery Law, including land use provisions, and supports the retention of all
435 specified privileges within the Law for farm wineries.
436 • The Council supports the right of farm wineries, cideries, and meaderies to open and operate remote retail
437 establishments as a privilege of the farm winery license.
438 • The Council supports efforts to expand the development and use of Virginia-grown products in Virginia breweries,
439 malt houses, distilleries, wineries, cideries, and meaderies.
440

441 **Education, Outreach, and Research Policies**

442 **Higher Education and Land Grant Universities**

- 443 • The Council encourages exploration of admission policies at colleges, particularly at Land Grant Universities, to
444 afford the greatest opportunities for students seeking degrees or professional certificates in agribusiness related
445 fields.
446 • The Council supports coordination between Land Grant Universities and Community Colleges to provide adequate
447 agriculture and natural resource programs that facilitate transition to four-year degree programs.
448

- 449 • The Council supports fulfillment of the three-part land-grant mission for education, research, and extension by
450 Virginia’s two land-grant institutions - Virginia Tech and Virginia State University. The Council supports all three
451 parts of the land- grant mission as equally important, and supports maintaining a focus on programs critical to
452 agribusiness.
- 453 • The Council supports adequate state funding for programs, personnel, initiatives, maintenance and operations, and
454 capital projects that advance agribusiness research, education, and outreach through Virginia State University and
455 Virginia Tech. Specifically, the Council supports state funding to match “1890 Institution” federal funds for land-
456 grant mission programs at Virginia State University.
- 457 • The Council supports accountability and transparency with respect to how Virginia Tech and Virginia State
458 University funding is distributed, including Virginia Cooperative Extension and Virginia’s land-grant agricultural
459 research stations.
- 460 • The Council supports changing or moving the agricultural animal facilities for the College of Agriculture and Life
461 Sciences at Virginia Tech from their current locations with 1) complete funding for equal or improved replacements
462 with the most current and up-to-date technologies2) the uninterrupted use of facilities, and 3) the preservation of
463 educational opportunities and experiences for students.
- 464 • The Council encourages the development and implementation of agricultural land-use plans so that the integrity of
465 all agriculture programs are preserved and Virginia Tech’s and Virginia State University’s missions as land-grant
466 institutions are visibly demonstrated.
- 467 • The Council supports making state owned and operated facilities available at an affordable rate for youth events
468 such as FFA and 4-H judging events.
- 469 • The Council supports soil testing services at Virginia Tech and adequate resources to ensure their viability and
470 capability to meet producer demands.

471 |
472
473 **Virginia Cooperative Extension and Agricultural Research Stations**

- 474 • The Council supports adequate funding for Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE), the Virginia Agricultural
475 Experiment Station (VAES), Virginia State University (VSU) Randolph Farm, and other land-grant agricultural
476 research station programs which are essential in providing the latest information, research findings, and technologies
477 to the agribusiness industry.
- 478 • The Council supports keeping Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) and Virginia’s land-grant agricultural research
479 stations within Virginia Tech’s College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, in coordination with Virginia State
480 University, the Virginia Tech College of Natural Resources and Environment and the Virginia-Maryland Regional
481 College of Veterinary Medicine.
- 482 • The Council believes State funding decisions for Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) and land-grant agricultural
483 research stations and facilities must recognize that funding needs cannot be offset by tuition and fees.
- 484 • The Council supports agriculture and 4-H being the priority for Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) programs.
- 485 • The Council supports the inclusion and review of the needs and priorities of local governments and the agribusiness
486 community, and retention and advancement of Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) employees by Virginia
487 Cooperative Extension (VCE) on a regular basis.
- 488 • The Council supports a continued assessment, with industry involvement, of Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE)
489 and land-grant agricultural research stations to assure that critical services to agriculture and forestry are preserved
490 and that limited resources are used wisely and efficiently.

491 Note: Extension is requesting \$350,000 for an event in 2020 that will showcase Virginia Agriculture to a national
492 conference

493
494 **Youth Education**

- 495 • The Council supports positive youth education and leadership opportunities through environmental, career and
496 technical education, agricultural education in public schools, Ag in the Classroom, 4-H, FFA, Project Learning Tree,
497 and the Governor's School for Agriculture, and the adequate funding of these programs.
- 498 • The Council supports agriculture-based Career and Technical Education positions through Virginia Tech, Virginia
499 State University and the Virginia Department of Education.

- The Council supports efforts to educate students in public schools about the benefits and positive impacts of the agribusiness industry on local communities, food safety and availability, and economic development.

Environmental Policies

Air Quality - The Council supports sound air quality policy that is scientifically responsible, risk-based, does not require business practices that modern science, technology, and economic feasibility do not support, considers the risks and benefits to the agribusiness community, and does not create an unfair disadvantage for Virginia agribusiness in competing regionally, nationally, and internationally. Full economic impact studies should be used in the decision making process, including recognizing and crediting previous efforts to reduce or limit a facility's emissions.

Agricultural Best Management Practices (Ag BMPs) -The Council supports achieving state-wide water quality goals through a public-private partnership between farmers and the Commonwealth for implementation of voluntary agricultural best management practices. In order to achieve these goals, adequate, consistent and dedicated State funding is needed for implementation of agricultural best management practices, technical assistance, and essential operations provided by the Soil and Water Conservation Districts distributed in an efficient manner to achieve these statewide goals.

Agricultural Permitted Facilities - The Council supports cost-share assistance for permitted agricultural facilities.

Agricultural Stewardship Act - The Council supports the purpose of the existing Agricultural Stewardship Act statute, which serves as a mechanism to protect water quality, and believes a successful Agricultural Stewardship program must be adequately staffed, sufficiently funded, complaint-driven, and managed by the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS).

Chesapeake Bay Restoration

- The Council supports a comprehensive data system that fully accounts for all Agricultural Best Management Practices, whether through federal or state programs, permits, or voluntary implementation.
- The Council supports meeting agriculture nutrient reductions within the Chesapeake Bay Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) through utilization of voluntary Resource Management Plans (RMPs). RMPs must be supported by adequate, consistent, and dedicated funding for cost-share programs and technical assistance for implementation.
- The Council supports the use and implementation of state guidelines for actions by localities in meeting Bay Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Watershed Implementation Plans (WIPs) requirements in order to maintain consistency of expectations upon agribusinesses across all jurisdictions. The Council opposes arbitrarily shifting the burden of Chesapeake Bay restoration to any source sector, including agribusiness.
- The Council supports the Chesapeake Bay Program that does not incorporate significantly expanded federal authorities. Specifically, the Council opposes additional federal regulation and enforcement power of state programs including Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs), effluent guidelines, Animal Feeding Operation regulations, and point source programs.
- The Council opposes efforts within the Chesapeake Bay Agreement to include measures that would divert efforts and resources beyond those required to meet the Bay Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL).
- The Council supports the usage of real-world, science-based and tested water quality data in decision-making processes versus an overall dependence upon computer modeling.
- The Council opposes using any Chesapeake Bay Model with significant flaws which adversely impact the agribusiness industry's efforts to address water quality.

Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act - The Council opposes the expansion of the existing Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act to localities within the western Chesapeake Bay watershed but supports other water quality improvement incentives suitable for the nature of agriculture production in the region.

Climate Change - The Council encourages balanced energy and climate policies that:

- Are based on peer reviewed, science-based conclusions.
- Include realistically achievable strategies for compliance.
- Rely first on market-based solutions instead of government regulations.

- 553 • Create economically affordable and sustainable solutions that minimize the impacts to agribusinesses and
554 consumers.
555 • Include access to markets related to carbon sequestration and carbon capture when they become available.
556 • Promote research and development of new technologies that can be implemented in realistic timelines.
557 • Maximize the utilization of current programs to achieve results, including working farm and forestland preservation
558 and active forest management.
559 • Are predicated upon equal levels of requirements in all nations, do not rely on US funding to achieve reductions in
560 developing nations, and do not create an unfair disadvantage for Virginia agribusiness in competing regionally,
561 nationally, and internationally.

562
563 **Environmental Offset Programs** - The Council supports the development of trading or offset programs that provide market-
564 based approaches to resolving environmental issues, provided that there are provisions to avoid detrimental impacts to
565 facilities or operations providing these offsets. Offset programs should realistically account for the amount of offsets
566 available from agriculture, forestry, and the green industry, not serve solely as a means to shift additional requirements from
567 one source to another, and allow for full trading participation from all sectors, including agribusiness.

- 568
569
570 **Environmental Permitting**
571 • The Council supports adequate general funds and/or cost-saving measures to fund environmental permit programs.
572 • The Council supports environmental incentive programs for facilities that have demonstrated a strong environmental
573 compliance record.
574 • The Council supports coordination of state agency programs and regulations that positively impact the agribusiness
575 industry.
576 • The Council opposes requiring agribusinesses or producers to be co-liable with a permit holder.

577
578 **Environmental Program Development**-The Council supports an expanded voice for agribusinesses in the development and
579 implementation of environmental programs administered by state agencies including boards, commissions, and working
580 groups.

- 581 **Environmental Stewardship**
582 • The Council supports sound, science-based environmental stewardship on all agricultural and forestry operations.
583 • The Council supports increased efforts for education about the importance of proper water quality practices.

- 584
585 **Farm and Forest Land Preservation and Conservation**
586 • The Council supports the implementation and funding of voluntary programs that enhance the viability of the
587 business of farming and forestry and conservation of the working lands upon which they depend.
588 • The Council supports state funds for local Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) programs to preserve working
589 farms and forests.
590 • The Council supports tools that will meet a variety of landowner needs, including generational transfer education,
591 agricultural and forestal districts, perpetual and shorter term easement programs, and mechanisms that provide
592 certainty in assessment values.

- 593
594 **Land Application Programs**
595 • The Council supports appropriate use of funding for land application programs, including the Biosolids Use
596 Program, at the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). The Council supports funding for these programs in
597 order to ensure that permits are issued in a timely and efficient manner, that vigilant enforcement programs are
598 implemented, and that appropriate mechanisms are in place to gather input from those who are directly impacted by
599 land application of biosolids or industrial residuals.
600 • The Council supports land application, such as of biosolids and industrial residuals, and its regulation only at the
601 state level. Current land application regulations are balanced, efficient and effective, based on sound science, and
602 protective of both the environment and property rights of landowners utilizing these nutrients.

- 603 • The Council supports adoption of county ordinances for testing and monitoring and appropriate training of local
604 monitors to facilitate local participation in the testing and monitoring provisions of land application programs.
605

Livestock Stream Fencing

- 607 • The Council supports the proactive, voluntary efforts of the livestock industry to pursue additional implementation
608 of livestock stream fencing practices.
609 • The Council supports the adoption by federal and state programs of flexible fencing standards.
610 • The Council supports strategies and cost-share assistance to implement and maintain livestock stream fencing, while
611 ensuring that available funding is used in the most efficient manner to achieve the greatest environmental
612 effectiveness.
613

Nutrient Management Program

- 614 • The Council supports a streamlined and efficient nutrient management program that addresses nutrient applications
615 through site-specific assessments, is flexible and tiered for the size and type of agribusiness operation, and seeks a
616 balance between environmental stewardship and the viability of the operation. Cost-share assistance must be
617 guaranteed, adequate technical assistance and resources provided to impacted industries, and further program
618 enhancements made prior to adoption of mandatory standards.
619 • The Council supports adequate state cost-share funding to revise and retain nutrient management plans on golf
620 courses to assist courses in meeting the state requirement to have a nutrient management plan.
621 • The Council supports a voluntary, incentive-based nutrient management program, and efforts to educate and
622 encourage implementation of nutrient management plans.
623 • The Council supports funding, education and deployment of Nutrient Management Plan writers as necessary to
624 comply with the Chesapeake Bay Restoration Plan and statewide permitting requirements.
625 • The Council supports increased flexibility in required Nutrient Management Plans for state-owned lands for research
626 purposes.
627 • The Council supports the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) Nutrient Management Standards and
628 Criteria that are science-based and written through consultation with Virginia Tech.
629
630

Plant Nutrients

- 631 • The Council supports the use of alternative sources of nutrients such as industrial residuals, biosolids, livestock
632 manures, and poultry litter for crop and forest lands.
633 • The Council opposes local government regulation of nutrients.
634 • The Council supports addressing urban nutrient reductions from managed landscape and turf through practices that
635 are feasible, science-based, cost-effective, and generate measurable results.
636 • The Council supports labeling guidelines provided by the Association of American Plant Food Control Officials
637 (AAPFCO) and opposes labeling that is applicable only to Virginia.
638 • The Council supports science-based application rates for slowly available nitrogen in lawn fertilizers.
639
640

Poultry Litter Management

- 641 • The Council supports collaboration between the poultry industry and the State to facilitate transportation and
642 alternative uses of poultry litter. Any state or industry funded initiatives must have clear parameters with appropriate
643 caps and not subsidize that which free-market forces can accomplish. The Council strongly opposes a levy or tax
644 upon the poultry industry to fund such programs.
645 • The Council supports education and incentives for feed nutrient management but opposes mandates for use of the
646 phosphorus reduction enzyme Phytase or other feed nutrient management strategies.
647 • The Council supports the use of traditional and innovative economic development efforts such as tax incentives and
648 grants to promote alternative uses of poultry litter.
649
650

Soil and Water Conservation Board

- 651 • The Council supports the decision making authority of the Soil and Water Conservation Board in order to provide
652 transparency and citizen input for programs and regulations impacting agribusinesses, including oversight of: 1)
653 nutrient management planning regulations and standards and criteria, 2) resource management plan regulations and
654

655 program implementation, 3) Soil and Water Conservation District funding and operations, and 4) Agricultural Best
656 Management Practice Cost-share standards, specifications, and funding.
657 • The Council supports appropriate representation of the agribusiness industry, and the utilization of other state
658 agencies critical to agribusiness as resources on the Soil and Water Conservation Board.
659

660 **Stormwater Management** - The Council opposes federal, state, and local stormwater management regulations for
661 agribusinesses, including managed landscape and turf, (like golf courses, athletic fields, parks, and landscaping features)
662 agricultural buildings and structures, and agribusinesses in urban settings, that are not based on sound science, do not provide
663 credit for industry practices for managed landscape and turf, and negatively impact the further development and expansion of
664 agribusinesses.
665

666 **TMDL Development**

- 667 • The Council opposes Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Development processes that a) are not based on peer-
668 reviewed, science-based information, b) do not account for population growth projections in the watershed, c) do not
669 assess wildlife population impacts on water quality, d) do not consider the realistic availability of offset credits
670 and/or e) do not provide state level guidance to localities and oversight of local actions.
- 671 • The Council encourages the use of sound science and the representation of the agricultural and forestry community
672 in Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) development and implementation.
673

674 **Urban Best Management Practices**

- 675 • The Council supports the urban best management practices (BMP) program and associated cost -share assistance to
676 increase adoption of water quality practices on urban landscapes and managed turf.
- 677 • The Council endorses best management practices (BMP) for golf course management, developed in coordination
678 with industry leaders, academic experts, and state officials, to address water quality and quantity concerns for golf
679 courses.
680

681 **Waste Management** - The Council supports proactive education programs and other efforts to increase the effectiveness of
682 waste management activities in order to reduce the negative impacts to agribusinesses from improper waste disposal.
683

684
685 **Water Permit Fees**

- 686 • The Council supports agriculture’s exemption from water permit fees.
- 687 • The Council opposes increases in applicable water permit fees. The Council supports the coordination of all state
688 agencies impacting environmental permits throughout the permitting process.
- 689 • The Council supports increasing the length of groundwater permits to at least 15 years.
690

691 **Water Quality Programs**

- 692 • The Council opposes state laws and regulations that are more stringent than those required by federal authority and
693 create an unfair disadvantage for Virginia agribusiness in competing regionally, nationally, and internationally.
- 694 • The Council opposes any adverse changes to the current Virginia Pollution Abatement General Permit, a permit
695 program which provides a means to effectively protect water quality and to monitor intensive livestock and poultry
696 facilities. Further, the Council believes that clear and consistent administration and enforcement of the permit
697 system are necessary to maintain the confidence of the agricultural community and the general public.
- 698 • The Council supports exemptions for fruit and vegetable packing houses from Virginia Pollution Discharge
699 Elimination System (VPDES) permits.
- 700 • The Council supports the management of agribusiness related water quality programs that will ensure and enhance
701 the effective, efficient, and consistent delivery of programs and services to the agribusiness industry.
- 702 • The Council supports 1) oversight of water quality programs within an agency that maintains and/or increases the
703 benefits and viability of voluntary agricultural water quality programs, including increased resources, funding,
704 participation, and agency communications with the agribusiness industry, 2) statutory specifications to maintain
705 existing voluntary programs, including agricultural best management practices, soil and water conservation districts,

706 and resource management plans, and 3) policies to ensure that voluntary agricultural water quality programs will not
707 be directly overseen by state personnel charged with regulatory authority.
708 • The Council supports application of the federal agricultural stormwater exemption in Clean Water Act permitting
709 programs administered by the Commonwealth, and opposes any efforts to require federal discharge permits for
710 operations falling under the exemption.

711
712 **Water Quality Resources**

- 713 • The Council supports full utilization of existing state water quality programs and the provision of adequate funding
714 and resources to implement these programs prior to imposing additional, unnecessary regulatory programs.
- 715 • The Council supports sufficient federal and state funding for implementation of required and voluntary
716 environmental practices on agribusinesses.

717
718 **Water Use, Management Policy and Water Rights**

- 719 • The Council supports sound water use policy planning that fairly and equitably addresses water uses, water rights of
720 landowners, and water restrictions during times of drought.
- 721 • The Council supports the protection of water rights for agriculture and turf operations and opposes withdrawal
722 regulations or laws that result in adverse financial or operational impacts.
- 723 • The Council supports policies that encourage the appropriate use and management of water resources, including the
724 reclamation of water for irrigation and industrial purposes.

725
726 **Wetlands** - The Council supports a balanced wetlands protection program that is based on sound economic and scientific
727 data, fairly addresses the interests of agriculture and forestry, and expedites the permit approval process by federal, state and
728 local government.

729
730 **Legal and Regulatory Policies**

731
732 **Dillon Rule** - The Council supports the current use of the “Dillon Rule” regarding the relationship of state and local
733 government powers and opposes efforts to amend or abolish the “Dillon Rule” in Virginia.

734
735 **Eminent Domain (Rights of Private Property Owners)** - The Council opposes policies and actions that infringe upon the
736 rights of private property owners. The Council supports legislative action that prevents unreasonable restrictions and actions
737 against private property owners and supports fair compensation for the taking of property, lost access, and lost profits, when
738 eminent domain authority is exercised.

739
740 **Freedom of Information** - The Council supports amendments to the Virginia Freedom of Information Act that prevent
741 disclosure of proprietary information including: content of Nutrient Management Plans and Resource Management Plans,
742 premises and animal identification and tracking records, investigation reports, testing results, and records related to
743 catastrophic events and losses impacting the agribusiness industry.

744
745 **Initiative and Referendum** - The Council opposes amending the Virginia Constitution to incorporate initiative and
746 referendum procedures that bypass the General Assembly.

747
748 **Legal Services** - The Council supports accountability and oversight of legal service programs in the Commonwealth to
749 ensure that they are not used to the detriment of agribusiness. The Council further supports requiring state appropriated funds
750 to be subject to the same restrictions as placed on Federal funds to legal organizations.

751
752 **Nuisance Protections** – The Council supports the intent of the agricultural nuisance protections in the Right to Farm Act to
753 prohibit nuisance lawsuits against responsible farmers by ensuring that such farms are appropriately protected from baseless
754 claims of nuisance and from significant and unfair legal fees and actions.

755
756 **Right-to-Work** - The Council supports Virginia’s current status as a Right-to-Work state.

757
758 **Wage Policy** - The Council opposes any change in wage policy that could negatively impact Virginia agribusinesses.
759

760 **Worker's Compensation** - The Council supports mechanisms to control rising medical costs within Virginia's workers'
761 compensation system while opposing any changes that will undermine the basic concept and sound balance of this law, such
762 as broadening conditions not clearly arising in the course of employment.

763
764
765

Taxes and Fees Policies

766 **Estate Tax** - The Council opposes reinstatement of Virginia's Estate Tax.

767
768 **Local Real Estate Taxes** - The Council opposes the adoption of a general "homestead exemption" applied to all local
769 residences due to the increased local government reliance on land-use taxation or taxation of business and commercial
770 property to offset the reductions in other tax revenues.

771

Tax Policy

- 772 • The Council supports maintaining favorable current tax status and policies specific to the agriculture and forest
773 industries and updates of policies when necessary to ensure they reflect current industry practices.
- 774 • The Council supports consistent application, collection, and enforcement of the Forest Products Tax to reflect
775 changing markets, in support of Virginia's Reforestation of Timberlands (RT) program.
- 776 • The Council opposes a burdensome and unreasonable tax clearance policy related to the issuance or renewal of State
777 licenses.
- 778 • The Council supports Virginia tax laws that:
 - 779 ○ Rely more on taxes that can be fairly assessed on all taxpayers (i.e., income, non-food sales, and fuels) and
780 less on taxes that are unfairly assessed and are burdensome to agribusiness growth (i.e., real estate,
781 services, personal property, machinery and tools, and Business, Professional, and Occupational License
782 (BPOL)).
 - 783 ○ Reduce local dependence on real estate taxes by allowing localities to receive a greater portion of the state
784 sales tax and/or a portion of the state income tax.
 - 785 ○ Requires local governments to refund over-payment of taxes in a timely and efficient manner.
 - 786 ○ Do not increase the taxation of tobacco products at the local or state level.
 - 787 ○ Do not increase the state excise tax on alcohol beverage products produced under the Alcoholic Beverage
788 Control Act and recognize the already high rate of excise tax on wine.
 - 789 ○ Do not increase pressures on localities to disproportionately increase real estate taxes on agriculture and
790 forestry lands and agribusinesses.
 - 791
 - 792

793 **User Fees** - The Council opposes the imposition of taxes disguised as user fees to fund mandatory regulatory programs
794 designed to benefit society as a whole.

Virginia Agribusiness Council

2019 Priority Issues

Issue: Budget Items

For the 2019 General Assembly, the following items will likely be budget priorities for the Council:

- *Agricultural Conservation Cost Share Programs – With WIP III currently progressing with a final target date of April 2019, funds for Ag BMP cost share and Technical Assistance will be a high priority. The 2018 Chesapeake Bay Needs Assessment estimates the need for \$70.6 million in FY2020 for cost share and technical assistance.*
 - *Broadband Funding – See Below*
 - *Virginia Cooperative Extension – Increase funding for research and staffing needs*
 - *Reforestation of Timberlands (RT) Program – Maintaining the full state match*
 - *VDACS & DOF- Wildlife Control, Weights & Measures, Ag & Forestry Industries Development Funds, Farmer Development fund, Food Safety and Inspection—maintaining or reinvesting current programs*
-

Issue: Interstate 81 Improvements

There is general consensus among legislators that improvements to interstate 81 are needed. The Virginia Department of Transportation has undertaken extensive study as the result of Senator Mark Obenshain’s SB971, and is preparing to make recommendations to the General Assembly about how best to fund these improvements. Among their proposals made at public meetings and comment periods over the Summer are: tolls on commercial trucks, passenger vehicles, retail sales tax increases, regional gas tax increases, and bond packages. The tolls have been discussed at a rate of \$0.17/mile and “annual commuter passes” have been floated at a cost of about \$20/year.

Impact on Agribusiness

Agribusiness producers, distributors, and consumers would all feel the effect of tolls. Increased traffic diversion, a likely side-effect of tolls, would put more trucks on small, rural roads, creating stressed conditions for rural citizens and small businesses.

Status

VDOT has completed a series of public meetings and comment periods held in localities along I-81. A public comment period is open until November 30th. A draft report of VDOT’s recommendations is due to the General Assembly sometime in December, with an exact date not yet specified. However, the Commonwealth Transportation Board is set to vote on the recommendations at its December 5th meeting.

Issue: Rural Broadband

Rural Virginians and small businesses have gone without high-speed internet for years, hindering growth efforts for many localities in less populated regions of the state and driving up the cost of doing business. A high priority for Governor Ralph Northam and his administration, the Governor has appointed Tobacco Commission Executive Director Evan Feinman to oversee rural broadband efforts. It is not yet clear whether this will be pursued through the budget or legislation, but many in the industry believe it will be the former.

Impact on Agribusiness

Several agribusinesses have expressed the need for high speed internet in rural Virginia, with several producers on the ground in dire need of increased service and reliability, especially for producers utilizing precision agriculture.

Status

The Administration will include funds in the 2019 budget bill for broadband, however it is unclear the exact amount. Council staff is pursuing a consensus position and has suggested the following wording to be included in the state policy document: “The Council supports efforts to expand funding for affordable broadband and high speed internet access to the entire Commonwealth for the purposes of expanding business opportunities and precision agribusiness practices in rural Virginia. This funding should be spread equitably among rural regions and among providers.”

Issue: Agritourism and Farm Structures Exemption

In Virginia, agritourism is defined as “any activity carried out on a farm or ranch that allows members of the general public, for recreational, entertainment, or educational purposes, to view or enjoy rural activities, including farming, wineries, ranching, historical, cultural, harvest-your-own activities, or natural activities and attractions.”

Issues involving building codes continue to arise. The issue centers around two main questions: is there a need for a new standardized set of safety standards that addresses public gatherings in farm structures? If so, what effect would that code have on existing agricultural businesses and economic development in general?

Impact on Agribusiness

Agritourism provides producers with a new source of revenue and in some localities has become a major driver of the tourism economy. However, localities are struggling with how best to regulate agritourism.

Status

A study resulted from [SB784](#) (Obenshain). That study, conducted by the Extension Office, examined building code regulations and how they apply to agritourism activity. As a result, it will likely recommend to the legislature additional research and study is needed. However, the possibility remains that additional legislation for and against agritourism activity will arise during the 2019 session.

Issue: Animal Welfare Bills

A number of animal welfare bills have already been introduced. Senator Bill Stanley (R-Franklin County) regularly puts in bills involving the welfare of dogs. For instance, his SB32 seeks to establish an animal cruelty convictions list, paid for by a fee assessed on those convicted of animal cruelty. He has introduced other similar bills addressing animal welfare. Perhaps more pressing is a [bill](#) (HB1625) introduced by Delegate Robert Orrock (R-Spotsylvania) that would require adequate shelter during extreme weather temperatures. These are just a couple examples of the types of animal welfare bills we see each and every year introduced in the General Assembly.

Impact on Agribusiness

Animal welfare bills have become somewhat of a political device for some legislators, and are becoming more common. Removing the critical tools now available to the agribusiness industry that help prevent the spread of disease could have detrimental effects on the industry. It is also important to keep the distinction between livestock care and companion animal care.

Status

Council staff is monitoring several pieces of legislation and will work alongside industry partners to defeat those bills that place unnecessary burdens on agribusiness.