

Statement of Position on Federal Agriculture Policies

As Announced by the LWVUS National Board May 2014

The League believes that government should provide financial support for agriculture that includes disaster assistance, crop insurance, need-based loans and incentives to adopt best management practices. Support should be extended to specialty crops, such as fruits, vegetables and nuts, to new production methods, such as organic, hydroponic, and urban practices, and to farms that supply local and regional markets.

Subsidized crop yield insurance should be linked to implementation of best management practices with the subsidy denied for marginal or environmentally sensitive land. The premium subsidy for crop insurance should be available for a wide range of crops, such as fruits, vegetables and specialty crops. Government should limit the amount of the premium subsidy received by larger farms.

The League supports policies that increase competition in agricultural markets. Antitrust laws should be enforced to ensure competitive agricultural markets. Alternative marketing systems such as regional hub markets, farmers' markets and farmer cooperatives should be promoted.

Clean air and water regulations should apply to all animal and aquaculture production and processing facilities, and not just to the very large confined animal feeding operations (CAFOs). Such regulations should be designed in a manner that takes into account environmentally sound technologies and the scale of the operation being regulated. Small size operations should not be granted automatic exemption from regulation.

The League believes that government regulatory agencies dealing with animal and aquaculture production should have adequate authority and funding to 1) enforce regulations and 2) gather information that supports monitoring the impacts of all animal feeding and aquaculture operations on human and animal health and the environment.

Government should fund basic research related to agriculture. Government funded research should also address the impact of new technologies on human health and the environment prior to widespread adoption of products developed with such technologies. Assessment of products developed with new technologies should be conducted as transparently as possible, while respecting intellectual property rights. Research should be funded to support the continuation of diversified and sustainable agricultural systems, such as seed banking and promoting and preserving genetic diversity.

To provide adequate safety of our food supply, government should:

- Clarify and enforce pre-market testing requirements for foods and food additives developed using any new chemical technology, such as genetic engineering or nanotechnology;
- Require developers to monitor all such new food products developed after releasing to the market;
- Require developers of such new food products to provide data and other materials to independent third parties for pre- and post-marketing safety assessment;
- Fund independent third party risk assessment examining how long term and multiple exposures to such new foods affect human health and the environment;
- Withdraw marketing approval and require recall if such products are shown to be unsafe;
- Require post-market monitoring of human health and environmental impacts for pharmaceutical applications used in animal and aquaculture production;
- Limit use of antibiotics in animal production to the treatment of disease;
- Promote crop management practices that decrease dependency on added chemicals; and
- Fund, employ and train sufficient personnel for assessment and compliance functions of regulatory agencies.

The League supports government developing and requiring more informative and standardized definitions on product labeling. Food labeling and advertising should display only approved health and safety claims and an accurate representation of the required ingredient and nutrition lists. The League supports consumer education about labeling of foods developed using any new technology.