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Breakout Session One

Food as Medicine

Regency Ballroom B

Stephanie Hodges
Founder
Nourished Principles

Steve Brazeel
Founder and CEO
Elevated Foods

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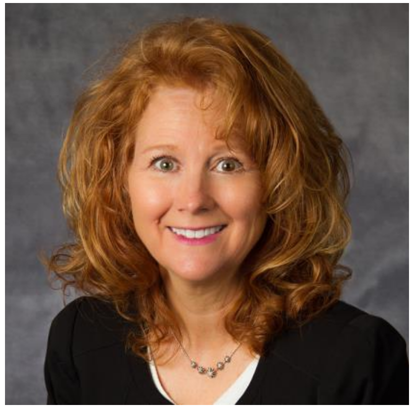
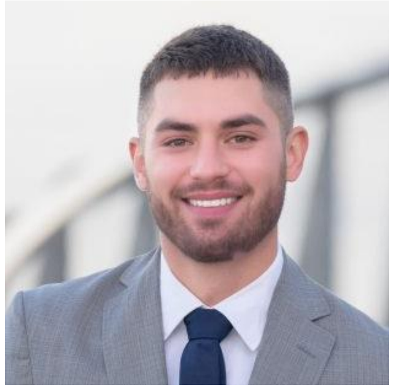
Breakout Session Two
U.S. River Systems: Challenges and Opportunities
Sterling Studio 3



Mary Lamie
Executive Vice President
Multimodal Enterprises



Anthony Peña
Vice President of Policy and Communications
National Association of Wheat Growers

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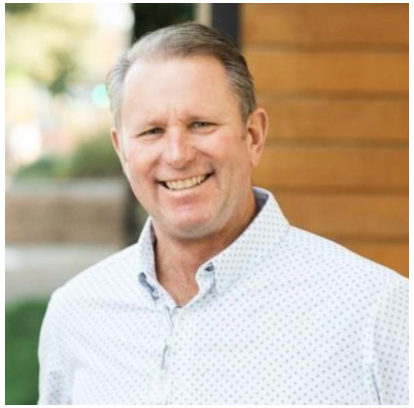
Breakout Session Three
The Future of Biofuels
Sterling Studio 9

Jennifer Aurandt-Pilgrim
Vice President of R&D and Innovation
Marquis



Jim Hedges
CEO
CoverCress

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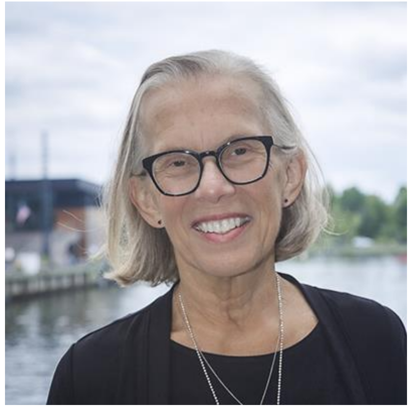
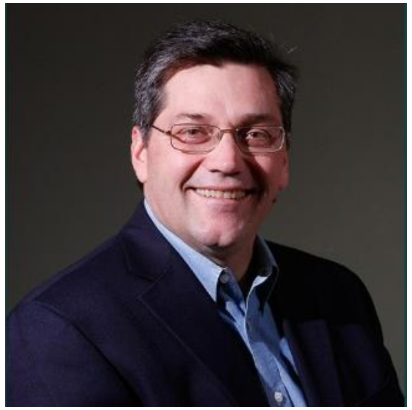
Breakout Session Four
Policy Innovation Sandbox Workshop
Regency Ballroom C-D

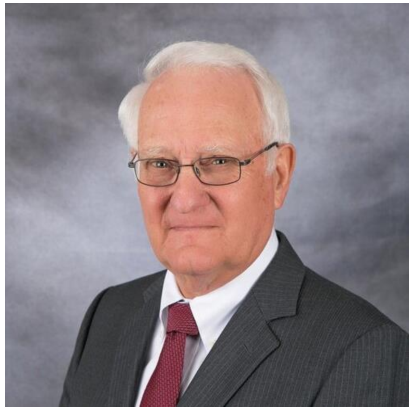
Tim Brennan
Vice President
Programs and Strategic Impact
Farm Foundation



Janie Simms Hipp
CEO
Native Agriculture
Financial Services



Bruce Knight
Principal and Founder
Strategic Conservation
Solutions, LLC



Bob Easter
President Emeritus
University of Illinois

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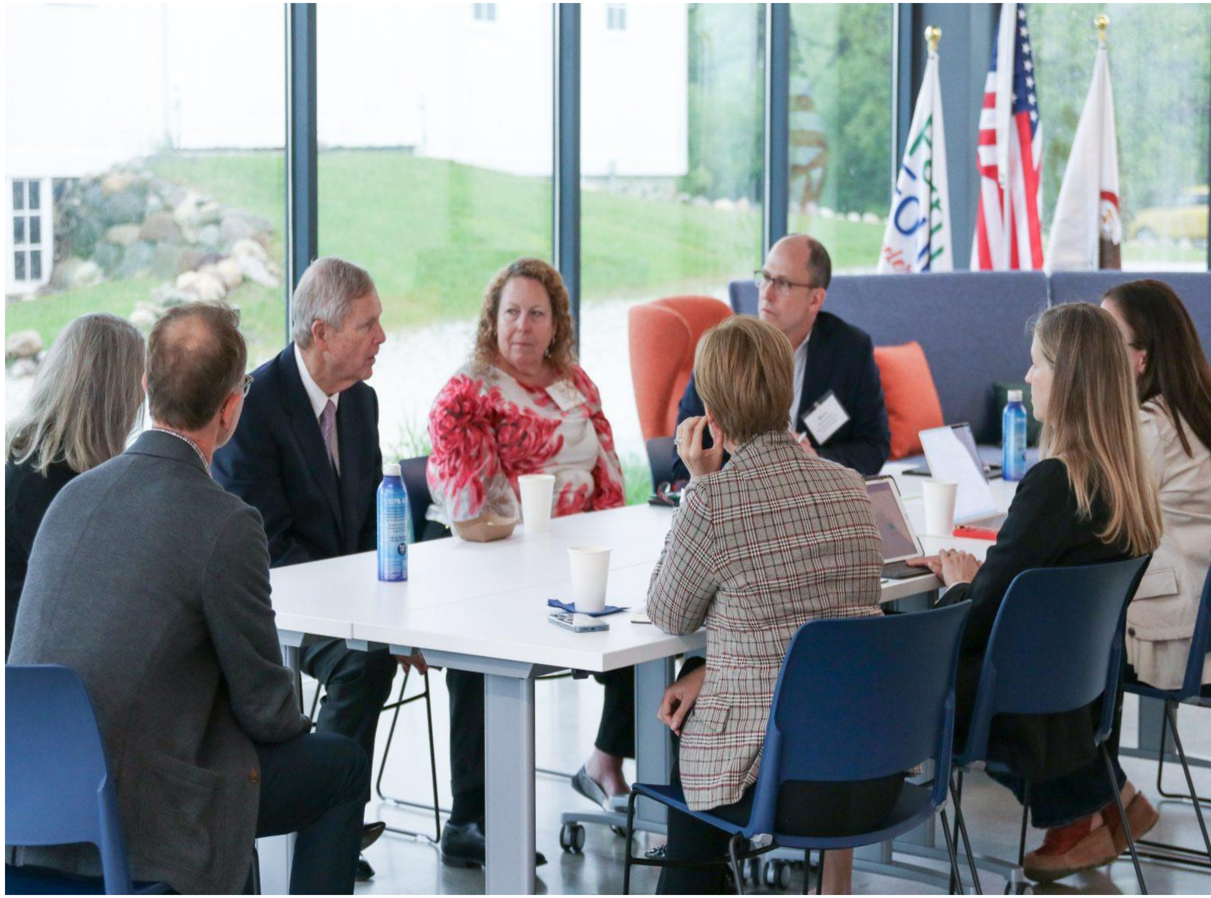
POLICY INNOVATION SANDBOX WORKSHOP AGENDA

- WELCOME
- A SHORT HISTORY OF FARM FOUNDATION'S POLICY WORK
- CURRENT POLICY INNOVATION SANDBOX WORK
- DISCUSSION



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Farm Foundation’s History of Policy Work

- Founded as the first ag policy institute in the US in 1933, when there were 6.8 million farmers in the US. This was also the year the first Farm Bill was created.

- Farm Foundation’s initial role with policy was not about influencing or shaping policies, but helping farmers understand their new and extensive policy environment.

- Round Table was merged into Farm Foundation in the 1970s as a community of thought leaders discussing ag policy.

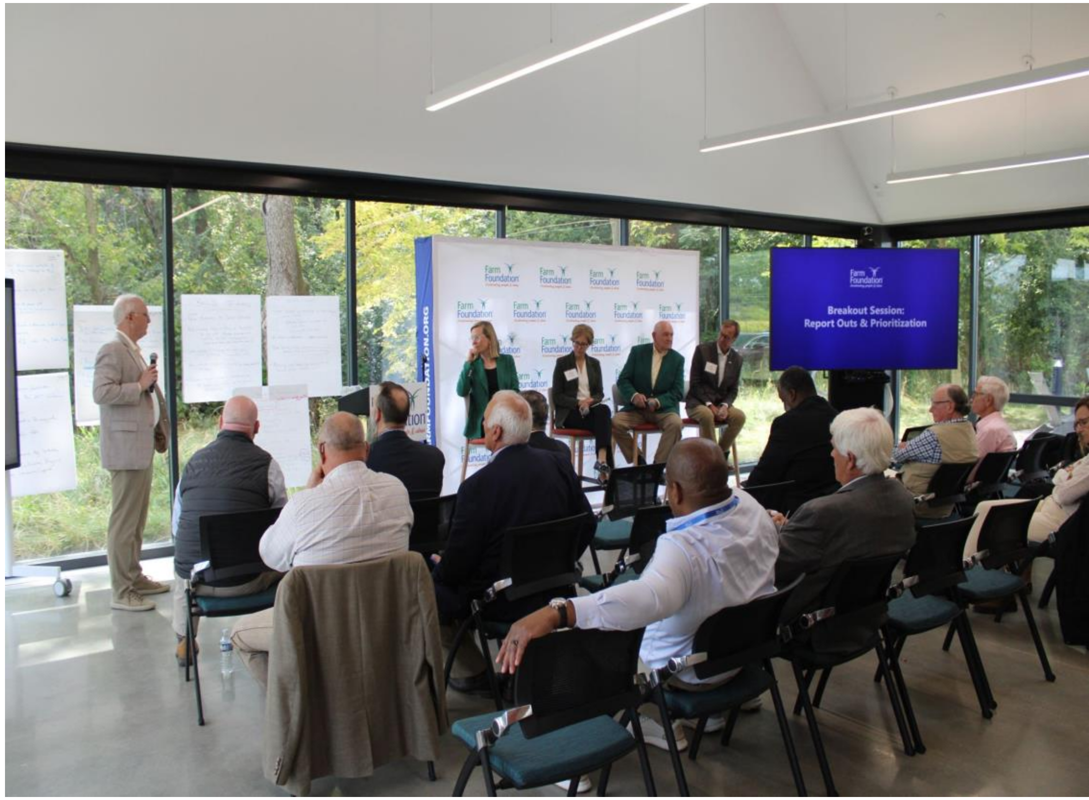
- During a few periods of time, certain Round Table leaders had the opportunity to influence policy through government roles they held or through their professional roles as agriculture economists/professors.

Policy Innovation Sandbox

The concept of our Policy Innovation Sandbox arose from our ***Shaping the Future of US Food and Agriculture Summit*** in May 2025.

In September 2025, we hosted a Round Table-centered policy summit as the initial policy innovation sandbox that prioritized:

- Risk Management Reform
- Trade & Market Policy
- Infrastructure & Innovation
- Leadership & Policy Development
- Technology & Education
- Food Security & Public Goods
- Economic & Generational Growth
- Nutrition & Consumer Engagement
- Regulatory & Governance Questions



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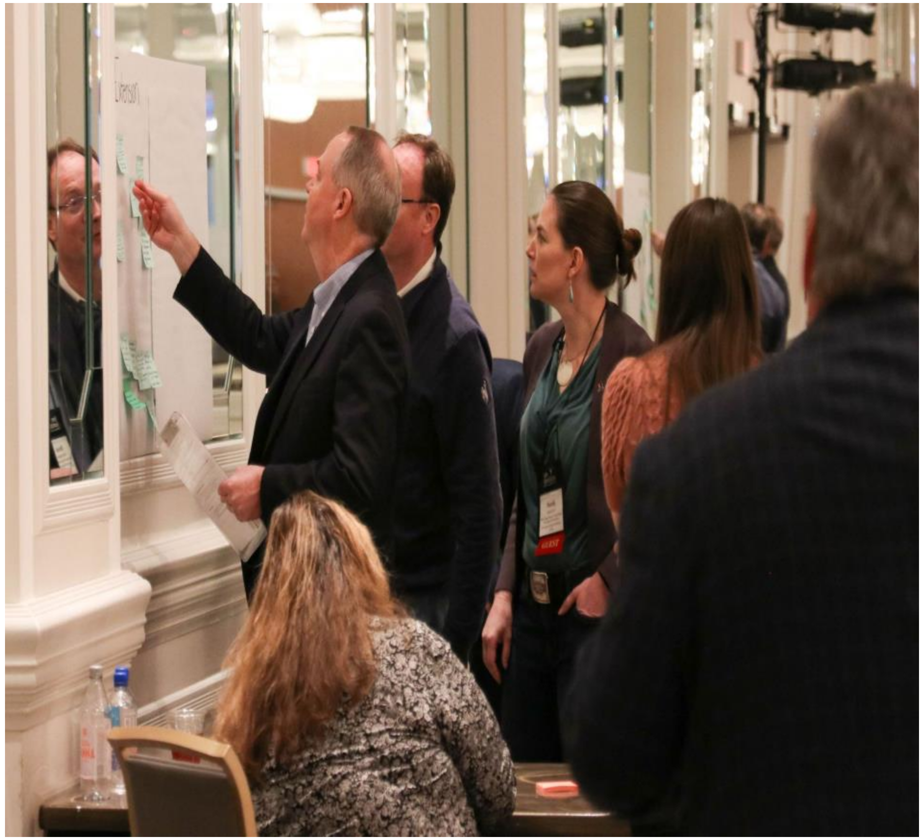
COMMITTEE WORK

- The purpose of the Innovation Policy Sandbox Committees is to convert ideas from our previous convenings into prioritized, focused, and actionable “alternatives and consequences” that Farm Foundation, its partners, and other leaders can advance with confidence, credibility, and real-world impact.

- Each committee has worked from a compiled source package containing the full recommendations from both 2025 Policy Summits and the January 2026 Round Table session notes, organized by subject area.

- Committees were not limited to replicating existing ideas; they were encouraged to synthesize, refine, and elevate the best thinking across all three source documents.



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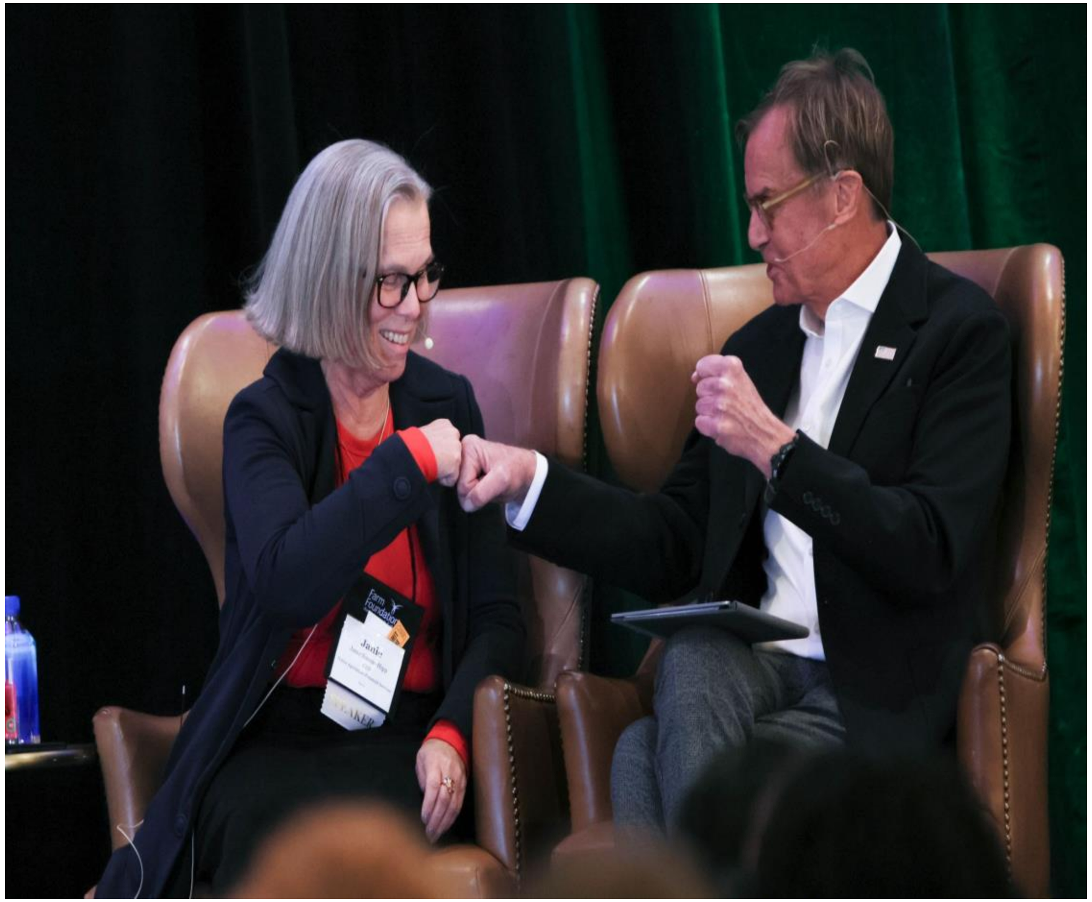
Policy Innovation Sandbox

- At the January 2026 Round Table meeting in El Paso, we had a robust working session to dig deeper into the nine priority areas.
- The areas most aligned with our priorities, and with energy and opportunities for Farm Foundation were:
  - Risk Management Reform
  - Trade & Market Policy
  - Infrastructure & Innovation
- Over the past few months, three committees have met to review policy ideas from the previous gatherings.



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Risk Management Reform

Bruce Knight & Elizabeth Dworkin

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Reform the Agricultural Safety Net System

Problem

- Overlapping programs (crop insurance, ECAP, hail insurance, ad hoc payments) can trigger on the same acre for the same underlying loss, dulling incentives to self-insure or take on risk-managing practices independently
- The Farm Bill's five-year cycle and continuances freeze program parameters (reference prices, coverage levels) despite fluctuations in input costs, commodity prices, and climate risk

Fix

- Evaluate the safety net as a single interconnected system. Redirect duplicative dollars toward tax-advantaged farm savings accounts and other programs that put the responsibility to manage risk more squarely in producers' hands.
- Redesign select Title I and Title XI provisions to auto-adjust annually to market prices and production costs, reducing dependence on reactive legislative fixes
- Audit the public-private crop insurance partnership. Redirect savings from overhead and intermediaries toward producer savings mechanisms and investment in programs that diversify markets available to farmers

Reform the Agricultural Safety Net System

Why

- A proactive system incentivizes strategic risk planning. Ad hoc payments undermine it by creating uncertain but recurring income that farmers cannot reliably plan around
- Auto-adjusting provisions reduce the political pressure that drives inefficient band-aid payments, reserving ad hoc relief for genuine, unprecedented disasters

Trade-offs

- Consolidating programs requires legislative cooperation that has proven difficult. Reform efforts often produce continuances, not changes
- Shifting funds from ad hoc payments to permanent programs reduces the constituent-facing "wins" that make ad hoc payments politically attractive to Congress
- Renegotiating private insurer profit-sharing is technically and politically complex, with risk of reduced program accessibility if private participation wanes, and significant lobbying pressure against this reform is possible

Build a Competitive, Transition-Ready Future for U.S. Agriculture

Problem

- Rising input costs, shrinking labor supply, and consolidation of commodity buyers leave producers dependent on a handful of commodities with narrow margins and limited potential to shift to new production
- Aging farmer population, high land prices, and lack of succession planning create mounting barriers for farm transitions. This threatens the continuity of viable operations

Fix

- Invest in land-grant university research on input costs, labor, and water.
- Reform H-2A to reduce complexity while preserving worker protections
- Expand domestic and export market access: reform school lunch programs, incentivize local value-added processing, and broaden pathways to organic, identity-preserved, and specialty markets
- Support farm transitions through succession planning assistance, tax incentives for farm sales, lease-to-own programs for beginning farmers, and rural development investment in healthcare, childcare, and education

Build a Competitive, Transition-Ready Future for U.S. Agriculture

Why

- Diversified markets and production systems are inherently more resilient. A system with multiple profit pathways is more durable than one organized around a handful of commodities and buyers
- Supporting farm transitions today preserves viable operations for the next generation. Without intervention, high land prices and capital requirements will keep new entrants out

Trade-offs

- Investments in research, infrastructure, and rural development have long payback horizons
- Export market diversification and foreign infrastructure investment carry governance and debt risks. However, standing still cedes market share to geopolitical rivals

QUESTIONS or Comments?

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Trade and Markets

Bob Easter & Asa Dolbow Vann

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Re-engage in a Multipronged Approach to Trade Policy

The U.S. should help build a durable, enforceable trade framework that rewards rule-followers and penalizes cheaters. Absent at the table, American producers end up bound by rules written against their interests.

PROBLEM

- WTO dispute settlement has been broken since 2019 — no real recourse when partners cheat
- U.S. absent from the bilateral/regional deals (e.g., EU–Mercosur)

FIX

- Re-engage in multilateral and regional institutions; push reform on enforcement and dispute settlement
- Base deals on enforceable market access, not headline purchase targets

Re-engage in a Multipronged Approach to Trade Policy

The U.S. should help build a durable, enforceable trade framework that rewards rule-followers and penalizes cheaters. Absent at the table, American producers end up bound by rules written against their interests.

WHY

- Predictability drives long-horizon investment in processing, terminals, and supply contracts
- Keeping global involvement keeps U.S. production and influence relevant

TRADE-OFFS

- Slow, technical, politically thankless
- Long horizon on returns
- Disengagement costs more: lost investment, market share, and influence

Strengthen Agricultural Supply Chains at Both Ends of the Market

To compete in growing food markets, the U.S. must invest at both ends of the chain which exist at home and in these growing countries.

PROBLEM

- U.S. farm-to-port network (rail, waterways, ports, terminals) is aging and congested, raising delivered prices
- Fast-growing importers lack cold storage, feed mills, and terminals
- Requisite infrastructure is being provided by geopolitical rivals, leaving the US behind

FIX

- At home: modernize waterways, rail, ports, and export terminals — treat farm-to-port as export infrastructure
- Abroad: back transparent public-private partnerships (DFC, EXIM, USDA, MDBs) to build receiving infrastructure that favors U.S. exports

Strengthen Agricultural Supply Chains at Both Ends of the Market

To compete in growing food markets, the U.S. must invest at both ends of the chain which exist at home and in these growing countries.

WHY

- Lower logistics costs make exports competitive, lift farm income, and pull investment through the chain
- Early infrastructure ties create lasting demand for feed grains, oilseeds, livestock, and processed foods

TRADE-OFFS

- High cost, long build times, and political patience required
- Foreign investment adds instability, governance, and debt risks — but standing still cedes market share

QUESTIONS or Comments?

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Infrastructure & Innovation

Parthu Kalva & Janie Simms Hipp

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STATUS QUO: MAINTAIN AND CLARIFY THE CURRENT APPROACH

- Keep the federal-state-local structure
  - 392 agricultural counties operate within the existing framework; incremental adjustments only.
- Preserve the land-grant & extension system
  - Recognize its foundational, historic role across all counties and its ongoing value to rural communities.
- Retain formula-based research funding
  - Retain current research funding framework, with consideration of improved compliance
- Use current definitions of 'rural'
  - Accept the trajectory of rural change as the baseline condition for policy. Avoid prolonged definitional or structural debates

EVOLUTION: REFINE, TARGET, AND ALIGN THE SYSTEM

- **Separate rural policy from agricultural policy**
  - Stop treating farmers as the sole engine of rural development; target economically declining ag counties directly.
- **Build around three coordinated pillars**
  - Infrastructure & Essential Services (broadband, healthcare, housing) · Finance (capital access, risk tools) · Investment (local businesses, supply chains).
- **Regionalize extension & research**
  - Reduce duplication across institutions; modernize funding formulas to reflect ag-dependent counties and rural outcomes.
- **Expand inclusion and cooperation**
  - Integrate tribal governments; promote inter-county shared services; support professional infrastructure (e.g., tax advisors).
- **Foster the next generation of farm interest**
  - Engage suburb-adjacent youth; build a pipeline of civic and professional investment in rural agriculture.

REVOLUTION: TRANSFORM WITH NEW MODELS FOR THE FUTURE

- **Shift from place-based to need/assets-based targeting**
  - Focus resources on economically distressed communities, with a grounding in how investments flow
- **Rebuild extension as regional networks**
  - Replace single land-grant institution anchors with fully multi-institutional, regionally coordinated knowledge systems.
- **Tie research funding to community outcomes**
  - Link agricultural research dollars directly to community development, economic vitality, and measurable rural impact.
- **Unified federal-state-tribal governance**
  - Develop integrated coordination models that bring all levels, including tribal governments, into regional strategies.
- **Address structural long-term risks**
  - Climate impacts, demographic decline, and external land acquisition pressures require proactive, systemic policy responses.

QUESTIONS or Comments?

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NEXT STEPS

- Each committee will take the feedback from these workshops to further develop their ideas.
- We will also host a Farm Foundation Forum in Washington, DC, on November 17, 2026, that will highlight the work of these committees in the context of the future of US ag policy.

QUESTIONS or Comments?

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