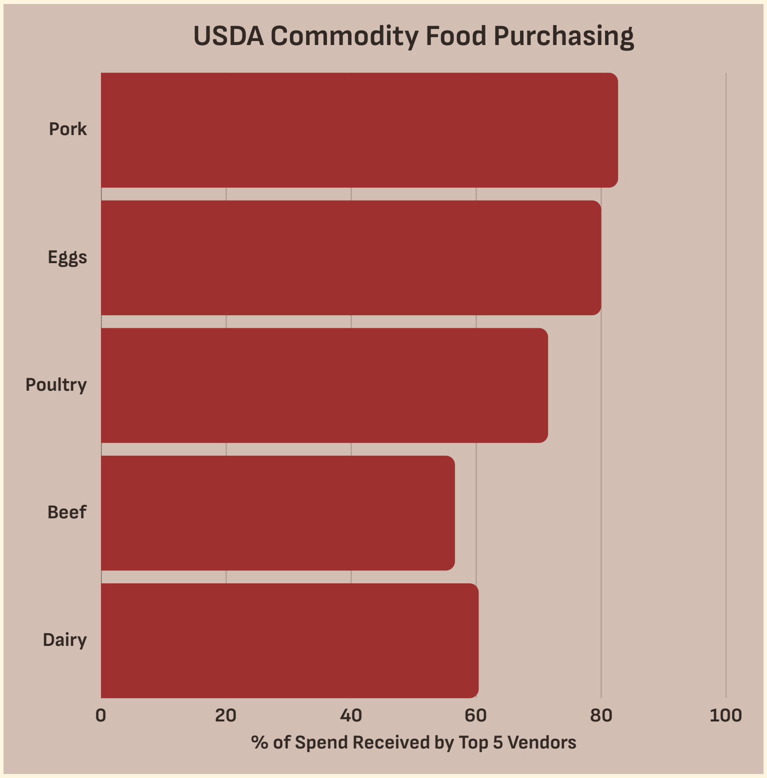
MORE FUNDING FOR PASTURE-BASED FARMING SYSTEMS

FACE

Agricultural Spending Overwhelmingly Supports Industrial Systems

- The billions of dollars invested into industrial agriculture by the government plays an outsized role in why industrial systems have come to dominate our agricultural landscape.
- The vast majority of that spending goes to industrial agriculture, from corn and soy subsidies to keep animal feed prices down, to conservation payments that support concentrated animal feeding operation (CAFO) infrastructure like manure lagoons.
- These huge industrial operations - confining tens or even hundreds of thousands of animals indoors - receive an enormous amount of federal support.
    - Between 2018 and 2023, the USDA spent $12.1 billion in assistance to the top 10,000 CAFOs. The top 20 operations received an average of $11 million *each*.



- Farm Bill programs that could potentially benefit pasture-based farmers, like conservation and rural development programs, represent less than 10% of total spending. Crop insurance alone outspends these programs by almost $5 billion.
- Beyond Farm Bill spending, the USDA's programs overwhelmingly favor industrial producers. From its Commodity Food Purchasing Program to its Farm Service Agency Guaranteed Loans, independent, pasture-based farmers are consistently overlooked in favor of further incentivising industrial production.

Shifting Spending Could Have a Huge Impact

- Redirecting even a small percentage of agricultural spending could play a huge role in supporting pasture-based farmers and farming systems across the country, as well as industrial farmers who want to move away from the CAFO model.
- Demand for funding to support pasture-based farmers far outstrips current public and private offerings. For example, applications for FACT's pasture grants doubled from 2024 to 2026.
- Many CAFO operators are stuck in debt and barely able to make ends meet, sold a business model by integrators that doesn't hold up. It's critical that these producers also have an off-ramp to transition to more sustainable livestock and crop production.

Solutions- Legislation and Policy Asks

Ensure Public Funding Supports Better Practices

Pass the Industrial Agriculture Conversion Act (IACA) to use existing conservation funds to support farmers transitioning from industrial livestock operations to more humane and sustainable systems, like pasture-based animal agriculture and organic and specialty crop production.

Pass the EQIP Improvement Act to reform the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) to prioritize funding for small and mid-sized farmers who use environmentally sustainable practices. The bill limits payments to industrial agriculture operations and increases access to conservation support for historically underserved farmers.

Support for Investing in More Humane Farming Systems

- 74% of Americans think the government should be supporting farmers transitioning to more humane practices
- 89% of voters favor CAFO farmers transitioning to more humane systems of agriculture, such as raising livestock on pasture or growing vegetables, and there is almost equal support for the government funding these transitions (82%)

Leverage Public Procurement to Support Farmers

Pass the EFFECTIVE Food Procurement Act to leverage USDA purchasing power to support more independent, higher-welfare farmers. The bill outlines a values-based approach for the USDA commodity purchasing program, which supplies nutrition programs across the country

Pass State Good Food Purchasing bills to incentivise and enable public institutions to procure food from independent, higher-welfare and pasture-based farmers.

Invest in Building Local and Regional Food Infrastructure

Increase funding for key USDA grant programs including:

- Value Added Producer Grants
- Local Food Promotion Program
- Regional Food Systems Partnership Program
- Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure (RFSI) program

STOPPING THE MOST HARMFUL INDUSTRIAL AGRICULTURE PRACTICES

Americans Don't Support Cruel Industrial Farming Practices

- Americans overwhelmingly want animals to live good lives free of suffering and cruelty, regardless of what they eat, where they live or their political affiliations.
- The intense confinement of animals on CAFOs (concentrated animal feeding operations), sometimes in cages and crates so small that animals can't even turn around or fully extend their limbs, does not align with American's concern and compassion for farm animals
- The public continues to push back against these practices, illustrated by the 15 states that have banned extreme confinement in one form or another, including California, Colorado, Florida, Michigan and Massachusetts.
- These laws provide important marketplace opportunities and incentives for higher-welfare farmers raising animals in cage and crate-free systems. Overturning these laws would harm the thousands of farmers and companies who have already invested in more humane systems.
- Rather than attempting to overturn state laws like Prop 12, the federal government should be investing in farmers seeking to meet the growing demand for higher-welfare animal products.

Industrial Agriculture is Harming Farmers and Rural Communities

- In addition to the negative animal welfare impacts of CAFOs, they also cause a myriad of public health, environmental, and economic harms. The continued consolidation and concentration of CAFOs in rural communities has put thousands of farmers out of business and decimated local economies.
- The largest CAFOs house the overwhelming majority of animals who move through our food system, and accordingly contribute the greatest proportion of air and water pollution and greenhouse gas emissions caused by industrial animal agriculture.
- The largest CAFOs are also the biggest zoonotic disease risks, as highlighted by the COVID pandemic and the ongoing bird flu outbreak. Both of these disasters resulted in millions of animals being cruelly depopulated on CAFOs, with American taxpayers picking up the tab.
- In order to reduce the harms caused by industrial agriculture and halt the destruction of rural communities, we must rein in the worst practices happening on CAFOs and halt their expansion and further consolidation.

CAFOs Grow While Farmers Go Under

In the past two decades, the number of farm animals raised on CAFOs has increased by almost 50%. At the same time, the number of farms plummeted. Between 2002 and 2022, roughly 58,000 feedlots (72%), 18,000 hog farms (23%), and 56,000 dairy farms (61%) exited the market, while the number of animals raised remained relatively consistent across sectors.

Solutions- Legislation and Policy Asks

Stop the Growth of the Largest CAFOs

Pass the Farm System Reform Act (FSRA) to phase out large CAFOs by 2040 and place a moratorium on new or expanding CAFOs. It supports a transition to more sustainable animal agriculture through buyouts and assistance programs, while also strengthening enforcement of antitrust laws in the meatpacking industry.

Pass State CAFO Moratoriums

Multiple states have introduced – and some have successfully passed – moratoriums on the growth of CAFOs or CAFO infrastructure. These efforts allow local communities to have a say in the types of farming systems they want to support.

- 79% of Americans are concerned about the negative impacts of industrial animal agriculture on animal welfare, second only to their concern about its impact on public and community health
- 80% of voters would support a law like California's Prop 12, which prohibits the sale of pork, veal and egg products from confinement systems, in their state
- 74% of Americans support a ban on new industrial animal agriculture facilities, or CAFOs

Support & Protect Bans on Extreme Confinement

Oppose Efforts to Overturn State Animal Protection Laws

15 states have banned the confinement of farm animals in some form, whether banning the use of battery cages for laying hens, veal crates for veal calves, or gestation crates for mother pigs. Bills like the Ending Agricultural Trade Suppression (EATS) Act (recently renamed the Food Security and Farm Protection Act) and Save Our Bacon (SOB) Act are examples of extreme federal overreach, attempting to prohibit states from passing any laws regulating animal agriculture, including farm animal protection laws.

- The EATS Act would overturn state laws regulating the interstate sales of any agricultural product, not just animal products, implicating thousands of laws
- The SOB Act would overturn state laws regulating the interstate sales of animal products, except for eggs

Hold Industrial Agriculture Accountable for its Harms to People and Animals

Pass the Industrial Agriculture Accountability Act (IAA) to hold industrial agriculture accountable for disaster planning, prohibit the most inhumane depopulation methods, require annual depopulation reporting, improve slaugher and transport conditions for farm animals and ensure that taxpayers do not bear the costs when industrial systems fail.

Poor Oversight of Label Claims Hurts More Humane Farmers

- Americans overwhelmingly want to support higher-welfare products, but misleading labeling in the marketplace makes it incredibly difficult to make informed choices. Factory farmed products can hide in plain sight, behind poorly regulated and deceptive claims like "natural" and "humanely raised."
- Even though the USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) is tasked with pre-approving all animal welfare claims, the agency often approves claims that have been submitted without any, or with insufficient, substantiation.
- The inadequate regulation of label claims is worsened by the concentration in the meat and poultry industries, which are controlled by a handful of corporations. These major companies benefit from consumer confusion in the marketplace because they can charge more for products with hollow or meaningless claims.

USDA Rubberstamps Misleading Labels

A review of FSIS animal welfare and raising label applications found that 85% of claims lacked sufficient substantiation, but were approved anyway.

Yet 75% of Americans think the government should be enforcing clear definitions for food labels related to animal welfare.

- Farmers who are truly raising animals in higher-welfare, pasture-based systems are forced to compete against mislabeled products that take away their marketshare, within a larger food system that has been vertically integrated to meet the needs of massive industrial agriculture companies.
- If we want markets that allow producers to compete fairly, we must reform the way the federal government reviews label claims and start right-sizing the outsized influence and grip corporate agricultural interests have in our food system.

Corporate Consolidation Creates an Uneven Playing Field

- Just a handful of companies control the majority of beef, pork and poultry production in the U.S. This rapid consolidation and concentration has greatly undermined the viability of small and mid-sized producers, who can't compete against the economies of scale and vertical integration used by industrial agriculture.
- Rural communities that used to be home to dozens of farms with a variety of options for processing and animal sales have been hollowed out as individual farms grew to overtake their neighbors and supply chain infrastructure was captured by corporations.
- As a result, independent farmers struggle to access slaughter and processing facilities, as well as the markets they need to succeed.
- This consolidation also impacts food security, as highly concentrated supply chains are less resilient to disruption, as illustrated by the breakdown of industrial slaughter and processing during the COVID pandemic.

Solutions- Legislation and Policy Asks

Meaningfully Regulate Meat and Poultry Labels

Reform the USDA-FSIS label approval process to:

- Create meaningful definitions for often misused labels, like "pasture-raised" and "free-range"
- Require FSIS to publish the documentation submitted by companies/producers to support the use of animal welfare and environmental claims on meat and poultry products
- Require the use of meaningful third-party certification to validate holistic claims like "humanely raised" and "naturally raised"
- Provide technical and financial support to small and beginning farmers seeking to achieve animal welfare or other third-party certifications

Rein In Corporate Control and Consolidation

Pass the Farm System Reform Act to strengthen enforcement of antitrust laws in the meatpacking industry and require Country of Origin Labeling on all beef, pork and dairy products

Pass the Opportunities for Fairness in Farming (OFF) Act to prohibit checkoff programs from contracting with agricultural lobbying organizations, require more transparency about checkoff budgets, and require periodic audits by the USDA Inspector General.

Improve Access to Slaughter for Small and Mid-Sized Producers

Increase funding for programs that support new and expanded processing capacity including:

- The Cooperative Interstate Shipping program, which allows livestock and poultry products from participating state-inspected slaughterplants to be sold across state lines
- The Local Meat Capacity Grant program
- The Meat and Poultry Inspection Readiness Grant (MPIRG) program

Consolidation by the Numbers

- The top three chicken companies control 90% of the US market
- The top four beef companies control 85% of the US market
- The top four pork companies control 70% of the US market
- The top four meat processing companies have 53% of the US market share
- 20% of farms control nearly 70% of total US farmland