

NFHS Policy Debate Topic Paper

Domestic Agriculture Policy

#SpeakAg "if you care about AG being accurately represented, know that we need every voice in the conversation" – Michele Payn-Knoper

In America, you are 187 times more likely to starve to death than be killed by terrorism

In a time span of less than 40 years, America has gone from being a nation of farmers and secretaries to one of truck drivers and the occasional software developer.

"God said, 'I need somebody willing to get up before dawn, milk cows, work all day in the fields, milk cows again, eat supper, then go to town and stay past midnight at a meeting of the school board.' So God made a farmer." - Paul Harvey

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Introduction: This topic was originally submitted for the 2017-2018 season, it has been updated to reflect the early policies of the Trump administration. Bouyed by massive support and turnout from rural Americans, Donald Trump's policies have not matched his pledges to America's heartland. The NFHS body previously selected five areas for debate in the summer of 2015 (biofuels, GMOs, concentrated animal feeding operations, pesticides, and crop insurance); each of these areas have been radically affected since we considered this topic. It seems clear, now more than ever, that it is time to talk about our domestic agriculture policy. America's farm economy is now in its fourth consecutive year declining net incomeⁱ. The next farm bill is set to be passed in the fall of 2018, meaning that this topic will be debated at its peak moment. In 2014, the United States Congress passed a new farm bill. The measure costs \$489 billion in mandatory spending; 80% of this is in the form of the food stamp program. Although calls for a massive overhaul of US agricultural policy were called for, the latest version of the farm bill made few major changes to the policies that govern our farms. Today, the world faces the dual threats of explosive population growth and climate change – US agriculture policy is at the nexus of these dual threats. The US not only has to meet the demands of its own country, but is responsible for feeding a large portion of the world through its agricultural exports. Despite the need for more food, Federal law tends to focus on incentivizing animal feed, biofuels, and conservation at the expense of food. This topic allows debaters to examine where their food comes from as well as what changes are necessary in order to continue to feed the world.

The Importance of the Topic Moving Forward:

The 2014 legislation made significant changes to US domestic agricultural policy in the areas of commodity programs, disaster assistance programs and insurance, conservation program, trade, nutrition programs, farm credit, rural development, biofuels, and research. Implementation of the changes within these programs, however, face a number of challenges in the coming years including, but not limited to, budget cuts,ⁱⁱ implementation challenges, and production changes. It is no secret that population growth and climate change are going to be two major stressors of world stability moving forward. Nowhere do these factors intersect more than in agricultural production. The Population Institute explains the challenge ahead of us

The Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nation's (FAO) has issued a sobering forecast on world food production. If global population reaches 9.1 billion by 2050, the FAO says that world food production will need to rise by 70%, and food production in the developing world will need to *double*. The FAO's production requirements may be an underestimate. The FAO's forecast does not take into account any increase in agricultural production for biofuels. Earlier reports by FAO projected that biofuel production by 2030 will require 35 million hectares of land— an area about the size of France and Spain combined. The projected 70% increase in food production will have to overcome rising energy prices, growing depletion of underground aquifers, the continuing loss of farmland to urbanization, and increased drought and flooding resulting from climate change.

Through exports, changes in domestic agricultural policy can have a major effect around the world. Roughly, 1 in every 9 persons on the planet doesn't have enough food to lead a healthy

active life. Poor nutrition leads to 45% of worldwide deaths in children under 5. ⁱⁱⁱ When US food prices rise, as they did in 2012, it runs the risk of fueling “political instability in developing countries.”^{iv}

And the Trump administration is sure to make this topic relevant, Think Progress points out that much of the scientific consensus regarding agricultural policy is set to be thrown out the window of the White House,

“Cuts to USDA research programs would hardly be the first time the Trump administration showed science to be a low priority for the agency. Trump is expected to name Sam Clovis, a conservative talk-show host that denies the scientific consensus on climate change, to be the USDA’s undersecretary of research, education and economics. That would put Clovis in charge of the USDA’s entire scientific mission, including research programs aimed at helping farmers respond to climate change. Current Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue also denies the scientific consensus on climate change, calling climate science “a running joke among the public” in a 2014 op-ed published in the National Review.”

Furthermore, Trump’s crackdown on illegal immigration of Latinos as well as his disdain for international trade agreements such as NAFTA have profound impacts on our agricultural industry.

Reasons for consideration:

Agriculture has not been the focus of a NSDA topic since the 1986-1987 season. When agriculture has been debated more recently it has been done with very little depth; specifically as either a food price advantage or as an energy (biofuels) case.^{vi} Both of the collegiate circuits (NDT and CEDA) have debated it more recently^{vii}. A federal farm bill is passed every five years, with the last one being passed in 2014 and the next one slated for implementation in the fall of 2019 (the start of the debate season for most teams). The federal government has been involved in domestic agriculture policy since the passage of the first farm bill as part of FDR’s new deal legislation in 1933. Research won’t be a challenge for students as they will confront a plethora of unique affirmative case ground. Although there is a federal role in agriculture, negatives will be able to successfully argue traditional core generics including states/local CP, politics, sustainability, and economic arguments. Depending on the resolution selected, a major benefit of this resolution will be a focus on how US agricultural production affects the entire world’s food supply.

Affirmative Case ground:

One of the largest challenges at crafting a domestic agriculture topic is figuring out the right balance between depth and breadth. Many of the following areas are fertile enough ground for a year’s worth of debate by themselves. Figuring out which areas the debate community wants

included/excluded is of the utmost importance. Most affirmatives will quickly discover that they can access large impacts from international trade, food security, economic wellbeing, and climate change. For the sake of this topic paper, I am going to highlight multiple areas of affirmative case ground, always knowing that it would be insane to write a resolution that includes *all of this ground*.

Agricultural Subsidies:

Subsidies is one of the greatest debates on any agricultural topic. Depending on the wording of the topic, affirmative teams could have equal success with cases that either increase or remove agricultural subsidies.

The United States heavily subsidizes its domestic agriculture (most nations do), which creates fertile ground for a number of unique affirmative cases. The broadest case on a subsidies topic would be to completely remove subsidies and argue for a fully free-market approach. This approach would likely succeed better in Kritical form as most evidence will argue that subsidies are a necessity for controlling agricultural prices and preventing the type of allocation problems that typically lead to famine. A 'remove all subsidies' approach would be very akin to a typical 'Open Borders' K aff, in that it would be able to argue that the idea of subsidies and control only mask dominance and decide winners (west) and losers (the rest/other).

Affirmatives would also be able to examine specific agricultural subsidies. The 2008 CEDA topic dealt with a reduction of subsidies for the following crops for biofuels, Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations, corn, cotton, dairy, fisheries, rice soybeans, sugar and/or wheat. Due to subsidies, we typically end up with a lot of corn. In fact, in 2010, the US produced 32 percent of the world's corn supply.^{viii} Most of which goes into either feeding livestock or into ethanol^{ix}.

There is also the issue of who receives federal subsidies. "Since 1995, 75 percent of federal subsidies have gone to 10 percent of farms."^x This insures the success of large agricultural conglomerates at the expense of small local family farms. The amounts are astronomical, "During the past twenty years, farm programs have cost America's non-farm households a cumulative \$1.7 trillion. That is how much non-farm households would have in the bank today if they had been allowed to save and invest what they have been forced to surrender to favored farmers through our never-ending farm programs."^{xi}

Federal regulations and involvement in these industries often mean higher prices for US consumers,

"Chris Edwards of the Cato Institute noted the following about agricultural rules regarding milk prices (which don't appear among the rules noted so far). Because of the controls placed on the dairy industry, milk prices are substantially higher than they would be otherwise, which penalizes millions of American families. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development found that U.S. dairy policies push up the price of milk to consumers by about 26 percent. The U.S. International Trade Commission found that federal dairy policies push up the U.S. price of dry milk by 23 percent, the price of cheese by 37 percent, and the price of butter by more than 100 percent above world prices."^{xii}

These high prices for farmers have major impacts including the fact that high sugar prices are a major reason for why US sugar using companies have moved their factories abroad^{xiii}.

Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations:

Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFO) are well described by the CATO Institute,

“In a CAFO, animals are crammed by the thousands or tens of thousands, often unable to breathe fresh air, see the light of day, walk outside, peck at a plants or insects, scratch the earth, or eat a blade of grass. Over 50 billion food animals are raised and slaughtered every year (not including massive quantities of farmed fish). Grazing and growing feed for livestock now occupy 70 percent of all agricultural land and 30 percent of the ice-free terrestrial surface of the planet. If present trends continue, meat production is predicted to double between the turn of the 21st century and 2050^{xiv}. “

The practice of CAFO's is also clearly linked to water pollution, air pollution, climate change as well as a beacon for attacks by animal rights group. Teams that wanted to speak out for the land and animal rights would be able to look towards Mohandas Gandhi, who once uttered the phrase, “The measure of a society can be how well its people treat its animals.” Recently, the courts handed CAFO's a major defeat. The DC Circuit Court has ordered the EPA to close a loophole that allowed CAFO's to not report their hazardous waste. This actually takes policy back to 2008 before the loophole was added. There are questions, however, about how the EPA under Scott Pruitt will handle the court order. If history is any judge, it won't have much of a difference on the practices of CAFO's in America. When Scott Pruitt, the current head of the EPA, was the Attorney General of Oklahoma he never brought a single environmental lawsuit against polluters despite reports that showed 43% of wells (many near CAFO's) were highly contaminated in his state^{xv}.

Genetically Modified Foods:

Some estimates place 70% of the US's crops as being genetically modified. Although Genetically Modified Foods are subject to the same health and safety of traditional foods there is a tremendous amount of literature on the subject. Federal policy is mostly silent on the subject, the congressional debates that have occurred have been on what the label should include and not whether we should be able to grow them. Just like on agricultural subsidies it is possible to treat this subject area as a bidirectional topic. Although public opinion is largely against GMO's, some teams may argue that they are a requirement in order to sustain the food needs of our growing population. There are also a number of studies which argue that the bioengineering actually makes the food more nutritious.

The other side of the debate has labeled these genetically modified organisms as ' Frankenfoods,' a lab created monster. Monsanto is the 'whipping boy' for advocates in favor of banning GMO's. Although the studies are not conclusive, there is compelling evidence that Monstano's round-up ready crops are responsible for the massive die off of both the bees and butterflies. A situation that will easily allow policy debaters to gain a legitimate ecological die-off scenario. Concerns over GMO's have led to 38 countries around the globe banning the crops, including 19

in Europe. Earlier this year, BBC revealed that food safety, particularly GMO's, is a "major stumbling block" to creating a transatlantic free trade agreement.^{xvi}

GMO's also have their supporter. Some of the benefits of GMO's are – insect resistance, drought resistance, larger yields, reduction of greenhouse gases, more nutritious foods, more income for farmers, less deforestation, and cheaper foods. Detractors of GMO's can also argue antibiotic resistance within crops, cross-pollination, gene-spilling, monoculture crop failures, patent fights, and dominance of large farmers. Trump's victory is also a victory for GMO's as he has already signaled that the movement for GMO labels on food is 'dead on his arrival'^{xvii}."

Energy

This area has received a large amount of debate within the community for a number of years. Bioenergy is energy that is derived from agricultural/biological production. The area is extremely popular among debaters for its ability to access powerful advantages such as warming, oil dependency, and even hegemony by arguing for a new more effective type of jet fuel (as just one example). The US Department of Energy actively works with the USDA in order to promote the growth of biofuels. And the new EPA chief, Scott Pruitt is a known opponent of the ethanol industry. Specifically, he has long opposed the RFS standard that mandates a 10% blend of ethanol in gasoline. Although nothing has happened as of this date, the Des Moines Register argues that the Trump Administration has an executive order cut from a 'backdoor secret meeting' that will dramatically affect this affirmative area, "The renewable fuels industry roiled Tuesday after a national advocacy group said a Trump official told them the president would sign an executive order shifting the burden for blending ethanol and biodiesel into the nation's fuel supply from oil refiners to fuel retailers. The move, critics said, would hurt Iowa farmers and consumers by stymieing the widespread use of ethanol and biodiesel^{xviii}." The Congressional Research Service explains this case area by stating, "In 2014, Biopower comprised about 1.6% of total U.S. electricity generation and accounted for close to 12% of U.S. renewable electricity generation. Its advantages include a potential for baseload power production, greenhouse gas emission reduction, and use of renewable biomass feedstock, among other things. Its disadvantages include uncertain sustainable feedstock supply and infrastructure concerns, among other things."^{xix} The CRS also give possibilities for the affirmative plan "The future contribution of biopower to the U.S. electricity portfolio is uncertain. Challenges to biopower production include regulatory uncertainty (e.g., EPA's CPP), market fluctuation (e.g., natural gas prices), conversion technology development, and tax uncertainty (e.g., extension or termination of renewable energy tax credits), among other issues. Some argue that a comprehensive energy policy focused on renewables could boost biopower production efforts, especially if the policy includes a renewable portfolio standard."

Environment:

The current push for fracking in the oil and gas industry have taken their toll on America's farms. The ideal 'sand' for fracking happens to be found beneath the top shelf farm land in the Midwest. The fine silica sand, named St. Peter sandstone is primarily found in Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Illinois. In Wisconsin alone, industrial sand production companies increased from five to one hundred and twenty nine over the course of five years.^{xx} And in Illinois, over 3,100 acres of prime farmland were purchased by mining companies during the past decade.

There are two implications to this: First, mining companies destroy the value of the topsoil above the sand destroying its current and future productivity. Secondly, nearby farms are subject to blowing Silica, a known carcinogen, contaminated groundwater, loss/depletion of local wells.

Crop Insurance:

President Trump's first budget offering reverses course from the most recent iteration of the farm bill. The newest farm bill shifted a major focus towards subsidized crop insurance. While insurance typically sounds like a beneficial safety net, it may serve to discourage best practices among farmers. The insurance plans guarantee that farmers can sell their crop above a certain price (Price Loss Coverage) or make a certain amount of revenue (Agricultural Risk Coverage), and do little to encourage, say, better drought-planning measures or a more diverse spread of crops.^{xxi} Bloomberg News Service goes further arguing that insurance programs have grown "into a 21st-century crutch enabling affluent growers and financial institutions to thrive at taxpayer expense. Federal crop insurance encourages farmers to gamble on risky plantings in a program that has been marred by fraud and that illustrates why government spending is so difficult to control."^{xxii} In 2013, the USFG spent nearly seven times more on insurance losses than in 2000. And unlike direct farm aid payments, "there is no limit on crop insurance subsidies."^{xxiii} And the Congressional Budget Office worries that crop insurance will cost taxpayers about \$90 billion over the next decade – a conservative estimate if climate change models hold true. The Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy worries that the 2014 farm bill is in violation of the WTO subsidy limit and set up a "low-price-high-cost scenario (that) could well lead to a new era of agricultural dumping"^{xxiv} Trump's budget request includes 29 billion in cuts to federal crop insurance programs over the next decade^{xxv}. Items in the budget would create means-testing measures for qualifications of subsidies as well "reduce by about 45 percent the gross income cap for farmers to qualify for programs that pay out when commodity prices fall below a fixed level^{xxvi}." The reaction from farm groups was nearly universal, John Hansen, Nebraska Farmers Union President put it succinctly claiming, "We're really perplexed and disappointed in the Trump administration's approach to dealing with the worst ag crisis our country's faced since the mid-1980s. It would appear to us that instead of bringing water to the fire, they're bringing gasoline^{xxvii}."

Food/Animal Safety and Factory Farms:

Factory Farming is now the norm for US agriculture. Multiple US policies encourage and incentivize large factory farms over traditional local models. For example the Grace Communications Foundation states that,

The farm bill also sets money aside for environmental and land-stewardship programs, like the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). The program lists the reduction of industrial farm contamination as a top priority, and more than 50 percent (\$9 billion) of the Farm Bill's conservation fund historically has been spent on EQIP. In other words, your tax money is being used to help pay for the costs associated with pollution large industrial farms create. A better policy would be to require factory farms to pay for their own clean-up costs and use government conservation funding to help smaller independent farms improve their practices.^{xxviii}

Factory farms are responsible for massive waste run-off, the mistreatment of animals, the destruction of local farms, as well as the spread of dangerous pathogens. "Each year foodborne

illness strikes 48 million Americans hospitalizing a hundred thousand and killing thousands..”^{xxix} Furthermore, foodborne illnesses cost the economy 75 billion per year.^{xxx} One of the unique challenges to this area is the fact that over 15 government agencies share responsibility for our food’s safety. For example, on a frozen pizza, the FDA is responsible for the cheese while the USDA is responsible for the safety of the pepperoni.^{xxxi} “A 2014 report by the Government Accountability Office states, “the fragmented federal oversight of food safety has caused inconsistent oversight, ineffective coordination, and inefficient use of resources.” “Outbreaks are a result of a broken system: Foodborne illness outbreaks vary in size, causes, and responses depending on where they start. But...each issue is more or less the result of a system that allows these things to happen in the first place.”^{xxxii}

A second (I couldn't resist) option in the safety category would be to alter policy/regulation of the treatment of animals. Factory farming, in particular, allows K teams to argue that our animal treatment causes severe damage to humans as well as animals. The Atlantic argues that, “we should never fail to overlook the psychological implications of something as emotionally charged as killing animals for food. And when it comes to this endeavor, scale and density of production accomplishes something essential for all factory farming: it severs the emotional bond between farmers and animals. In the bluntest terms, it allows my friend Bill to kill thousands of animals a year and remain a happy person.”^{xxxiii}

Conservation:

“Over two-thirds of America’s land—including some of the most important fish and wildlife habitat—is in private hands. But these private wetland, grassland, and forest habitats are being converted to cropland at an alarming rate. One recent study showed that from 2008-2012, 7.3 million native acres were converted to cropland. That’s a total loss greater than the combined acreage of Acadia, Badlands, Everglades, Grand Canyon, Great Smoky, Rocky Mountain, Yellowstone, and Yosemite National Parks...in just four years.^{xxxiv}” For affirmatives that want to argue about sustainability, conservation programs are essential. “The farm bill is the single largest source of funding for habitat conservation and access on private lands.^{xxxv}” But many would argue that it is not enough, AGWeek points out that challenges in national policies have major trickle down effects to the local environment,

The Soil Bank Program was designed to divert land regularly used for crop production to conservation uses, which was a huge boost to wildlife, as it created habitat, and as anyone who's spent much time in the outdoors knows, habitat is the key to good wildlife populations. Like anything else, things change, which included the government programs when planting crops become the top priority and the Soil Bank Program went by the wayside.^{xxxvi}

The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) began in the 1985 farm bill, “in the 25 years that CRP has been in existence, more than 2 million acres of wetlands have been restored, as have 2 million acres of riparian areas, which are buffers between land and water that act as a filter, preventing millions of pounds of nitrogen and phosphorous from flowing into water.”^{xxxvii} The newest version of the Farm Bill reduced the funding for the CRP program for the first time since its inception.^{xxxviii} And Trump’s first budget proposal ends “the Natural Resources Conservation Service’s watershed protection projects, which helps both protect sensitive watersheds from

environmental degradation, like soil runoff, and helps rural communities respond to natural disasters like floods^{xxxix}.”

Farmers, particularly young farmers are also worried about a new concern: water conservation.^{xl} Droughts such as the one that our west coast has experienced are expected to become the norm rather than the exception. AGweek tells us that, “There already are programs designed to help young producers invest in conservation technology. But the report, based on a survey of 379 young farmers and ranchers in the west, found that most young producers aren’t taking advantage, either because they’re unaware of the programs or because their circumstances don’t allow them to.”^{xlii} The election of Donald Trump has created two new aspects of conservation policy in the US. First he has signed an executive order allowing the Department of the Interior examine whether federal land ought to be turned back into private land. It also “proposes to “streamline” conservation programs, while eliminating the rural development program aimed at bringing infrastructure, technology, and utilities to rural communities^{xlii}.”

Immigration:

Immigrants do much of the work on America’s farms and debaters well know that the system for allowing farms access to cheap immigrant labor is beyond broken. The challenge of this area would be in making it narrow enough to focus on the agricultural work that they do and not any other forms of immigration (manufacturing, high skilled medical professionals, and IT professionals). Farmers are extremely worried about the early crackdown during the Trump administration. They think back to the draconian immigration laws that Georgia experimented with in 2011; a law that led to millions of crops spoiling in the fields^{xliii}. As of this writing it is still too early to tell which way the administration will go regarding immigrant farm workers. Agricultural Secretary Sonny Perdue has sent signals that agricultural workers may be exempt from Trump’s wrath (although the Jan 25th order specifically states that there will be no exceptions). If not an area itself, the failure to exempt agricultural immigrants from deportation could potentially serve as a major alt cause argument against many advantages.

Farmers of Color:

“According to the 2010 U.S. Census, about three-quarters of the general U.S. population is classified as being solely White (i.e., White alone and of all ethnic origins). Farm operators are much more likely than the general population to report being White. In the 2012 Census of Agriculture, 95.4 percent of principal operators reported being White.^{xliv} This potentially allows for fertile affirmative ground (or negative K ground) regarding institutional racism. The Atlantic explains,

When it comes to funding, black farmers receive about one-third or less than what other farmers receive, which has resulted, Gail Myers points out, in black farmers losing their land. In fact, this asymmetry led a group of black farmers to sue the USDA for damages, claiming discriminatory treatment. The farmers agreed to a settlement, and in 1999, over 15,000 claimants received restitutions. Soon afterward, Native American, Latino, and female farmers

stepped forward with their own civil rights lawsuits against the USDA. Discriminatory lending has cost the federal government billions in settlements. But while the USDA continues to try to make amends for its institutional racism and sexism, Bowens says, "I was really inspired by folks not waiting around." Instead, they were "stepping outside of the obstacles and the structural racism" to create the organizations and mentorship programs that they needed. They were claiming ownership of their land and food, which is precisely what the modern term "food sovereignty" means.^{xlv}

The same article suggests that only by empowering local urban activists can achieve food justice. Although court settlements have been reached between the USDA and Black, Native American and Hispanic farmers, these court cases are not without their critics. For example, though compensation will be paid to Hispanic farmers, this class/group in the settlement is still obligated to pay back USDA backed loans made under less than favorable conditions. And according to The UCLA Law Review,

The historic Pigford settlement and its successors should have been significant triumphs. Instead, they triggered sharp discontent. Farmers and their allies argued that the settlements did not address the fundamental sources and consequences of racial injustice within the USDA and that the government behaved unfairly throughout the process. Class action settlements inevitably provoke disappointment. But the critics of the farmers' settlements expressed more profound concerns, suggesting that the remedies were fundamentally inadequate to repair the wrongs in question. The settlements addressed only a relatively narrow class of harms suffered by the farmers in the very recent past. The claims framework required farmers to satisfy a demanding, unintuitive definition of discrimination. Individual farmers could obtain limited cash payouts, but no provision was made for broader institutional reform. The real history of long-term discrimination in federal policy was not fully aired, but overshadowed by disputes over the settlement process and proof of discrimination."

There is also evidence that Big Ag discriminates v. Black Farmers and it has lasting effects to this day. Currently organic farming is 22 to 35 times more profitable than conventional farming^{xlvi}. Yet as reporter Melissa Evans for *Civil Eats* discovered, African-American farmers are getting shut out in this growing category. She writes that, "A **history of discrimination**, mass land loss, lack of start-up capital, lack of collateral for loans, and a multi-generational distrust of federal programs have put Black farmers behind in the organic movement."^{xlvii}

Pesticides:

There is no doubt that pesticides and insecticides help farmers produce a higher yield, but there is doubt about the health effects that they have after we have consumed the agricultural products that they are used to produce. This is another area that has been dramatically affected by the ascendancy of Trump to the presidency; Mother Jones provides a chilling example of the 'slow death' that will be caused by Trump's reversal of Obama era regulatory policies

Under Barack Obama, the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) proposed an agricultural ban on chlorpyrifos, one pesticide widely used in her region, based on the growing body of research documenting the risks for farm workers and communities, including links to brain damage in children. Donald Trump's administration, however, has rejected the science, announcing a reversal of the ban. That means that despite recent victories for families and environmentalists who have fought for more than a decade for protections from the insecticide, widespread use will continue in California, where a majority of the fruits and nuts in the US are grown. "There's a sense of helplessness," said Luis Medellin, a 30-year-old dairy worker, sitting with his three younger sisters at his family's home in the small agricultural town of Lindsay. "I'm being poisoned and I can't do anything about it. It's like a slow death^{xlviii}."

Pesticide use affects different populations in America, for instance, "In California Latino children are 91% more likely than white students to attend schools near heavy pesticide use^{xlix}." Besides Chlorpyrifos the following Pesticide are likely to come back into play during the Trump Administration: Atrazine (used on Corn and may affect some endangered species), Glyphosate (the most popular pesticide in the US and may cause cancer), Malathion (a livestock feed and killer of mostquos that may affect cardiovascular systems), and Neonicotinoids (fastest growing pesticide that may be responsible for Bee colony collapse disorder).

Other possible affirmative areas

Depending on the wording of the resolution, there are a number of other options that could be included. Among some of the areas available would be sustainable agriculture, cases that limit or deal with federal encroachment (Oregon Malheur standoff), nutrition programs/SNAP (80% of the 2014 farm bill goes to food stamps and nutrition), labor issues (particularly for migrant workers), the Uruguay Round Agreement on Agriculture (URAA, more on this later), yield increases, modeling another nation's policies, trade/export policy, as well as 'food deserts' (cities which have no access to fresh local foods. There would also be an opportunity to expand the wording of an agricultural topic to discuss labor practices (immigration issues or mechanization). Trump's budget also zero's out the USDA farm safety program, the only program that focuses on training farmers how to properly use farm equipment.

Negative ground:

Federal involvement arguments:

There are many that decry the involvement of any federal action in agriculture policy. This allows for not only state/local CP's, but solid disadvantages about how federal policy affects state government as well as their economies. Depending on the resolution's wording will allow for 'federal good' or 'federal bad' arguments to be considered. No matter what the change is, it's effects will be felt by the states and the locals that grow our food. The current system is working just fine for farmers, so there will of course be plenty of arguments for a maintenance of the status quo, after all "Farmers are pulling in record levels of income and carrying record-low levels of debt"^l The fight between State and Federal Government actors has already played out in the California drought crisis. Governing ran with the headline, "California's Efforts to

Combat Drought Hindered by Federal Government.” The article points to bureaucratic hurdles, key appointments being unfilled, politics, and ‘radio silence’ from the President as hindrances to credible and successful action.ⁱⁱ There are also a number of other agencies that can have an effect upon the topic area, for instance, many policy debaters utilized and laughed about evidence that the EPA thought about regulating warming inducing cow methane, yet such regulations would have dramatically affected America’s farmers.

Case Debate:

In judging a topic, one should always consider if the topic is capable of being debated on case. While generic DA’s, CP’s, and K’s insure that a strong (truthful) affirmative position can still be defeated – only true equal ground topics offer strong case debate. Look at some of the main case areas for a topic regarding domestic agriculture. Subsidies, GMO’s, and biofuels all have strong proponents and opponents. For instance,

Subsidies key to prevention mono-cropping destruction of small farms

Wenonah Hauter, director of Food and Water Watch, “if we end food subsidies, does that mean our food system will be healthy?” Alternet Oct 21, 2011

As we describe in a new report, released this week with the Public Health Institute, subsidies are not making junk food cheaper and more abundant than healthy food – the real culprit is the deregulation of agriculture markets, the failure to enforce anti-trust law and the millions spent on marketing junk food. In a market controlled by just a few buyers of crops like corn, wheat and soybeans, and no mechanisms to manage overproduction that causes prices to collapse, subsidies have served as the bandage that partially stops the bleeding of farmers who often cannot stay in business any other way. Pulling the subsidy rug out from under the small and midsized farmers who depend on this support to keep farming in lean years could result in even fewer independent family farmers and even larger mono-cropping behemoths who buy up that land and keep using it to produce crops like corn and soybeans.

Banning GMO’s would result in mass famine

Professor Malcolm Elliot, founding director of the Norman Borlaug Institute for Global Food Security, The Telegraph “people will starve to death because of anti-GM zealotry” May 23, 2012

(<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/earth/agriculture/geneticmodification/9284762/People-will-starve-to-death-because-of-anti-GM-zealotry.html>)

Norman Borlaug was forced to spend his dying years campaigning to protect agricultural innovations like GM from being derailed by activists who opposed all genetic engineering for ideological reasons, or were simply against modern biotechnology on principle. As Borlaug warned in 2004, success for the anti-GM lobby could be catastrophic: “If the naysayers do manage to stop agricultural biotechnology, they might actually precipitate the famines and the crisis of global biodiversity they have been predicting for nearly 40 years.” This warning seems particularly prescient right now, as anti-GM activists threaten to destroy publicly funded research on wheat at the Rothamsted Institute here in the UK. A group called “Take the Flour Back” has pledged to destroy the entire trial site next Sunday, while on Sunday a lone activist broke into the experimental plots and caused damage before being arrested by police. The threatened “decontamination” by anti-GM zealots is supposedly in response to the danger of pollen from the wheat spreading to neighbouring fields – the activists seem to be labouring under the misunderstanding that wheat is wind pollinated, whereas in fact it is self-pollinating, so little if any pollen ever leaves the plant. This sadly testifies to the extent of their understanding of agriculture.

Biofuel mandates are an absolute necessity to slowing catastrophic warming

Wayne Madsen, Progressive commentator, "Con: as climate change disasters loom, it's no time to discard Obama's environmental legacy" Gazettextra June 28, 2016 page http://www.gazettextra.com/20160211/con_as_climate_change_disasters_loom_it8217s_no_time_to_discard_obama8217s_environmental_legacy

EDITOR'S NOTE: The writer is addressing the question, "Should the U.S. scrap ethanol mandates and use its energy surplus to spur the economy?" Critics, particularly big businesses and right-wing conservatives, keep carping about the costs of the Obama administration's well-conceived campaign to fight climate change. Can you imagine how much they will carp 20 or 30 years from now when our low-lying coastal cities are flooded with ocean water and millions of acres of farmland are fallow and our forests change from timber to tender? Republicans and their fossil fuel producing allies are trying to destroy Obama's environmental legacy by rolling back as many environmental rules as they can. Ethanol mandate opponents such as oil industry-funded GOP presidential hopeful Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, want to abolish ethanol and other biofuel mandates. **Repeated scientific studies have shown that corn ethanol emits 51 percent less greenhouse gas than pure gasoline**. **With the global environment at risk of total collapse, biofuels are not a convenience but an absolute necessity**. Big Oil, which wants to maximize its profits in a market of decelerating demand, is seeking to eliminate the ethanol mandate to fatten its offshore bank accounts. America's consumers and their elected representatives should respond with a resounding "No!"

Case debate should form the core debate ground on the topic and domestic agriculture should allow for strong specific case debate. There are plenty of alternate causes to the main advantage impacts (globalization, economics, practices, warming, etc) as well as strong solvency opponents to change on a nation-wide scale.

International effects:

Food markets are connected around the world. In 2007 and 2008 food riots occurred around the world – particularly in Egypt, Tunisia and other Arab Spring nations. There is even evidence pointing directly to the food riots as the main cause for the toppling the Mubarak regime. This effect was also felt nearby our borders. Mexico is the 3rd largest destination for American food exports and because of NAFTA, our exports dramatically drive down the prices of food in Mexico. In 2008, however, subsidies for Ethanol resulted in diverted corn from food to biofuel production. The effects were dramatic in Mexico as the 'Tortilla riots' took center stage. Scientific American reminds us of the effects of a shift in agricultural policy on other nations. In 2008, they wrote that

The recent surge in world food prices is already creating havoc in poor countries, and the worse is to come. Food riots are spreading across Africa, through many are unreported in the international press... even small changes in food prices can push the poor into hunger and destitution: as famously expounded by Nobel laureate Amartya Sen, some of the greatest famines in history were caused not

by massive declines in grain production but rather by losses in the purchasing power of the poor.^{lii}

Brazil is another place where negatives will be able to examine the effects of a domestic policy change on the rest of the globe. In 2015, President Dilma Rousseff threatened a trade dispute with the US over how our subsidies for soy and corn farmers threaten the Brazilian economy.^{liii}

With international effects likely also coming from plan, there is the opportunity here for in-depth link turn debates with the 1ac.

URAA

“Beginning in 1995, World Trade Organization (WTO) constraints added a new dimension to domestic farm policy. Under the Uruguay Round Agreement on Agriculture (URAA), the United States and other countries agreed to keep the total value of trade-distorting domestic support to farmers from exceeding predetermined ceiling levels and to notify the World Trade Organization of annual domestic support spending.^{liv}” Subsidies for domestic agriculture are limited by the Uruguay Round Agreement on Agriculture. Any additional increase in subsidization is going to likely run afoul of the US limits. Breaking these limits would set a dangerous precedent and encourage developing nations to cease abiding by the agreement as well. The Iowa Ag Review points out that the limits placed by the URAA make sense for the United States to follow because of two reasons. First limiting its subsidies in exchange for limits on other countries’ subsidies makes the US the biggest winner in agricultural trade. Without such limits, other nations could easily undercut American produce. Secondly, the URAA operates as a constraint that works to limit the effects of farm programs on domestic and world markets – ensuring that the market is controlled.^{lv} The declining of trade distortions in agriculture helps to prevent the price of food from massively fluctuating around the world.

Politics:

Agricultural debates are fertile ground for politics links. Besides the individual links to key congressmen, the passage of farm legislation is inherently political. Senator Thad Cochran (R-MS) once told the North American Agricultural Journalists group “that food stamps should continue to be included in the farm bill “purely from a political perspective. It helps get the farm bill passed.^{lvi}” The Farm Lobby is alive and remains powerful today and will serve to work wonders in individual unique link stories for the disad.

Trump Trade Agenda:

President Trump has released a document entitled “America First Trade Policy.” The document specifically singles out the US agricultural industry as the intended beneficiary of his new trade policy. In fact, Trump’s early successes in changing our trade policy have come in the form of agriculture. Trade is incredibly important to the US agricultural industry,

Amid the tumult, US agricultural players are freaking out, and for good reason. The countries that Trump most directly targeted in his trade tirades during the campaign, Mexico and China, are two of the three biggest export markets for farmed products. The third biggest market is Canada—the country that joins the United States and Mexico in

NAFTA. According to Joseph Glauber, who served as chief economist at the US Department of Agriculture under most of Obama's presidency, US agriculture exports to China, Mexico, and Canada averaged \$63 billion annually between 2013 and 2015—accounting for 44 percent of total food/ag US exports. For soybeans and pork, two of the most valuable US ag export products, the reliance is particularly stark. The United States is the world's largest soybean producer, and our farms export nearly half of what they harvest. The biggest recipients are China and Mexico, which together account for nearly 70 percent of US soybean exports, buying a total of about \$16.6 billion worth of the product. They also make up two of the top three destinations for US pork^{vii}.

Trump has already agreed to a deal that would open up China to our Beef in exchange for opening our markets to their poultry. But there is danger to aff's that will reduce the amount of food that available to export. The Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy explains the potential trade-off if the SQ is upset,

The 2017 USTR agenda states that it will rely less on the WTO dispute settlement system and more on unilateral U.S. action to enforce an "America First" trade and foreign policy. Whether the Trump administration avoids the WTO to settle agricultural disputes, the reorganization of the U.S. Department of Agriculture to add an Undersecretary for Trade and Foreign Agricultural Affairs indicates that the Trump administration will **prioritize exporting U.S. agriculture overproduction**. The reorganization eliminates two undersecretary positions and creates an Under Secretary for Farm Production and Conservation. There are concerns, both in Congress and in USDA, that placing the offices to conserve agricultural natural resources and the offices to administer the 29 domestic support payment programs (Table 1) authorized by the 2014 Farm Bill to support agricultural production under the control of one Undersecretary will result in a budgetary competition that the Natural Resources Conservation Service is very likely to lose. The likely result of this reorganization is an environmentally destructive and unsustainable agricultural trade policy. In a 2011 speech to European agricultural economists, then WTO Director General Pascal Lamy said, "Neither food nor agricultural trade policy operates in a vacuum. In other words, no matter how sophisticated our trade policies are, if domestic policies do not themselves incentivize agriculture, and internalize negative social and environmental externalities, we will not be satisfied with our agricultural systems." Thus far, the Trump administration's policy indicates the social and environmental costs of maximizing agricultural production for trade, to China and elsewhere, will stay off the trade accounting balance sheet or, in the euphemism of economists, will be "externalized."

Upsetting the amount of products produce in America could dramatically affect our ability to export and fulfill Trump's trade policy (or would force him to export the food we actually need in order to ensure access to markets that he holds dear).

Spending DA/Turns/Tradeoffs:

Empirically, economic hardship/decline makes it extremely difficult for government expenditures on US agricultural programs. The persistent fiscal deficits limited government spending on agriculture in the 1990s, but surpluses from the end of the Clinton era set the stage for the massive increase of agriculture spending in the 2002 farm act. Negative teams that win a

link to the economy can do more than just generic economic impact analysis – they could argue that it will lead to a reduction in other areas of domestic agriculture and thus potentially turn case.^{lviii} One particular funding tradeoff argument would be with the Conservation Reserve Program. The Center for Agricultural and Environmental Policy at Oregon State University and University of California Agricultural Issues Center suggests that it is regularly on the chopping block. Cutting such a program would harm water and soil quality, economies of scale through tourism and land values, as well harm wildlife habitat.^{lix}

Kritiks:

Kritical debate should be able to access some of its main arguments.

Environmental K's:

Deep ecology naturally fits with any environmental topic as well as anthropocentrism. Trying to 'fix' or regulate the environment would link into a managerialism K, particularly if it makes advantage claims to increased technology or biodiversity. Environmental justice as well as Kritiks on the concept of sustainability, in particular the concept of sustainable development, should have multiple links to the 1ac.

Individuals/actor K's

The affirmative area touched on the issues of black and other minority farmers who make up a fraction of America's farmers. Going through the USFG without first dealing with the past will generate credible links to multiple K's. Settler Colonialism links extremely well to most cases. The argument points to the USFG's policy of 'hear no evil, see no evil' when it comes to the past colonialism of America from the Natives. Enacting a policy to alter domestic agriculture ignores the fact that the land isn't really ours and therefore is just continuing our settler colonialist mindset. Wilderson's black bodies gathers fertile links from the fact that the slave trade (and the middle passage that occurred because of it) was in large part because of our domestic agriculture policy. A policy that has been rooted in destruction for the black bodies ever sense. There are Foucauldian biopower links in changing behavior through things like subsidy reduction. And as with any topic, there should be fertile ground for capitalism and neoliberalism links.

Word Pics

Domestic has sprung up as a common argument and it is hard to envision a resolution without the word in it.

Pertinent Definitions:

Included are definitions for understanding some of the terminology that is used in the paper and may end up used in the future resolution. It is not attempting to define typical debate terms (USFG, Substantial, Increase, etc).

Domestic Agriculture:

These two words are typically defined separately, although there will be plenty of field contextual definitions that place them together. Merriam Webster defines Domestic as “of, relating to, or made in your own country” and agriculture as “the science or occupation of farming.”

An example of likely field contextual definitions include:

USDA – “The U.S. agriculture sector extends beyond the farm business to include a range of farm-related industries. The largest of these are food service and food manufacturing. Americans’ expenditures on food amount to 13 percent of household budgets on average. Among Federal Government outlays on farm and food programs, nutrition assistance far outpaces other programs.”^{ix}

Agricultural Subsidies:

The Free dictionary gives us a solid starting off point on this term with the following definition: “Payments by the federal government to producers of agricultural products for the purpose of stabilizing food prices, ensuring plentiful food production, guaranteeing farmers’ basic incomes, and generally strengthening the agricultural segment of the national economy.”

Biofuels:

Businessdictionary.com explains biofuels as “Fuel derived from organic matter (obtained directly from plants, or indirectly from agricultural, commercial, domestic, and/or industrial wastes) instead of from fossil products.”

Regulatory involvement:

Dictionary.com defines regulatory as “1. to control or direct by a rule, principle, method, etc.: to regulate household expenses. 2. to adjust to some standard or requirement, as amount, degree, etc.: to regulate the temperature. 3. to adjust so as to ensure accuracy of operation: to regulate a watch.”

Possible Resolutions:

1. Resolved: The United States federal government should substantially increase its regulation of one or more of the following in the United States: genetically modified foods, biofuels, pesticides, concentrated animal feeding operations, crop insurance.
2. -The United States Federal Government should substantially decrease (or eliminate) its agricultural subsidies for domestic agriculture.
3. -The United States Federal Government should substantially increase its regulation of genetically modified foods (or crops) in domestic agriculture.
4. The United States federal government should substantially decrease its financial and/or regulatory involvement in domestic agriculture
5. The United States federal government should substantially decrease its agricultural subsidies devoted to food and/or biofuel production.

Availability of literature on the topic:

The topic of domestic agriculture should work for both novice debaters and seasoned researchers. Simple google and google news searches should provide enough media coverage to construct a successful 1acs and negative strategies. For advanced debaters and researchers there are a number of devoted think tanks, search engines, and university centers that devote themselves to covering the topic area. The Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (iatp.org), USDA, Foodtank, Worldwatch institute all have a major focus on the issue. Meanwhile, most US think tanks cover the issues addressed in the topic area within their sections of 'energy and the environment.'

Although it is never the most reliable identifier of content availability, there are plenty of hits for novice debaters. Some highlights:

- Congressional Research Service (CRS) reports show 36,500 hits for the search Agriculture
- US Domestic Agriculture returns 300,000,000 hits in google
- US agricultural policy returns 13,500,000 hits in google and 3,110,000 in google scholar

Conclusion:

In the 2018 – 2019 season, fourth year debaters will have debated Education, China, and Domestic Surveillance, meaning that it is highly unlikely that they have done more than briefly touched upon one form of food production. Where our food comes from and how much we have to spread around the world is one of the most pressing issues facing the world today. The topic will rollout at the exact time the next farm bill is being implemented, meaning that this is the ideal time for our debaters to deal with this topic while it is stealing some national headlines. In the final analysis, the world is facing the dual threat of runaway population growth and climate change. The two challenges converge on the issue of food production. The US faces its own hunger issues with an estimated 14% percent of its own households as food insecure at some point in 2014 and we will be called upon to shoulder more of the load of feeding the world. US domestic agricultural policy is at the heart of this and other issues. Where we go from here is as essential of a question facing the world as any. Debaters regularly expose the importance of focusing on systematic harms, a topic centered around US domestic agriculture will allow research into the interconnectedness of a globalized world, apply local solutions to global issues, explore key government mechanisms such as subsidies, and debate our competing priorities (food vs fuel; us vs them).

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iii “Hunger Statistics” *World Food Programme* 2016 page <https://www.wfp.org/hunger/stats> access date April 15, 2016

iv Aleesi, Christopher, staff writer, “U.S. Drought and rising global food prices” *Council on Foreign Relations* August 2, 2012 page <http://www.cfr.org/food-security/us-drought-rising-global-food-prices/p28777>

v Geiling in 2017

vi Resolved: That the federal government should establish a comprehensive national policy to protect the quality of water in the United States.

vii 2003 – 2004 NDT debated Resolved: that the United States Federal Government should enact one or more of the following:

Withdrawal of its World Trade Organization complaint against the European Union’s restrictions on genetically modified foods;

A substantial increase in its government-to-government economic and/or conflict prevention assistance to Turkey and/or Greece;

Full withdrawal from the North Atlantic Treaty Organization;

Removal of its barriers to and encouragement of substantial European Union and/or North Atlantic Treaty Organization participation in

peacekeeping in Iraq and reconstruction in Iraq;

Removal of its tactical nuclear weapons from Europe;

Harmonization of its intellectual property law with the European Union in the area of human DNA sequences;

Rescission of all or nearly all agriculture subsidy increases in the 2002 Farm Bill.

2008-2009 CEDA debated Resolved: that the United States Federal Government should substantially reduce its agricultural support, at least eliminating nearly all of the domestic subsidies, for biofuels, Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations, corn, cotton, dairy, fisheries, rice soybeans, sugar and/or wheat.

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