

## **Bernie Sanders on Farm and Rural issues**

### **Animal welfare**

Sanders has supported the appropriations bans on USDA inspection of horse slaughter facilities and [cosponsored several bills](#) dealing with animal welfare. That legislation has included the proposed [Egg Products Inspection Act Amendments of 2013](#) that would have phased out the use of battery cages for egg laying hens in favor of enriched housing that allows chickens room to move, and includes perches, nesting boxes, and places to scratch. The legislation, which would have preempted state regulations on hen housing, resulted from an agreement between the United Egg Producers and Humane Society of the United States but never became law.

Bills he has cosponsored in the 114th Congress:

-[Prevent All Soring Tactics \(PAST\) Act](#), which would ban the use of soring devices and strengthen penalties for violations of the Horse Protection Act.

-[John Rainey Memorial Safeguard American Food Exports \(SAFE\) Act](#), which would permanently prohibit the slaughter of horses for human consumption in the United States. It would also ban the transportation of horses for foreign slaughter.

### **Commodities**

Sanders voted against an [amendment](#) in 2012 and [another version](#) in 2013 to roll back the sugar program.

### **Crop insurance**

Sanders has a mixed record on crop insurance amendments during consideration of the farm bill in 2012. He voted against [an amendment](#) to the Senate farm bill in 2012 to limit the amount of premium subsidy for any producer with an average adjusted gross income in excess of \$750,000, and he voted against a [similar amendment](#) in 2013. Both versions were adopted in the Senate, but the language didn't make it into the 2014 farm bill.

Sanders voted for a 2012 [amendment](#) to link conservation compliance to crop insurance.

### **Environmental/regulatory issues**

Sanders has made climate change a major issue in the Senate and in his presidential campaign. He has repeatedly argued that it is the most urgent national security issue facing the country.

“We are facing a planetary crisis,” [says Sanders](#). “The vast majority of climate scientists agree that our planet is warming, that human activities – especially burning fossil fuels – are the

primary cause, and that climate change already is causing devastating damage across the world in the form of floods, droughts, wildfires and extreme weather.”

He has proposed to reduce emissions via taxes on carbon. His [Climate Protection and Justice Act of 2015](#) would also attempt to reduce agricultural emissions by funding voluntary measures. The bill would expand the Rural Energy for America Program to subsidize biodigesters and other projects. The bill would set a goal to have half of all U.S. farmland under no-till cultivation by 2026.

### **Farm Bill**

His campaign’s [rural policy](#) calls for shifting farm subsidies away from large-scale farms but doesn’t say how that would be done. “It is unacceptable that the top 10 percent of farms collect 75 percent of farm subsidies, while the bottom 62 percent do not receive any subsidies. We have to adopt policies that will turn this around.”

Sanders voted for the farm bill in 2014, [although he said he regretted](#) that it would make cuts to nutrition assistance. He expressed relief that the Milk Income Loss Contract program was continued as a bridge to the new Margin Protection Program that the bill provided for dairy producers.

“This was a difficult vote on a bill which has some positive provisions but also some very negative ones.

“This bill will bring greater stability to Vermont dairy farmers by helping them to manage risks and produce products more efficiently. It also is good news that a successful MILC program will stay in place until new insurance provisions for dairy farmers are implemented.

“I am very disappointed that this bill makes \$8.6 billion in cuts over the next decade to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. While the final bill steps back from \$40 billion in food stamp cuts that House Republicans had demanded, it is both morally and economically wrong to cut assistance to families in a very difficult economy.

### **Biotechnology/ GMO**

During consideration of the farm bill, Sanders proposed unsuccessful amendments in 2012 and 2013 to ensure that states that could require labeling of biotech foods. The [2012 amendment](#) failed, 26-73. The [2013 version](#) failed, 27-71.

“All over this country, people are becoming more conscious about the foods they are eating and the foods they are serving to their kids, and this is certainly true for genetically engineered foods...I believe that when a mother goes to the store and purchases food for her child, she has the right to know what she is feeding her child,” [Sanders said](#) in arguing for his amendment.

### **Immigration/ Labor**

Sanders supported the [comprehensive immigration reform bill](#) passed by the Senate in 2013. The bill, which would have created a new and expanded farmworker visa program and provided a path to citizenship for illegal immigrants then in the country, was never considered in the House.

"The Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act addresses the concern all of us have about securing our borders, something I strongly support. It addresses the need to hold employers accountable for hiring illegal immigrants, something the Bush administration has neglected. It addresses the contentious and difficult issue of how we respond to the reality that there are some 12 million illegal immigrants in this country today, and carves out a path which eventually leads to citizenship, which I also support," [Sanders said](#).

He supports and wants to expand President Obama's executive actions to allow children and some adults who are in the country illegally to stay.

Sanders expressed concern that the Senate bill would have expanded guestworker programs, and his [campaign immigration policy](#) calls for reforms in several visa programs, including [H-2B](#), which is heavily used by the food industry.

"The visa system must be fundamentally reformed to prevent employers from abusing and exploiting guest workers, especially in the context of H-2B, H1-B, and J-1 workers. Binding workers to a specific employer or not allowing their family members to work creates a situation rife for abuse and exacerbates an already unequal relationship between the employer and the employee. We must substantially increase prevailing wages that employers pay temporary guest workers."

## **Renewable Energy**

Sanders "strongly supports" the Renewable Fuel Standard, [according to his campaign's rural policy](#), and during [a December 2015 interview](#) with Iowa Public Radio, he said he shared corn growers' concerns that the annual RFS volume requirements set by the Environmental Protection Agency are too low. "I happen to believe that climate change is the great environmental crisis that we face, and what the scientists tell us is that if we do not get our act together in the near future, a bad situation will become much worse. And what that means is that we have got to do everything we can to break our dependence on fossil fuel, move to energy efficiency and move to sustainable energy," he said.

"I know Iowa has done a really great job in terms of wind, and in terms of biofuels, so I think we have to be supportive of that effort. And take every step that we could, and in every way we can including the growth of the biofuels industry to break our dependency on renewable fuels."

To incentivize more wind energy, he supports making the wind production tax credit permanent.

## **Trade**

Sanders, who has consistently opposed new trade agreements, voted against providing President Obama with fast-track negotiating power - Trade Promotion Authority - to complete the Trans-Pacific Partnership and Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership.

“Fast track removes Congress from its constitutionally-mandated role in negotiating trade deals. It would pave the way for passage of the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) which would force American workers to compete against desperate workers in Vietnam who are paid as little as 28 cents an hour,” Sanders said.

Sander also opposes the TPP, [calling it](#) a “disastrous trade agreement designed to protect the interests of the largest multi-national corporations at the expense of workers, consumers, the environment and the foundations of American democracy. It will also negatively impact some of the poorest people in the world.”

His campaign’s [trade policy](#) calls for reversing the North American Free-Trade Agreement, Central American Free-Trade Agreement and revoking permanent normal trade relations (PNTR) with China.

## **Taxes**

Sanders proposes to increase taxes on businesses, individuals and estates to reduce income inequality and to pay for his expansive policy initiatives, including his plan to provide free college tuition to all. He has not said how high he would raise tax rates.

He wants to levy a progressive estate tax on people who inherit more than \$3.5 million. He also is pledging to stop corporate tax inversions by which businesses shift profits to overseas entities to lower their U.S. tax liability.

He has previously proposed taxing capital gains at the same rates as ordinary income. He also has [proposed](#) a speculation fee on financial institutions.

His [campaign statement](#) on income equality says: “This campaign is sending a message to the billionaire class: ‘you can’t have it all.’ You can’t get huge tax breaks while children in this country go hungry. You can’t continue sending our jobs to China while millions are looking for work. You can’t hide your profits in the Cayman Islands and other tax havens, while there are massive unmet needs on every corner of this nation. Your greed has got to end. You cannot take advantage of all the benefits of America, if you refuse to accept your responsibilities as Americans.”

Bernie Sanders’ position paper on Rural America is available here:  
<https://berniesanders.com/issues/improving-the-rural-economy/>