

## EAT, DRINK +FARM

### THE FOOD, AGRICULTURE & NUTRITION PRACTICE AT STORY PARTNERS

From farm to table, Story Partners brings decades of experience working directly with those who shape the policies and behaviors of today's food and beverage culture. Our expanding food, agriculture and nutrition practice — Eat, Drink +Farm — delivers results by connecting with the farmers and ranchers dedicating their lives to food production, to the companies and brands creatively marketing to today's savvy consumer, to the policymakers and influencers shaping how we perceive and interact with food and beverages and to the consumers who ultimately determine what works and what doesn't.

Unlike others, Story Partners can actually help change the narrative by steering policy outcomes, building influential coalitions, elevating an image and brand above the clutter, managing reputation and helping you respond effectively to any challenge or crisis. Our work in food, agriculture and nutrition goes back decades and includes creative, cutting-edge public relations campaigns that make a difference for clients big and small. With a team of top talent, Story Partners has a keen understanding of the legislative, regulatory and consumer processes that will help you prevail in today's rapidly evolving food and beverage marketplace.

From our roots as Dittus Communications to Story Partners today, our food, agriculture and nutrition practice has flourished with clients from farming to retail, food safety to food science, and all the good stuff in between.

Our menu of services and expertise includes:

#### THE EAT, DRINK +FARM POLICY CENTER

A deeply experienced and well-connected team able to navigate the legislative, regulatory and consumer processes important to associations, manufacturing, production and food service

#### ALLIANCES IN FOOD +DRINK

When you need it, we're able to tap into a wealth of expertise and influence among CEOs, chefs and authors, consumer experts, scientists and physicians, think tanks, lawmakers and regulatory specialists, social influencers and journalists

#### FARM TO TABLE BRAND BUILDING +MANAGEMENT

With decades of award-winning experience in marketing and advertising campaigns, digital storytelling and social influence, message development and testing, and media relations and crisis management, the Story Partners team has a winning strategy to help define and defend your brand



Matt founded the Eat, Drink +Farm practice at Story Partners public affairs help clients navigate today's evolving food and beverage culture. He has served as a close advisor and communications director to both the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture and the Administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development. A veteran of two Farm Bills and multiple trade negotiations, Matt brings a journalist's sense of storytelling and a campaigner's gift for connecting with grassroots using digital and traditional media. He's led efforts to help secure landmark legislation, such as GMO labeling. And he's managed some of the thorniest policymaking processes and crises in food and agriculture over the past 15 years, such as the recent outbreak of highly pathogenic avian influenza.

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## What Coalitions Matter Today in Food Policy?

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I participated recently in the [2017 Food Tank Summit Series](#), which brought together more than three dozen speakers from the food and agriculture field. Researchers, farmers, chefs, communicators, policymakers, government officials, and students came together for discussions on diverse topics, including the outlook for the next Farm Bill.

As I pointed out in the Summit, a Farm Bill's success—passage or failure—often comes down to the coalitions formed to push the legislation across the finish line.

Last month, I joined [Story Partners public affairs](#) and [founded the agency's Eat, Drink +Farm practice](#) to help clients tackle some of the biggest challenges facing food, agriculture and nutrition today. Certainly, the upcoming Farm Bill is one such challenge. Passed by Congress every five years, the law sets national agriculture, nutrition, conservation, and forestry policy for the United States. The last Farm Bill was passed in 2014 with overwhelming bipartisan support, and expires at the end of 2018.

Each Farm Bill is different, often designed to meet the unique challenges of its time. Today, the farm economy struggles with low commodity prices, depressed farm income and a global supply glut. At the same time, the U.S. economy has improved

considerably since 2014, putting more people back to work.

Here are five of the most critical coalitions that will shape the nation's next Farm Bill:

1. **The Georgia Coalition:** President Trump has chosen former Georgia governor Sonny Perdue to serve as the next U.S. Secretary of Agriculture. One of Mr. Perdue's good friends is Zippy Duvall, president of the nation's largest and most powerful farmer and rancher membership group, the American Farm Bureau Federation. While the Farm Bureau and its policy platform often play a key role in shaping the Farm Bill with Congress, the organization will have outsized influence this go around thanks to the Duvall-Perdue relationship.
2. **The Nutrition-Production Ag Coalition:** Sometimes called the bedrock of modern-day Farm Bills, this collection of farming and commodity groups aligned with nutrition and hunger organizations, like FRAC and Share Our Strength, represent a rural-urban coalition that often preserves the heart of the legislation. The idea here is that SNAP—also called food stamps—appeals to urban constituents while commodity payments and crop insurance programs appeal to rural audiences. It's that type of strategy that unites groups like the National Chicken Council with the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities to move this major piece of legislation across the finish line.
3. **The Conservation-Crop Insurance Coalition:** When it comes to conservation, the Farm Bill mostly provides voluntary, incentive-based opportunities for private landowners rather than mandates. The Farm Bill's conservation compliance requirement is one major exception. In order to receive federal crop insurance subsidies (up to 60%) and payments under federal disaster assistance and some commodity support programs, the Farm Bill asks producers to sign an agreement promising they will not farm on highly erodible lands or wetlands. This agreement is cherished by hunting, fishing and conservation groups, like Ducks Unlimited and the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership. Commodity farmers often call on these groups to help protect federal crop insurance from budget cuts; for that favor, commodity groups have greater incentive to protect conservation programs.
4. **The Good Food Movement:** Identified closely with small farms, local food, organics, equitable pay for farmworkers, food justice, and environmental sustainability, the Good Food Movement is a hodgepodge of progressive food policy advocates and organizations with growing influence in Washington, D.C. and beyond. Although the movement has no official head, its spokespeople are many: Farm Aid board chair Willie Nelson, journalist Michael Pollan, and chef Tom Colicchio, to name a few. From farmer fair practices, to GMO labeling, to cage-free eggs, the Good Food Movement uses grassroots and grasstops strategies fueled by

digital advocacy to achieve their goals.

5. **Budget Hawks and the White House:** Early in the Trump Administration, it's clear that fiscally-conservative think tanks, namely the Heritage Foundation, are working hand-in-glove with White House officials and key members of Congress, such as House Speaker Paul Ryan (R-WI), to bring greater scrutiny to the federal appropriations process. It's still an open question how influential this coalition will be in shaping the federal budget, but that will become clear when Congress negotiates a new budget in April as the current short-term fix expires. If the coalition proves effective, it may go after key titles in the Farm Bill--commodity payment programs, crop insurance and nutrition.



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