

Ted Cruz: Positions on Farm, Food and Rural Issues

Biotechnology/GMO

Cruz has expressed strong support for agricultural biotechnology and has made clear that he considers labeling unnecessary. “We need to stand up to the hysteria,” he said at the [Iowa Ag Summit](#) in March 2015. “I would note: For families, for parents, that don’t want to feed their kids GMOs, in the private marketplace there has grown up an abundant market. You can go and purchase organic if you want to pay more.”

On labeling, he said [during an interview with RFDTV and Agri-Pulse](#) in September 2015, “I don’t think the federal government should be mandating labeling that’s not driven by the sciences, particularly when there have been enormous benefits in terms of driving down the cost of food and feeding people all across the world.”

Crop insurance

During debate on the farm bill in 2013, [Cruz voted for](#) an amendment that would have reduced premium subsidies for policy holders with adjusted gross incomes of more than \$750,000.

In the interview with RFDTV and Agri-Pulse, Cruz offered mixed views on crop insurance. He said “there is an important federal role in crop insurance” and he said that “agriculture has always had significant risk associated with it, whether from acts of God or the potential for massive price variations.”

But Cruz went on to suggest the program should be reformed to target assistance to smaller-scale operations, saying that most of the benefits went to large farms. “I think there are reasonable reforms to have subsidies focused on smaller farmers, on lower-income farmers, and I don’t think we necessarily need to be in the business of providing major subsidies to large conglomerate agricultural operations.”

Regulations

Cruz has been outspoken about federal regulatory policy, saying they often hurt more than they help. “When it comes to getting the federal government out of your lives, trying to stop the EPA, trying to stop OSHA, trying to stop federal regulators from descending on your farms and making it harder for you to produce, for you to do your jobs, you have no greater friend and ally than I am,” Mr. Cruz said.

He said at the Iowa Ag Summit that the Obama administration’s “waters of the United States” rule re-defining the jurisdiction of the Clean Water Act is “directly contrary to law.” ... It’s the EPA trying to turn irrigation ditches into lakes and rivers and oceans and it is completely lawless.”

Cruz challenges the science on climate change and chaired a [subcommittee hearing](#) in December 2015, during the Paris climate talks, to make his points. The administration's greenhouse gas regulations on electric utilities "will cripple the coal industry and deprive Americans from jobs," [Cruz says](#).

Farm Bill

Cruz was opposed to the 2014 farm bill, citing the cost of nutrition assistance. "Agriculture is essential to the Texas economy and to our nation, and I am proud to support our farmers and ranchers as they feed America and the world," [he said](#). "Unfortunately, this bill is not really a Farm Bill, it's a Food Stamps bill with some farm provisions. Instead of locking people into an endless cycle of dependence, we should be focused on making it easier for people to stand on their own feet by getting this weak economy booming. That's the American Dream."

Cruz has listed the sugar program among 25 programs that he would eliminate, and [during one of the presidential debates](#) he said the savings could help pay for higher defense spending. Texas Sen. Ted Cruz took aim at the sugar program, suggesting that sugar "subsidies" should be done away with to help pay for defense spending.

"Sugar farmers farm on roughly 0.2 percent of the farmland in America, yet they give 40 percent of the lobbying money," Cruz said. "That sort of corporate welfare is why we're bankrupting our kids and grandkids. I would end those subsidies to pay for defending this country."

USDA generally operates the sugar program at no cost to taxpayers by using market allotments and import quotas to prop up prices, although there is also a provision allowing government purchases of sugar for fuel ethanol production to prevent surpluses from developing.

Food stamps

Cruz says the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program has gotten out of control.

During debate on the 2014 farm bill, [he said](#) that the legislation represented "a massive expansion in food stamps, trapping millions in long-term dependency. It fails to provide a true safety net for farmers in difficult years, fails to fully target assistance to those most in need, subsidizes massive agri-businesses, and fails to prioritize farm aid over duplicative programs, promoting unrelated programs from green energy to housing."

Immigration

Cruz fought against the Senate's "Gang of Eight" immigration reform bill in 2013 and has backtracked somewhat in his support for legal immigration.

During the Iowa Ag Summit, he noted that he proposed to double the cap on green cards from 675,000 to 1.3 million a year. He also proposed during the 2013 debate to increase H-1B visas for high-tech workers, but [has since reversed that position](#). [His campaign's immigration plan](#)

says there should be no increase in legal immigration as long as “work-force participation rates remain below historical averages.”

His immigration plan is silent on farmworkers. He doesn’t propose making E-Verify mandatory except for federal contractors. For the private sector, the government should “expand E-Verify without burdening employers,” he says.

He would bar companies who employ illegal immigrants from deducting the costs of their pay and benefits from the firms’ taxable income.

His plan also calls for ending birthright citizenship, completing 700 miles of priority fencing along the U.S.-Mexico border and tripling the number of Border Patrol agents. He would provide assistance to states and local governments to beef up immigration enforcement.

Renewable Fuel Standard (RFS)

Cruz proposed phasing out the Renewable Fuel Standard. He stood by his opposition to biofuel mandates when questioned about his position at the Iowa Ag Summit: “The answer you’d like me to give is I’m for the RFS, darn it, and that would be the easy thing to do. But people are pretty fed up with politicians who tell one group one thing, another group another thing and then they go to Washington and do nothing. They aren’t doing what they said they would do.”

He also opposes subsidies for wind power.

Taxes

Cruz [has said](#) he envisions shifting the tracking and collection of federal taxes to "some much smaller division" of the Treasury Department. The senator said that replacing the current, complex tax code with a simple flat tax would eliminate most of the work the IRS needs to do, making the agency obsolete and "irrelevant."

Trade

Cruz generally supports trade deals, he says, but he [voted against](#) Trade Promotion Authority on June 23, 2015, saying he wanted the Senate leadership to commit to killing the Export-Import Bank. And in November, Cruz [told The Des Moines Register](#) that he would vote against the Trans-Pacific Partnership because it would undermine U.S. sovereignty and immigration laws.

“I believe we can negotiate a much better agreement with a strong conservative president than we have with Barack Obama,” Cruz said of TPP.

At the Iowa Ag Summit, Cruz’s expressed support for both TPA and the TPP. “Opening up overseas markets expands the ability of our farmers and ranchers, our manufacturers, to continue to do well,” Cruz said.

Water projects:

Cruz [voted for](#) the final version of the Water Resources Development Act in May 2014 after having opposed an earlier of the legislation when it was on the Senate floor in 2013. [He said](#) the earlier bill neglected "to reduce a substantial backlog of projects, to the detriment of projects with national implications, such as the Sabine-Neches Waterway."