

# 2012 Presidential Candidates on the Issues

*As a nonpartisan, grassroots organization, the National Corn Growers Association does not endorse candidates for any political office, including president of the United States. NCGA provides information to grower-members so they can make informed decisions on this and other issues. NCGA has asked the two major candidates for president, President Barack Obama and Governor Mitt Romney (R-Mass.), to address some of the top issues important to corn growers.*

**The following was submitted to the National Corn Growers Association from Pres. Barack Obama**



## **Farm Bill and Safety Net**

Any Farm Bill passed this year – and there needs to be a Farm Bill this year – must provide certainty and adequate protections for America's farmers. I called on Congress to pass a five-year bill that strengthens the farm safety net, including natural disaster relief and a strong crop insurance program. We need to boost economic growth and create jobs in rural America by increasing access to credit for rural small businesses, investing in rural broadband, water and sewer infrastructure, and make it easier for rural communities to access health care.

The next Farm Bill needs to support farmers' access to crop insurance and extend disaster assistance programs so that farmers have a strong and resilient safety net. In the past three years, I have increased the availability of crop insurance and emergency disaster assistance to help nearly 600,000 farmers and ranchers keep their farms in business after natural disasters and crop loss. My administration has expanded farm credit to help more than 100,000 farmers struggling during the financial crisis to keep their family farms and provide for their families. I created a White House Rural Council to bolster federal assistance to rural America and expand economic opportunities. And as farmers continue to go through hard times because of this drought, we are expanding access to low-interest loans, encouraging insurance companies to extend payment deadlines and opening new lands for livestock farmers to graze their herds. At the same time, our agriculture programs are contributing to our government-wide efforts to cut the deficit by cutting subsidies to crop insurance companies and better targeting conservation funding.

My opponent and House Republicans have a different vision for rural America. The Romney- Ryan budget would continue handing taxpayer money to wealthy farmers, while increasing the cost farmers pay for the insurance that protects them against natural disasters and gutting conservation and rural development programs.

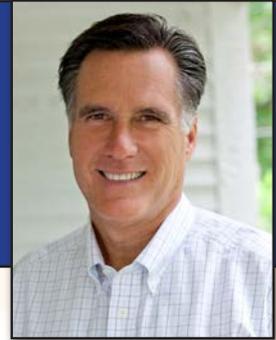
I intend to do everything I can to get a comprehensive and long-term farm bill sent to my desk. But right now, House Republicans are not doing their part. House Republicans rushed out of Washington declaring their work was finished, without allowing a vote on this year's Farm Bill. The House needs to do its part and pass this bill. Protecting American farmers is too important to let it slip through our fingers.

## **Corn-based Ethanol/Renewable Energy**

We must invest in a clean energy economy that will lead to new jobs, new businesses, and reduce our dependence on foreign oil. I recently announced a new goal of cutting oil imports in half by the end of the decade. Developing the next generation of biofuels and clean energy will help us achieve this goal, and reducing our dependence on foreign oil will help create millions of new jobs that can't be outsourced.

We are already making progress. U.S. biofuel production is at its highest level in history. Last year, rural America helped the U.S. reduce our reliance on foreign oil by producing about 14 billion gallons of renewable fuels like ethanol and biodiesel– roughly 8 percent of total U.S. highway vehicle fuel. I am making substantial investments to support the development and

**The following was submitted to the National Corn Growers Association from Gov. Mitt Romney, R-Mass.**



## **Farm Bill and Safety Net**

I support passage of a strong farm bill that provides the appropriate risk management tools that will work for farmers and ranchers throughout the country. When considering farm programs, we must be cognizant that our agricultural producers are competing with other nations around the world. Other nations subsidize their farmers, so we must be careful not to unilaterally change our policies in a way that would disadvantage agriculture here in our country. In addition, we want to make sure that we don't ever find ourselves in a circumstance where we depend on foreign nations for our food the way we do with energy. Ultimately, it is in everyone's interest to achieve a level playing field on which American farmers can compete.

## **Corn-based Ethanol/Renewable Energy**

An affordable, reliable supply of energy is crucial to America's economic future. I have a vision for an America that is an energy superpower – rapidly increasing our own production and partnering with our allies, Canada and Mexico, to achieve energy independence on this continent by 2020. Taking full advantage of our energy resources will create millions of jobs, but this revolution in U.S. energy production will not just expand economic opportunity within the energy industry. Upstream businesses that supply the industry will experience a surge in demand, and perhaps the greatest benefit will occur downstream as agricultural businesses and manufacturers gain access to a more affordable and reliable supply of energy and feedstock. America's energy resources can be a long-term competitive advantage for American agriculture, and their development is key to the success of the industry.

Domestically produced biofuels will play an important role in enabling us to achieve energy independence. In order to support increased market penetration and competition among energy sources, I am in favor of maintaining the Renewable Fuel Standard. I also support eliminating regulatory barriers to a diversification of the electrical grid, fuel system, and vehicle fleet. My policies broadly aim to ensure that all of our energy industries can sustainably become competitive, innovative, and efficient.

## **Taxes**

We must pass fundamental tax reform that lowers tax rates, broadens the base, achieves revenue neutrality, and maintains the progressivity of the tax code. This will help jumpstart an economic recovery that will help create 12 million jobs in my first term in office. Regarding the estate tax and capital gains taxes, we must work to help all working families, including farmers and ranchers, keep more of what they earn. As president, I will eliminate the estate tax, helping keep family farms and ranches intact when businesses pass on from one generation to the next. I will also maintain the current 15% capital gains rate for wealthier Americans, while totally eliminating capital gains, dividend, and interest taxes for those who earn less than \$200,000 per year. This will help middle-class families save tax free for long-term costs like college tuition and retirement, and to generally enjoy the freedom that accompanies financial security.

deployment of renewable fuels. We are increasing the level of ethanol that can be blended into gasoline and a higher renewable fuel standard is supporting 39,000 jobs and ensuring the continued growth of this industry.

We can also help farmers and ranchers who invest in renewable energy – like wind and solar – and energy efficiency improvement projects. Especially during a drought like we've seen this summer, these projects can provide additional income security to farmers across the country. So I've set a goal of generating 80 percent of electricity from clean sources by 2035 and cutting our nation's imports of foreign oil in half by 2020. We've already made great progress – doubling our electricity from sources like wind and solar and supporting nearly a quarter million jobs in the clean energy economy. I am also urging Congress to extend the production tax credit and renew tax credits for advanced energy manufacturing to support the growing clean energy economy. It'll help create jobs in states like Iowa and Colorado while supporting American businesses and innovation. Mitt Romney would roll back investments in clean energy, and would allow tax credits for wind energy to expire, eliminating 37,000 jobs across the country.

### **Taxes**

I have put forward a balanced plan for deficit reduction that continues tax cuts for the middle-class, while asking millionaires and billionaires to pay their share. First, we must extend the middle class tax cuts for the 98 percent of Americans making less than \$250,000 for another year. In fact, my proposal extends tax cuts for 97 percent of all small business owners in America. But at the same time, if we are going to reduce the deficit without sacrificing investments in our future like education, clean energy, and manufacturing, we can't afford to continue tax breaks for the wealthiest. These policies were unfair and unaffordable when they were passed, and they remain so today. Governor Romney would take the opposite approach – his tax plan would require an average tax increase of \$2,000 on middle class families with kids, to pay for a new round of tax cuts for multi-millionaires, who would get an average break of \$250,000.

And I support the return of the estate tax exemption and rates to 2009 levels. At this level, only 60 small farm and business estates in the entire country would owe any estate tax in 2013. This would protect the family farm from being sold to pay taxes, while ensuring that folks like Warren Buffett, Bill Gates, or the Koch Brothers do not avoid the tax on their billion dollar estates.

### **Infrastructure**

I know that America's transportation infrastructure is in need of attention. And upgrading it is a necessary step in creating an economy built to last. American's need to know that they can rely on our network of ground, air, and water infrastructure to get themselves and their products from point A to point B. It's that simple.

That's why earlier this summer, I signed a transportation bill that will put thousands of construction workers to work and supports our commitment to restoring America's infrastructure. It provides states and communities with two years of steady funding to build needed roads, bridges, and transit systems. This is on top of my administration's efforts to improve safety across all forms of transportation and to make progress on transportation alternatives as we have done during the last three years.

I am making these historic upgrades while eliminating duplicative and outdated programs and saving taxpayers' hard-earned money. Last month, we freed up nearly half a billion dollars in unspent transportation funding that accumulated over the last decade and we are giving it right back to the states, so that they can spend it on the infrastructure projects they need most.

I am also strengthening rural water, sewer, and broadband infrastructure to make rural businesses more competitive. My administration has expanded broadband access to nearly 7 million rural Americans, including 364,000 rural businesses. We are closing the gaps in mobile coverage, supporting accelerated 3G and 4G access across rural America. And we are investing in bridges, critical roads and rail in rural areas.

Under the Romney-Ryan plan, these programs would be cut by nearly 20 percent, leaving more than hundreds of thousands of families without necessary improvements to their water facilities, and hundreds of rural

### **Infrastructure**

A major part of the great success that American agriculture has experienced is because of the dynamic transportation system that has been developed over the last 100 years. This transportation system of barges, railroads, and trucks – supported by our nation's major rivers and the Great Lakes – has and will continue to provide a significant opportunity for U. S. agriculture to feed a growing U.S. and world population. The net result has been the creation of millions of U.S. jobs and spurred economic growth here and around the world. And yet for future competitiveness of U.S. agriculture to remain intact, increased investment is needed to update our rural transportation system – locks, dams, and ports – so that we may remain the world's leader in agricultural exports. A Romney Administration will support much needed investment in critical infrastructure to help keep our U.S. agriculture transportation system the most efficient in the world.

### **Trade**

As the United States is the largest agricultural exporter in the world, I understand that agricultural trade is incredibly important to our economy and to job creation in our country. A thriving agriculture sector is a key to getting our economy going again. We must continue to encourage this sector to grow, not stifle its success with ineffective trade policies that linger in bureaucracy and do not advance our economic interests. As president, I will work to promote multilateral trade agreements and reverse the course of the Obama Administration, which has only enacted three trade agreements – all initiated in the Bush Administration. As president, I will work with Congress to gain Trade Promotion Authority in order to facilitate the negotiation and completion of trade agreements. I will also stress that the World Trade Organization should reassert itself in order to resolve and restrict non-science-based trade restrictions prohibited by the overriding agreements, and I will value the important roles of the USDA and USTR as they provide focused attention and resources important to agricultural trade issues.

### **Environmental Regulation**

America's farmers provide the bounty that not only sustains us here at home, but also brings nutrition and health to countless others around the world. Farmers are true conservationists – every day of the year. Washington has forgotten that fact by seeking to impose overzealous federal regulation of workers, water, fertilizer, and even dust – ignoring the practical realities and common sense of what it takes to produce and care for our natural resources. A Romney Administration will take a balanced approach to environmental policy, and modernize our environmental laws to achieve our goals in more innovative and cost-effective ways, respecting and protecting our agricultural communities.

### **Why should farmers and ranchers vote for you?**

As the breadth of your questions indicate here, American agriculture needs relief from the Obama Administration's crushing onslaught of unnecessary regulations; a commonsense energy policy that develops our resources right here at home; a renewed focus on opening new markets; and a pro-growth tax policy that encourages investment and recognizes that death should not be a taxable event. On day one of my administration, farmers and ranchers would have something they've lacked over the past several years – an advocate.

Farmers and ranchers are the backbone of America and play a critical role in ensuring Americans across the country have access to safe and affordable food. The fruit of your labor nourishes the world, and I admire your hard work in harvesting our country's bountiful resources. I also admire our farmers and ranchers for the critical role you play in the health of our economy, employing millions of Americans.

I'm honored to have interacted with so many farmers and ranchers during this campaign, and I'm grateful to have them supporting our efforts to turn around the economy and strengthen the middle class. If you haven't yet signed-up to help with the campaign or just want to learn more, please visit my website at [www.mittromney.com](http://www.mittromney.com) or read my white paper that lays out my vision for a vibrant rural America. Much is held in the balance of this election for all Americans, but particularly for farmers, ranchers, and rural communities; and I hope I can count on your vote this November 6th.

communities without essential facilities including hospitals, schools, libraries, fire protection, and child and adult day care.

My administration will continue to do everything we can to put Americans back to work. We're not going to let politics stand between good jobs and repairing our roads and bridges.

**Trade**

I believe that America can compete and win in the global marketplace. Ninety-five percent of the world's consumers live outside of our borders – and I want to see them buying products with three proud words “Made In America” stamped on them. That's why I set the ambitious goal of doubling our exports by 2015, a goal that we are on track to meet.

The United States currently has a trade surplus in agriculture of more than \$42 billion. This is something to be proud of, and is an area that we need to continue to expand. That is why I signed free trade agreements with South Korea, Colombia and Panama, marking the biggest step forward in US trade liberalization in a decade and supporting tens of thousands of jobs. At the same time, it is absolutely essential that American workers compete on a fair playing field – that's why I didn't sign those trade deals until I was satisfied that our workers were protected. In 2011, American farm income reached the highest point since 1974, with a record number of agricultural exports and a record agriculture trade surplus.

Our Trans-Pacific Partnership will open up new markets that total 40 percent of global trade to more U.S. goods. I'll work to ensure that the Export-Import bank provides a level playing field for American exporters by making sure the most favorable financing is available to buy American products. And I'll continue my efforts to stand up for American workers and businesses in the global marketplace. And I am working to expand local and regional food markets, a multi-billion dollar industry. We've increased the number of farmers markets by 53 percent since 2008. And my Administration has helped farmers build nearly 4,500 hoop houses to extend the growing season, and funded new regional storage and kitchen infrastructure to help producers serve larger institutional customers like schools and hospitals. Through these policies, we are expanding markets for American goods abroad and at home.

**Environmental Regulation**

Farmers want to work their land; they don't want to spend days upon days on paperwork. With smart, sustainable policies, we can continue to grow our agricultural economy today and protect our environment for ourselves and our children. That's why my administration has worked with farmers to identify and reduce regulatory burdens. For example, in return for voluntarily making habitat improvements on their lands, landowners now have certainty that they will be able to continue managing their lands without taking additional conservation action. This helps reduce the burden on landowners while ensuring the protection of surrounding lands and species.

Even more broadly, I have always been committed to looking at existing rules on the books, and streamline, fix and eliminate those that aren't working. Last year, I issued an Executive Order calling for a government-wide review of regulations to reduce costs, eliminate unnecessary burdens, and get rid of unnecessary paperwork requirements that waste time and money. In response, dozens of government agencies produced final plans, including more than 500 proposals for reducing regulatory burdens. These changes are already improving conditions for consumers and businesses. Over the next five years, more than \$10 billion in savings are anticipated from just a small fraction of the initiatives now underway.

Now there is a lot of misinformation out there about changes to environmental standards. Let me be clear that all existing regulatory exemptions for agricultural discharges and waters are going to stay in place in the future. I know that farmers are ultimately the best stewards of our lands and I am committed to working together to find innovative solutions that ensure farmers are competitive in the global market.



**For more information, please visit  
[www.ncga.com/decision2012](http://www.ncga.com/decision2012)**

**For more information on Pres. Obama, visit his website at:  
[www.barackobama.com](http://www.barackobama.com)**

**For information on Pres. Obama's specific rural positions,  
visit his website at:  
[www.barackobama.com/rural-issues](http://www.barackobama.com/rural-issues)**

**For more information on Gov. Romney, visit his website at:  
[www.mittromney.com](http://www.mittromney.com)**

**For information on Gov. Romney's specific rural positions,  
visit his website at:  
<http://www.mittromney.com/blog/agricultural-prosperity-mitt-romneys-vision-vibrant-rural-america>**



The National Corn Growers Association (NCGA) is a national organization founded in 1957, the National Corn Growers Association represents approximately 38,000 dues-paying corn growers and the interests of more than 300,000 farmers who contribute through corn checkoff programs in their states. NCGA and its 48 affiliated state associations and checkoff organizations work together to help protect and advance corn growers' interests.

Our mission is “To create and increase opportunities for corn growers.”

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