



## A Farmer's Bill of Rights for Missourians

*Taking On Monopolies and Foreign Corporations to Renew Family Farmers' Right to Fair & Open Markets, Right to Local Control of Land, and Right to Rural Opportunity*

Ahead of the 2018 elections, the Missouri Democratic Party is unveiling its Farmer's Bill of Rights. It's comprised of three values that are designed to restore competition and protect the rights of Missouri's family farmers. Missouri Democrats are renewing these guiding values to directly counter the big corporations and monopolies that have been using Republican officeholders as a tool to export wealth from rural communities, ship it off to foreign countries, and line their own pockets.

### **The Missouri Democratic Party's Farmer's Bill of Rights includes:**

**Right to Fair and Open Markets:** Missouri's family farmers have a right to compete in fair and open markets. Today, the playing field is simply not level -- and it's been getting worse. Take for example that two decades ago there were over 600 individual seed companies. Today, there are just 6 giant companies -- including some pursuing mergers -- that control the markets<sup>1</sup>. That concentration of power is driving Missouri's farmers into debt by making it more and more expensive for Missourians to grow crops like corn and soybeans, while also causing farmers to receive less and less money in return when they sell them<sup>2</sup>. Missouri needs to take bold steps to reverse this damaging course and start prioritizing the economic interests of Missouri's family farms.

**Right to Local Control of Land:** Missouri's local communities have the right to protect their own land from big corporations and foreign businesses. Republican politicians in Jefferson City have been using their offices to favor farming monopolies and big corporations -- instead of protecting family farms and their surrounding environments. In recent years, Missouri even lifted a ban on foreign farm owners<sup>3</sup>, allowing foreign entities from countries -- including China -- to purchase farmland throughout the state. The St. Louis Post-Dispatch even warned that "northern Missouri could become a province of China." That's unacceptable.

**Right to Rural Opportunity:** Missouri's farmers have the right to basic services that allow them to raise their kids in rural Missouri without having to worry about access to healthcare, good public schools, and economic opportunity. By undermining family farms, the concentration of wealth and power in monopolies and big corporations has also led to the closure of mom-and-pop shops and helped drive away younger Missourians in search jobs and better economic opportunity. We need to reverse the decline of main streets all across Missouri and fight for the right to rural opportunity.

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<sup>1</sup> ["Want to rescue rural America? Bust monopolies." Washington Post, 4/20/17.](#)

<sup>2</sup> ["Cheaper to buy than to grow." Daily Yonder, 1/3/17.](#)

<sup>3</sup> ["Missouri moves to lift ban on foreign farm owners." AP, 6/18/13.](#)



## **Policy Priorities for Missouri Democratic Party's Farmer's Bill of Rights:**

**Stopping Foreign Ownership of Farms:** Missouri should restore the initial language in the 1978 law on foreign ownership of farmland that detailed “no foreign entity could own farmland in Missouri.”<sup>4</sup> This policy has received bipartisan support<sup>5</sup>. Missouri should also increase transparency by requiring companies or entities to report if they have over 20% foreign ownership.

**Improving Country-of-Origin Labeling:** We need strengthened country-of-origin labeling<sup>6</sup>. Similar to a bill that was filed in the state of Colorado, Missouri should require retailers selling beef and pork to place placards that clearly state where the product is from<sup>7</sup>.

**Transparency for Contract Growers:** Missouri can help tilt the balance back in favor of family farmers by increasing transparency for contract growers for pigs and chicken. As it stands, many unfair contracts from monopolies force Missouri farmers “deeply into debt to keep up with dictated standards...and pit them against other farmers in the community.”<sup>8</sup> Contracts should be transparent and filed in the public record so Missouri’s farmers can guarantee they’re not getting ripped off by big corporations. The State of Iowa has passed this into law<sup>9</sup>.

**Protect Local Regulation of CAFOs:** The Republican establishment in Jefferson City needs to stop passing bad bills<sup>10</sup> that attempt to help big corporations by taking away local counties’ ability to regulate Concentration Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs). Local communities should have the right to protect themselves from the negative health and environmental impacts that CAFOs can have on family farms<sup>11</sup>.

**End Corporate Stacking of the Clean Water Commission:** Missouri needs to reverse legislation that Republicans passed in 2016<sup>12</sup> that stacked the Clean Water Commission in favor of big corporations. Since the commission has “the ability to approve or deny construction permits for facilities that have the potential to damage Missouri waterways,”<sup>13</sup> this move unfairly shifted control away from local farming communities, making it more difficult to hold big corporations accountable for pollution and bad practices that harm family farmers.

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<sup>4</sup> [“Is Missouri's agricultural law being rewritten in Hong Kong?” St. Louis Post-Dispatch, 5/24/15.](#)

<sup>5</sup> [“House Bill 149,” Representative Hurst.](#)

<sup>6</sup> [“Factsheet: Country-of-origin labeling,” National Farmers Union.](#)

<sup>7</sup> [“House Bill 17-1234,” First Regular Session, Seventy-First General Assembly, State of Colorado.](#)

<sup>8</sup> [“Trump Sides with Big Agriculture over Family Farmers,” The Nation, 10/18/17.](#)

<sup>9</sup> [“Chapter 202, Commodity Production Contracts,” Iowa Code, 2017.](#)

<sup>10</sup> [“House Bill No. 113,” Representative McGaugh.](#)

<sup>11</sup> [“Battle over ‘local control’ of farms brews in Callaway County,” Columbia Missourian, 6/5/17.](#)

<sup>12</sup> [“Changes to Missouri Clean Water Commission Wins Legislative Approval,” Kansas City Star, 9/14/16.](#)

<sup>13</sup> [“Move to remake Missouri's water commission draws ire and concern,” St. Louis Post-Dispatch, 9/16/16.](#)