Agriculture Update Consensus Study Pages
with consensus questions keyed to research papers

There are 11 categories of consensus questions with sub-parts underneath. To help you find information on the issues more easily, we have added links to related LWVUS study papers. It is suggested that you review 1 question at a time, then click on the links and read the background information. Consider what you now understand and what more you need to make a decision. Jot down your thoughts and questions to bring with you to a Unit meeting. At the Unit meeting we will discuss each question and try to reach consensus (Yes, No, or No Consensus).

Please Note: Each question provides an opportunity to comment. Each comment section has a 250 word limit. Please include the letter(s) from each question that is relevant to the comment(s). For example: In question 1, if you wanted to make a comments about Disaster assistance and crop insurance, you would include the letter 'b' before your comments on Disaster assistance and 'c' before your comments on crop insurance.
Comments:
a: Your comments on disaster assistance would go here.
b: Your comments on crop insurance would go here.

Economic Health of the Agricultural Sector

To answer the first four questions members should be familiar with the pros and cons of current and past agricultural subsidy programs which are described briefly in United States Department of Agriculture on the USDA, in Overview of Agricultural Subsidy which describes different types of agricultural subsidies, and in Overview of Crop Insurance which describes the crop insurance program. Some of the areas of current or potential government support listed in the questions are not covered or only briefly mentioned in the overview materials (e.g., dairy program, livestock program, specialty crops, and best management practices). Members are asked to consider these questions from the perspective of their local and state agricultural interests and knowledge they have obtained from farmers in their area. For cases where there is some relevant discussion for one of the sub-question topics, we have noted the resource paper and section of relevance below.

1. *Should government financial support for agriculture be directed to:*	Yes	No	No Consensus
a) Subsidized agricultural credit (loans) Overview of Agricultural Subsidy page 6 has link to recommended reading that describes 10 agricultural loan programs.			
b) Disaster assistance Overview of Agricultural Subsidy page 3			
c) Crop insurance Overview of Crop Insurance			
d) Farms that supply local and regional markets Overview of Farm Management, pages 1-2 on Farm Characteristics and Consolidation, page 4 on Vertical Integration, and pages 6-7 on Small Farms, Urban Farms, and Local Food Systems; Overview of Animal Management, page 3 on AFO/local farm issues and pages 4-5 on issues of vertical integrations and consolidation.			

e) Subsidized implementation of best management practices 1. Overview of Soil Management, page 2 on Incentives for good soil management; 2. Overview of Water Management, several mentions of incentives to encourage good water management practices throughout the document; 3. Overview of Farm Management, page 5 on Influence of Government Policies provides an illustration of negative incentives for BMP			
f) Commodity crop programs, e.g., corn, soybeans, sugar, cotton, wheat 1. Overview of Animal Management, page 5 illustrates how commodity crop subsidies affect animal production choices; 2. United States Department of Agriculture, page 3 mentions current issues concerning commodity crop subsidies; 3. Overview of Agricultural Subsidy, pages 1-3 on descriptions of different types of current subsidies and many of the recommended readings			
g) Commodity livestock program Not mentioned specifically in any document but indirect subsidies affecting AFO production decisions are mentioned in Overview of Animal Management, page 5			
h) Commodity dairy program Not specifically mentioned in any document but a brief description of current price support program for milk producers is available at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Milk_Income_Loss_Contract_Payments			
i) Specialty crops, e.g. fruits, vegetables, nuts, etc. Not specifically mentioned in terms of support programs but Overview of Farm Management, pages 1-2 on Farm Characteristics and page 5 on Influence of Government Policies is of some relevance			
j) Other production methods, e.g. organic, hydroponic, urban, etc. farms Not specifically mentioned in terms of government support but Overview of Farm Management, page 5 describes Organic Agriculture, and page 6 mentions a variety of other production techniques used by Small Farms/Urban Farms/Local Food Systems			
Comments for discussion:			

2. *What changes should government make regarding direct payment programs to farm operators?* Note: Farm operators can be anything between family farms to huge corporations. All of the Overview of Agricultural Subsidy paper should be read.	Yes	No	No Consensus
a) *Eliminate* direct payments to farm operators			
b) *Update* the rules for direct payments to farm operators to support sustainability Definition: A sustainable agriculture must be ecologically sound, economically viable, and socially responsible.			
c) *Broaden* the types of farms that are eligible			
d) *Broaden* the types of crops that are eligible Note: Mainly now only commodity crops – not fruits and vegetables.			
e) Effectively *enforce* existing rules			
Comments for discussion:			

3. *What changes to current crop insurance programs should government make?* All of the Overview of Crop Insurance should be read.	Yes	No	No Consensus
a) Extend to more types of crops			
b) Link to the use of conservation practices			
c) Limit insurance for the cultivation of marginal and environmentally sensitive land			
d) Cap amount of premium subsidy to a single farm operator (see note in question 2)			
Comments for discussion:			

4. Should government act on any of the following? All of the Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO), Antitrust Enforcement Agencies and Legislation, Overview of Farm Management papers should be read. Overview of Animal Management – *for consideration of local butchering*	Yes	No	No Consensus
a) Revise anti-trust legislation to ensure competitive agricultural markets			
b) Enforce anti-trust laws as they relate to agriculture			
c) Promote alternative marketing systems, including regional hub markets, farmer cooperatives, farm markets, etc.			
Comments for discussion:			

Animal Management

We recommend that you read the entire Overview of Animal Management paper for helpful background for questions 5 and 6.

Question 5:

Look in particular at the section on Consolidation (pp. 1-5)
EPA Regulation of CAFOs (p. 6)
Right to Farm Laws (p. 7)
Animal Health and Welfare (p. 7)
Aquaculture (pp. 11-12)

Question 6:

Read Consolidation (pp. 1-5)
Indirect and Direct Subsidy of Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (p. 5)
EPA Regulation of CAFOs (p. 6)
Right to Farm Laws, (p. 7)
Aquaculture (pp. 11-12)
Climate Change (p. 13)

See also Overview of Soil Management paper, section on Nutrient Management, page 2

5. Which of the following approaches to animal management should government achieve? http://www.lwv.org/content/overview-animal-management	Yes	No	No Consensus
a) Transparently collect and disclose data about regulated animal feeding operations (AFOs) or aquaculture operations and about the health of animals in such regulated operations			

b) Apply and enforce existing clean air and clean water regulations to animal or seafood management facilities			
Comments for discussion:			

6. Which of the following approaches to animal waste management should government require or bring about?	Yes	No	No Consensus
a) Treat animal waste with environmentally sound technologies for all regulated AFOs			
b) Prioritize federal funds to mitigate existing environmental challenges (such as Environmental Quality Incentives Program, cost share, loans, etc.) rather than construction of new facilities			
Comments for discussion:			

Research and Development

Research and development (R&D) uses science and engineering to gain a basic understanding of processes and structures of organisms, to create new products or processes for agriculture, to determine health and safety of a product, to determine the environmental impact of a product or process, to develop conservation methods, and to improve efficiency, among other things. R&D utilizes scientific methods and statistical testing to achieve valid repeatable results.

Private corporations, universities, consulting organizations and laboratories, and government agencies perform agricultural R&D. Agricultural research by public universities began in 1862 when the Morrill Act established land grant universities across the United States; much of the basic research on agriculture was developed through these universities. Private R&D is generally more applied than basic and is motivated by the desire to produce a profitable product. Government agencies review this private research when regulatory approval for a product or process is required. And many government agencies conduct their own research.

To learn more about required research and development for agricultural *products and processes*, we recommend you review the study papers addressing

- Overview of Key Agencies Supporting and Regulating Food and Agriculture
- Food and Drug Administration (FDA)
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
- United States Department of Agriculture
- USDA's Role in American Nutrition

For an *overview* of public and private R&D funding, see Overview of Agricultural Subsidy.

Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) discussion of the Bayh-Dole Act is particularly relevant as a driver of agricultural *R&D policy*.

Review the papers Overview of Plant Breeding, Seed Industry, and Biodiversity, Genetic Engineering and Genetically Modified Organisms in the Food System, Overview of Nanotechnology and Other Technologies, and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and National Institutes of Health for information on *specific types of R&D*.

The papers on Overview of Farm Management, Overview of Pesticide Management, Overview of Water Management, Overview of Animal Management and Overview of Soil Management provide links to R&D on *agricultural processes.*

In evaluating the materials and suggested references and links, please consider the sources. Blogs, newspaper articles, and information pieces from sources with an identified bias may not necessary reflect all information on the topic and should be treated accordingly. The validity of scientific information increases as hypotheses are repeatedly tested. Thus a *single* paper reporting a research result should not be considered as the final truth.

7. Which of the following approaches to research and development (R&D) should government fund or accomplish? Note: For the purpose of these questions and some questions below, **"developed using any new technology"** or **"new technologies"** refer to any of many scientific processes for developing new crops or animals with genetic engineering, nanotechnology or other new techniques, which are not the traditional breeding or hybridization techniques.	Yes	No	No Consensus
a) Basic research			
b) Independent third-party (such as an academic institution) risk assessment of products *developed using any new technology*			
c) Research to assess the impacts of *new technologies* on human health and the environment, prior to their widespread adoption			
d) Research that advances the continuation of diversified and sustainable agricultural systems			
e) Seed banking, research, and other means that promote and preserve genetic diversity			
f) Both transparency in the reporting of research studies related to approval of new products **and** respect for intellectual property rights of private enterprises engaged in research			
g) Research on long-term effects of new crops, products and processes			

h) Development of new practices and technologies to promote conservation for all types of farms			
Comments for discussion:			

Food Safety

The United States has a complex food system. Risks to food safety can occur during the development of new plant and animal hybrids, during the growing of foods, during the harvest and processing of foods and during shipment and storage. Additional risk may accompany imported foods. Risk includes contamination with chemicals used in production, contamination with bacteria, fungi or viruses from multiple sources, nutrient loss due to processing or production techniques, introduction of allergens or other cross contamination.

To increase food safety, federal agencies have developed a variety of standards, and guidelines. Testing to meet these standards is performed by private groups and governmental agencies. To learn more about safety requirements we recommend you review the paper on Overview of Key Agencies Supporting and Regulating Food and Agriculture. Learn more about the role of the USDA United States Department of Agriculture, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and National Institutes of Health and the Interaction of Federal Agencies with Food Safety Missions. Please note that in some instances testing and reporting is mandatory and in other instances guidelines are provided with the onus placed on the producer to meet standards. For specific examples of requirements and approaches read the papers on Genetic Engineering and Genetically Modified Organisms in the Food System, Overview of Nanotechnology and Other Technologies, Overview of Pesticide Management and Overview of Animal Management.

Sections of the above papers that are directly relevant to each of the Food Safety consensus questions are listed below, with page references and section names.

8. Which of the following approaches to food safety should government perform or fund?	Yes	No	No Consensus
a) Clarify and enforce pre-market testing requirements for new foods and food additives *developed using any new technology* (see note below question 7) 8(a) to 8(c) Genetic Engineering and Genetically Modified Organisms in the Food System, pages 2-3 (Ht and Bt crops) and pages 4-6 (Regulatory Framework for GE Crops) Overview of Nanotechnology and Other Technologies, pages 3-4 (Safety and Regulation of Nanotechnology) Food Labeling: FDA and USDA, page 4 (Bioengineered Foods) and page 9 (Future of Food Labeling)			

b) Require developers to monitor all food products *developed using any new technology* after releasing to the market			
c) Withdraw marketing approval if products are shown to be unsafe			
d) Require post-market monitoring of approved pharmaceutical applications in animal production for human health and environmental impacts 8(d) & 8(f) Overview of Animal Management, pages 8-10 (Pharmaceuticals in Animal Feed) Genetic Engineering and Genetically Modified Organisms in the Food System, pages 7-8 (GE Animals)			
e) Require developers of new products to provide data and other materials to independent third-parties (such as academic institutions) for pre- and post-market safety assessment as appropriate 8(e) and 8(g) Genetic Engineering and Genetically Modified Organisms in the Food System, page 5 (Deregulation paragraphs) Overview of Agricultural Subsidy, pages 4-5 (Indirect Agricultural Subsidies for Research and Development)			
f) Limit use of antibiotics in animal production to treat and control disease			
g) Fund independent third-party (such as academic institutions) risk assessment of long-term and multiple exposures from foods on human health and the environment			
h) Promote crop management practices that decrease dependency on added chemicals (pesticides, herbicides, and synthetic fertilizers) 8(h) Overview of Farm Management, pages 4-6 (Sustainable Agriculture and Organic Agriculture) United States Department of Agriculture, pages 3-4 (Current Issues) Overview of Agricultural Subsidy, entire document provides insights on incentives provided by current programs			
i) Fund, train and add personnel for assessment and compliance functions of regulatory agencies 8(i) Interaction of Federal Agencies with Food Safety Missions, page 4 (Current Issues) United States Department of Agriculture, pages 2-3 (Farm Bill and Budget Authorizations)			

Food Labeling: FDA and USDA, page 2 (FDA Funding Concern) Food and Drug Administration (FDA), page 3 (Federal and State Appropriations)			
Comments for discussion:			

Food Labeling

9. How sufficient are the following regarding current food labeling? We recommend you read all of USDA's Role in American Nutrition and Food Labeling: FDA and USDA.	Insufficient	Sufficient	Too much	No Consensus
a) Nutrition Facts on food labels				
b) Nutrition Facts on food labels as a means of consumer education				
c) Common allergen labeling				
d) Health and ingredient claims that consumers can understand				
Comments for discussion:				

10. Which of the following should government achieve regarding marketing and ingredient claims on food labels? We recommend you read all on Food Labeling: FDA and USDA.	Yes	No	No Consensus
a) Define (and approve for use) health and safety marketing terms (e.g. immunity support, humane, pasture-raised, natural, etc.)			
b) Regulate the use of images or other sensory advertising			
c) Require that ingredient marketing claims accurately represent what is in the required ingredient list			
Comments for discussion:			

11. *Recognizing that each food developed using any new technology can be unique, and assuming that required food labeling should be useful to consumers, should the following generalized information relating to how products or components are developed be presented on food labels?*
See note below question 7. All these questions also assume some percentage threshold of new technology ingredients, such as the 0.9% used in the European Union.
We recommend you read all of Food Labeling: FDA and USDA, *Genetic Engineering and Genetically Modified Organisms in the Food System* and *Overview of Nanotechnology and Other Technologies*.

	Not Recommended	Voluntary	Mandatory	No consensus
a) Contains ingredients developed using any new technology stating which technologies are involved				
b) Does **not** contain ingredients developed using any new technology				
c) If meat, fish, eggs, or dairy products are from animals that have consumed feed developed using any new technology stating which technologies are involved				

Comments for discussion:

ALL of the LWVUS research papers, including a glossary of terms, and acronyms can be found on the LWVUS Agriculture Update Site. They include:

Leaders' Guide for the Agriculture Update Consensus
Overview of Key Agencies Supporting and Regulating Food and Agriculture
United States Department of Agriculture
USDA's Role in American Nutrition
Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
Food and Drug Administration (FDA)
Food Labeling: FDA and USDA
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and National Institutes of Health
Interaction of Federal Agencies with Food Safety Missions
Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO)
Antitrust Enforcement Agencies and Legislation
Introduction to Agriculture Technology
Overview of Farm Management
Overview of Plant Breeding, Seed Industry, and Biodiversity
Genetic Engineering and Genetically Modified Organisms in the Food System
Overview of Pesticide Management
Overview of Soil Management
Overview of Water Management
Overview of Animal Management
Overview of Nanotechnology and Other Technologies
Overview of Agricultural Subsidy
Overview of Crop Insurance
Agriculture Update Acronyms
Agriculture Update Glossary