



THE GARDEN CLUB OF AMERICA POSITION PAPER

The Garden Club of America supports independent, academic, peer-reviewed scientific research as the basis for formulation of responsible public policy and legislation, as well as appropriate funding to ensure quality results.

THE GCA SUPPORTS SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE, SEED DIVERSITY, AND FOOD SECURITY

Federal agricultural policy affects the safety and security of our nation's food supply both now and far into the future. As more than forty percent of land in the U.S. is farmed, agricultural policy has a significant impact on many issues of concern to The Garden Club of America: water quality, air quality, native plants, invasive species, and energy use.

The GCA encourages agricultural policies that support:

Sustainable agriculture, including:

- Conservation of healthy soil on farms and ranches by reducing the planting of marginal lands and the overuse of fertilizers and pesticides that kill soil microorganisms.
- A strong and well-funded conservation title in the Farm Bill, including programs such as the Conservation Reserve Program, Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program, and Wetlands Reserve Program, which title is the largest source of federal funding for conservation on private lands in our country.

Seed diversity, healthy food, food safety, and food security, including:

- Protection of worldwide seed diversity. Further study of genetically modified organisms (GMO) crops to determine safety. Expansion of food labeling laws to include foods that contain genetically engineered ingredients.
- Support for programs for farmers in increasing the production of healthy foods such as fruits and vegetables (referred to as "specialty crops" in the farm bill), and continued advocacy for locally grown food and Farm-to-School initiatives.
- Encouraging minimal use of pesticides and herbicides on farm crops.
- Recognizing the importance of pollinators and encouraging them by increasing and preserving natural habitat and supporting efforts to work with pesticide manufacturers, agricultural interests and beekeepers to determine best management practices for pollinator health.
- Discouraging the overuse of hormones and antibiotics in farm animals.
- Supporting the regulatory authority of the Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Department of Agriculture to achieve these ends.

The Garden Club of America positions on related issues:

1. Protect clean water by using riparian areas to prevent nitrate runoff and loss of topsoil and to encourage efficient irrigation practices.
2. Preserve clean air and water by minimizing use of fossil fuels for cultivation, harvest, and transportation.
3. Support policies that aid climate change adaptation, including establishment of seed banks and establishment of wildlife corridors.
4. Protect native plant species by establishing programs to prevent introduction of invasive species and to eradicate existing ones.
5. Encourage protection of wildlife habitat and native ecosystems, including wetlands, grasslands, hedgerows, forests, and riparian systems. Support conservation easements and tax incentives for this purpose.

The purpose of The Garden Club of America is to stimulate the knowledge and love of gardening, to share the advantages of association by means of educational meetings, conferences, correspondence and publications, and to restore, improve and protect the quality of the environment through educational programs and action in the fields of conservation and civic improvement.