



MARYLAND FARM BUREAU®

POLICY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM





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POLICY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

WHAT IS POLICY?

Policy is a public position statement(s) reflecting the opinions/desires of the members. Policy is the basis for all advocacy and problem solving conducted by the Maryland Farm Bureau staff and Farm Bureau members on any issue regarding agriculture or other matters. They provide the basis for unity of purpose and action by the organization, allowing us to speak with one voice.



WHAT IS POLICY DEVELOPMENT?

Policy development (PD) is the process where farmers come together through an organized, on-going program to surface and discuss issues, reach conclusions, and recommend resolutions to become Farm Bureau policies. It is the tool that gives each farmer a voice on the issues that affect the business of farming. Through PD, members determine the future direction that Farm Bureau should take on issues that are local, state, and national in scope. Policy is decided by a majority farmer vote on resolutions and is grassroots democracy in action.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Policy is the foundation of the Maryland Farm Bureau organization. Policy development is the process that builds consensus within members of the organization and assures Farm Bureau's solid standing with state and national legislators as well as local leaders. It guides the activities of the county, state, and national Farm Bureaus and provides direction to leadership and staff.

POLICY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE



PURPOSE

The purpose of the county policy development committee is to involve each regular/voting member in the process of developing policy resolutions for the county, state, and national organization.

RESPONSIBILITIES

- Attend all committee meetings
- Plan a county policy development program that will provide opportunity for all members to participate
- Establish a goal for member participation
- Select number and locations of meetings to be held in the county
- Provide for meeting notice to all members
- Furnish a copy of the policy development plan to all people involved
- Act as chairperson for area meetings
- Provide background materials on research topics and other subjects if requested
- Provide copies of resolutions for county annual meeting (publish proposed resolutions in the newsletter prior to the county annual meeting and publish approved policies in the newsletter following the county annual meeting)

- Set deadline for resolutions to be returned to the county policy development committee
- Encourage county committees to make recommendations to the PD committee.

BASIC REQUIREMENTS

- Regular/voting member of Farm Bureau
- Willing to learn the policy development program
- Committee should be diverse and inclusive involving members from different geographic areas, various commodity and production practices, various farm sizes and scopes, ages, gender, race, etc.

TRAINING

Ideally, all policy development committee members should be briefed on their responsibilities ahead of time by the policy development committee chair.

RESOURCES

MDFB Government Relations Staff
MDFB Regional Directors
MDFB Field Staff



SAMPLE AGENDA

PLACE: _____ DATE: _____ TIME: _____

I. Call to Order

II. Discuss Purpose of the Policy Development Committee (distribute pg. 2)

- a. Engage regular/voting members in the process
- b. Surface issues that need to be resolved
- c. Help members consider all possible solutions and decide on best possible solution
- d. Help members turn issues into well-constructed policy resolutions

III. What did our county do last year for policy development?

- a. Did it work? Why or why not?
- b. Approximately how many members did we engage? Was it enough to be relevant as an organization?

IV. Establish a goal number of members to engage in PD this year _____

V. How do we want to conduct policy development this year?

- a. Publish newsletter article? Who will do it? _____
- b. Host county Issues Forum? Who will plan it? _____
- c. Execute a survey? Who will plan it? _____
 1. Online, postcard, telephone, etc.?
- d. Host area discussion meetings? Who will plan them? _____
- e. How will we use Issues of Concern? _____

VI. Budget Needs

- a. Will financial expenditures be incurred? How much? Does it require board approval?

VII. Develop a committee calendar

VIII. Set next meeting date

- a. What needs to be accomplished and by whom, by the next meeting?
- b. What is the goal of the next meeting?
- c. Where and when will it be held?

IX. Other business

X. Adjourn

STEPS TO POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION



FORMING THE COMMITTEE AND UNDERSTANDING THE JOB

The county leadership, especially the policy development committee, should understand the importance of the PD process and communicate enthusiasm for member involvement. All members of the PD committee should understand their responsibilities as well as how the process works at the county, state, and national level in order to provide informed answers to members' questions.

PLANNING

Plan your meetings and strategy to collect input from members.

SURFACE IDEAS

Ideas should be surfaced with regard to any issue causing farmers concern. While associate members can participate in this process, by surfacing ideas, only regular members can vote on adopting resolutions.

DEVELOPING THE RESOLUTION

Once the ideas have been surfaced, find out the facts necessary to bring them before the members at a county annual meeting. **It is vital that written county policies be based on fact.** This is especially true for more controversial issues.

The PD committee should complete resolutions at least two weeks prior to the county annual meeting. Earlier is better as you will want to publish the proposed resolutions in the county newsletter to generate more interest in your annual meeting. The PD committee determines whether or not to present the resolution and how it is worded. Resolutions should be written so they are easily understood and not ambiguous. (Refer to page 8.)

POLICY MAKING

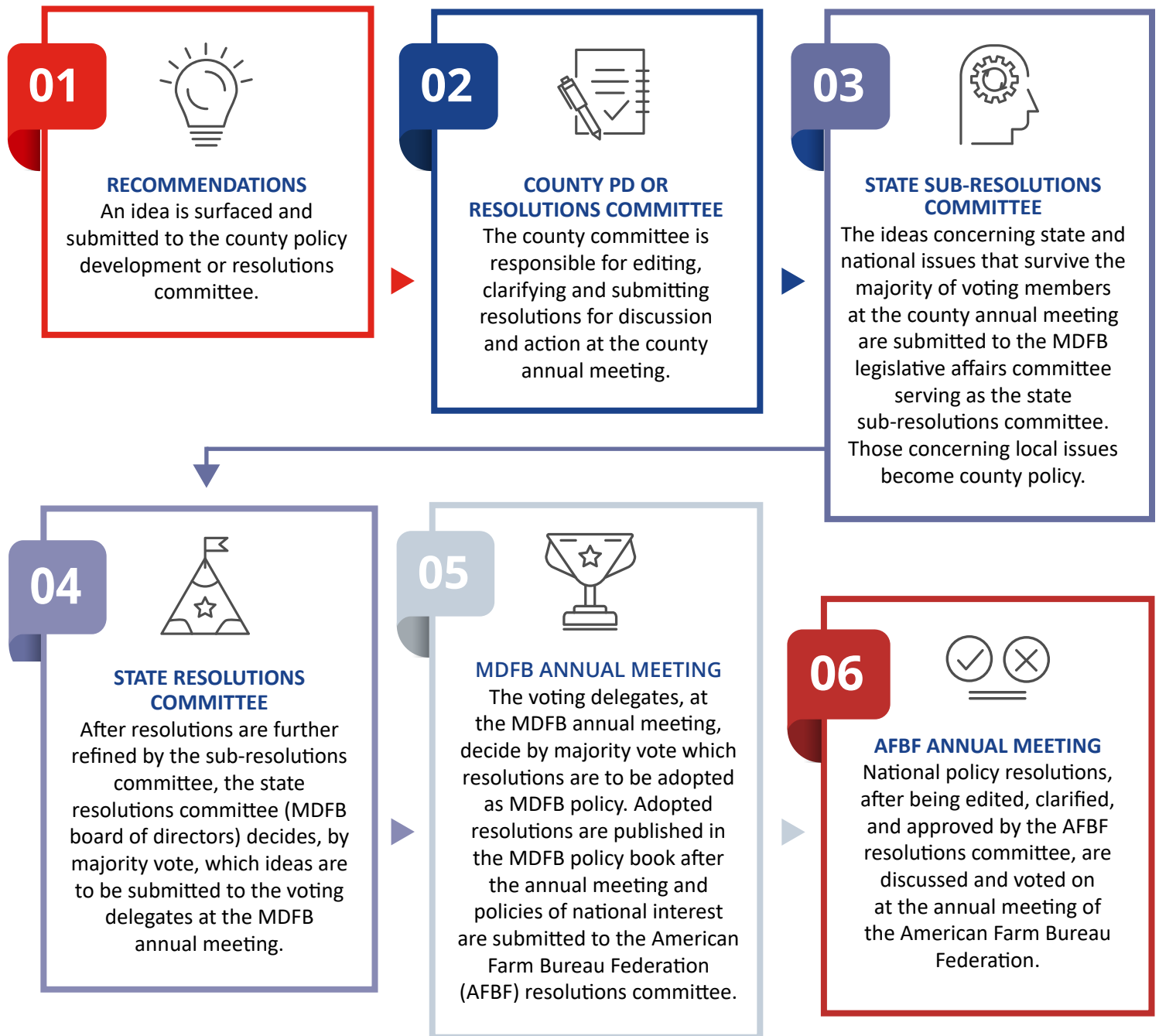
Resolutions strictly pertaining to a local issue become policy at the county annual meeting through a majority vote by regular members present. They are to be filed with county policies from other years. County policies should be reviewed regularly to see that they are still pertinent. Once a good number of policies have been established, the need for a county policy book may arise. Each year county policies should be printed in the county newsletter and, when appropriate, be distributed to county officials and the local paper. Resolutions involving state and national issues are forwarded to the state sub-resolutions committee for further action.

POLICY EXECUTION

Shortly after the county annual meeting, the board meets to review all the county's policies and recommend implementation plans. The board then assigns responsibility for carrying out county policies to appropriate county committees.

THE POLICY DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

THERE ARE SIX BASIC STEPS FROM AN IDEA'S INCEPTION TO ITS BECOMING POLICY



SUGGESTED POLICY DEVELOPMENT CALENDAR

JULY/AUGUST

- County PD committee is appointed and holds organizational meeting to set goals and develop program of work
- Review Issues of Concern, ideas or suggested policy currently submitted from members or planning groups and prepare for future PD meetings.
- Begin planning for county issues forum to be held in September/early October.

SEPTEMBER

- County issues forum is held with participation possibly including:
 - » Government agencies, business community, Extension personnel, local elected officials, county FB membership, etc.
- County PD committee continues to meet to refine proposed resolutions and publicize them to the full membership.
- Publicize the county annual meeting to general membership.

OCTOBER

- County annual meeting to adopt local resolutions (state, national policy recommendations) is held. County FBs may want to select their delegates for Maryland Farm Bureau's annual meeting at this meeting as well. Meeting must be held prior to the MDFB resolution deadline.
- Submit resolutions, policy priorities, sunsets and any MDFB board recommendations to MDFB government relations staff prior to deadline.

NOVEMBER

- MDFB sub-resolutions committee meets to review, edit, and/or clarify resolutions submitted by county FBs.
- One week later the MDFB board of directors, serving as the resolutions committee, discusses and votes on resolutions to move forward to the delegates at MDFB's annual meeting in December.

DECEMBER

- MDFB Annual Convention & Meeting of Delegates where delegate body acts on policy resolutions.

JANUARY

- National resolutions are determined by delegates to the American Farm Bureau Federation Annual Meeting of Voting Delegates.

SOURCES AND TECHNIQUES FOR SURFACING ISSUES AND MEMBER INVOLVEMENT

Listed below are different sources that may provide those responsible for policy development with different issues of importance to the county Farm Bureau. The techniques listed are generally ways in which the county FB can provide the opportunity for non-active members to become involved in the policy development process. Additionally, by reviewing minutes of past county board meetings, discussion group meetings, and various local commodity meetings, it is possible to surface issues that could/should be given consideration for the policy development process.

- County Farm Bureau boards
- Input from other county FB committees
- Community and county meetings (to include open sessions of the county PD committee)
- County newsletter articles (provide background and opportunity for comment)
- Hold county issues forum
- Telephone surveys
- Written surveys via letter or postcard

For more information on any of the above (e.g. survey templates, tips on conducting an issues forum, etc.) contact your district director on the state board or your regional field manager.

BUILDING THE RESOLUTION

Translating individual or group ideas that you generate during the issue surfacing and discussion phase of policy development into sound, reasonable resolutions can be a difficult process. The following outline is offered as one possible approach for attaining resolution statements that merit serious consideration at your county's annual meeting.

STEP 1 – DEFINE THE PROBLEM.

- State it as a fact, not a question
- Limit it
- Clarify terms
- Provide some background

STEP 2 – DETERMINE THE CAUSES OF THE PROBLEM.

- List as many as possible
- Don't evaluate
- Summarize



STEP 3 – LIST ALL POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS.

- Be specific
- Give evidence – statistics, examples, demonstrations, analogy, testimony
- Summarize

STEP 4 – DETERMINE THE BEST SOLUTION.

- Review the solutions and evidence
- Check to see if the resolution meets the test (*see page 8*)
- Vote
- Decide on next course of action

DOES THE RESOLUTION MEET THE TEST?

The following are a list of criteria that could be used by the policy development committee when determining what resolutions will go before voting members at the county annual meeting. Similar criteria are used by the state resolutions committee when determining which resolutions submitted by county Farm Bureaus will go before the voting delegates at the MDFB annual meeting.

1. The county policy development chair and PD committee have the responsibility to reject any resolution if one of the following conditions apply:
 - The resolution is the same as a present MDFB or AFBF policy.
 - The resolution expresses a mere philosophical belief and does not express a specific course of action for MDFB or AFBF to follow.
 - The resolution has been accomplished by law, regulation, or other means.
 - The resolution merely mentions support for a bill without including a statement of purpose. At the very least, the resolution needs to be amended to include the purpose or end goal to be achieved (purpose should not be misconstrued for rationale).
 - The resolution cannot be understood, and no one is present to explain its meaning.
- The resolution deals with matters other than those normally associated with public policy or with the goals and objectives of the Farm Bureau.
- The resolution calls for action that cannot reasonably be carried out, would likely be widely rejected by persons using reason and common sense, or would be detrimental to the administrative goals or functions of Farm Bureau.
2. If resolutions have been submitted reflecting opposing views the committee must decide which resolution to submit for vote before the county voting members.
3. The committee has the responsibility to make sure that any resolution submitted at the county annual meeting is written in such a manner that the issue is clearly defined and easily understood.
4. In preparing resolutions for consideration at the county annual meeting, the committee may make amendments to any resolution if a majority determines that the amendment is relevant and reasonable, will improve the goals or benefits the resolution is intended to accomplish, and/or improve its chances for accomplishment.

MDFB'S POLICY SECTION REVIEW PROCESS

(FORMALLY THE SUNSET REVIEW PROCESS)

Since 2002, Maryland Farm Bureau has conducted an annual sunset review process to evaluate older policy and determine whether to keep it in the active policy book or move it to the policy archive book.

Part of the review has included a discussion about the meaning of specific policy statements and a determination about whether they are still relevant for farmers today.

Beginning in 2012, we required that a policy marked for sunset review must be identified to be “retained” by at least five (5) counties to be given automatic retention. If fewer than five counties move to retain the policy during their local policy review, the policy will be marked for sunset and the counties that want to retain will be noted in the footnote. Any county can move to retain before the resolutions committee or the delegate body and a vote of the delegates will determine the outcome.

Unfortunately, this limited number of reviewed policies has created a substantial number of policies that are 10 years or older since they were reviewed or created. Because of this limitation, we have decided to start reviewing a few policy sections and/or subsections each year to maintain an updated and relevant policy book.

1. **MDFB legislative affairs committee will select sections of the policy book to have every county review for updates, revisions and/or deletions.**
2. **County Farm Bureaus will review these sections for updates and changes.** (County Farm Bureaus are encouraged to review other sections of the policy book to update other sections as well.)
3. **These changes will be reviewed by the MDFB sub-resolutions committee the same way any other new or revised policy is currently done.**
4. **Any policy or policies requested to be sunset will go through the normal policy review process and will be voted on by the delegate body at the MDFB Annual Convention & Meeting of Delegates.**





MEMBERS CHART THE FARM BUREAU COURSE

In the end, final decision on every policy is made by the Farm Bureau membership – county, state, or national – whichever it primarily concerns.

A recommendation affecting only a single county is decided on a county basis by the regular/voting members of that particular county Farm Bureau. A recommendation affecting only a single state is decided by the elected voting delegates of the twenty-three member county Farm Bureaus and affiliate organization members.

A resolution affecting the entire nation is decided on a national basis by the elected voting delegates of the member state Farm Bureaus (and Puerto Rico). The voting delegates are those representatives duly elected from their respective state Farm Bureaus. Thus, an issue decided by the Annual Meeting of Voting Delegates of the American Farm Bureau Federation merits support of all

member state Farm Bureaus and members everywhere. Each member has had a voice and a vote in deciding every policy of Farm Bureau.

This highly efficient process of presenting policy recommendations in community and neighborhood meetings, of testing them through successive steps where they are studied and improved, and finally adopting the best of them, is unique to Farm Bureau. **It is sound in action and trustworthy in results.**

The PD process charts a clear course and well-defined objectives for the year ahead. It assures members that Farm Bureau will march forward toward well-considered, carefully chosen goals, outlined by policies which the members themselves have initiated, scrutinized, and adopted. There are few, if any, processes more effective for outlining a program of work. It is grassroots at its finest.

MARYLAND FARM BUREAU RESOLUTIONS

POLICY AMENDMENT FORM

Amendment Sponsor: _____ County: _____

☐ Local Policy ☐ State Policy ☐ National Policy

Policy Section: _____ Page # _____

Proposed Wording: _____

Rationale: _____

MARYLAND FARM BUREAU RESOLUTIONS

POLICY AMENDMENT FORM

Amendment Sponsor: _____ County: _____

☐ Local Policy ☐ State Policy ☐ National Policy

Policy Section: _____ Page # _____

Proposed Wording: _____

Rationale: _____

TOP THREE POLICY PRIORITIES



In order to provide grassroots guidance for the policy priorities of our organization, we request that each county list the three policy provisions that should be targeted by Maryland Farm Bureau for action in the year ahead. You can select your policy priorities from among those already listed in our state policy book or from among any new policy resolutions you submit this year.

If you make your selection from the existing policy book, please try to be specific. Please list the exact sentence that includes your policy priority rather than listing the entire subject area. (The subject area may contain dozens of action items.) You should also list the page number and line number of the policy action item you select.

Each county will submit their three policy priorities for consideration by their resolutions committees. A list will be compiled for consideration by the delegate body at the MDFB Annual Convention & Meeting of Delegates in December of each year. Voting delegates will be asked to rank the policy priorities in order of importance for action. The final priority action items for the year ahead will be announced shortly following the state annual meeting.

Please complete this form and send it back to the MDFB Office in Davidsonville with your policy resolutions.

TOP THREE POLICY PRIORITIES

Submitted by _____ County Farm Bureau

1

1st Policy Priority: _____

Page # in Policy Book: _____ Line # in Policy Book: _____

2

2nd Policy Priority: _____

Page # in Policy Book: _____ Line # in Policy Book: _____

3

3rd Policy Priority: _____

Page # in Policy Book: _____ Line # in Policy Book: _____





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