



National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition

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# *2013 Annual Report*





## *Letter from the Chair*

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The National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC) is a member-driven coalition focused on building and engaging the grassroots in federal policy to support and advance sustainable agriculture.

NSAC staff and member groups have made significant progress toward our goals over the course of 2013. Our coalition continues to grow strategically, making our collective voices stronger than ever.

We worked tirelessly on the farm bill to ensure it includes grassroots policy initiatives that support sustainable agriculture driven by family farmers and ranchers, protects our precious natural resources, strengthens rural communities, and increases access to healthy, fresh foods for everyone.

Our coalition mounted an effective grassroots-driven campaign to ensure the Food Safety Modernization Act protects the farming systems we worked for decades to build, not only on the ground, but within federal farm policy as well.

Our coalition is effective because our staff and organizational member groups are strong. The members are our ear-to-the-ground, providing farm and community-based solutions to federal policy so that it serves sustainable agriculture, family farmers and ranchers, and communities. The staff and members work together to set on-point and critical policy priorities each year.

Our member groups bring farmers to Washington to work directly with those in Congress who are shaping and voting on critical legislation. Our staff work long hours to ensure the voices of our coalition are represented on Capitol Hill. Foundations and individuals contribute significant capital so all this vital work can take place. Together, we are a powerful force for change.

We sincerely thank everyone who contributed their time, talent and financial resources to NSAC's successes in 2013. We could not do this work without each and every one of you. We look forward to a prosperous and productive 2014.

Traci Bruckner  
Chair, NSAC Organizational Council



*Together, we are a  
powerful force for  
change.*



## Who We Are

NSAC was founded upon two shared, integrated, and equal priorities:

- To research, develop, and advocate federal policies relating to farm, food, and environmental issues, appropriations, and implementation to support and advance sustainable agriculture; and
- To support, build, develop, and engage the grassroots of sustainable agriculture for the health and vitality of the sustainable agriculture movement.

Committed to diversity, NSAC builds capacity among members at the grassroots level to develop leadership. Its effective and experienced staff offer political, media, communications, and collaboration expertise to a growing coalition of member organizations.

Formed from the merger between the National Campaign for Sustainable Agriculture and the Sustainable Agriculture Coalition in 2009, NSAC leads the development and implementation of federal sustainable agriculture policies through a dual strategy of direct and grassroots advocacy.



NSAC members meet with Senate Agriculture Committee chair, Senator Debbie Stabenow (D-MI)

## *NSAC has brought grassroots voices and stories to the federal policy-making process.*

NSAC's ten-person staff is based in Washington, DC, and works with member organizations to advance sustainable agriculture priorities. NSAC's policy team works with Congress and federal agencies to propose, implement, and improve policies and programs. Our grassroots team works directly with our 100 member organizations to provide resources and technical assistance that mobilize farmers, rural businesses, and conservationists to support better federal farm and food policy.

NSAC and its predecessor organizations have played a leading role in developing landmark federal conservation programs that reward farmers for protecting soil, water, and biodiversity. These include the Conservation Reserve Program buffer initiative, Wetlands Reserve Program, Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative, and Conservation Stewardship Program, among others.

NSAC has also led the charge to create federal programs supporting organic, beginning, and minority farmers; value-added food businesses and direct farmer-to-consumer and local and regional marketing; and sustainable agriculture research and education.

These programs include the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program, Farmers Market Promotion Program, National Organic Certification Cost Share Program, and Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program, among others.

In addition to working to create these programs, NSAC is also committed to ensuring that they are correctly implemented, that improvements are made so that they benefit sustainable and organic farmers and businesses, and that they receive funding.

For years, NSAC has brought grassroots voices and stories to the federal policy-making process. Our member organizations directly serve farmers and local citizens, and our priorities are based on how policies work for them and what's needed on the ground. Through our high-impact advocacy, outreach, and education, NSAC translates those needs into substantial policy change for a healthier, more equitable, and more environmentally sound food and farming system.



## *The Farm Bill*

For the past 25 years, NSAC staff have worked tirelessly to ensure that each farm bill includes more reforms and more sensible policies that conserve our soil and water, support beginning and socially-disadvantaged farmers, increase healthy food access for all communities, and support research and education efforts in agriculture. We are unwavering in our efforts to achieve the best policies. To achieve that end, we cultivate congressional champions on both sides of the aisle. In the lead up to the 2012 and 2013 farm bill reauthorization process, NSAC developed a comprehensive and robust set of policy proposals to achieve a better food and farm future. As a result of our strong relationships with congressional staff, many of our policy proposals were included in both the House and Senate-passed versions of the farm bill.

In 2012, Congress made significant progress toward passing a farm bill. Given the extremely tough fiscal environment, NSAC worked to protect funding for landmark conservation, sustainable agriculture, and organic programs. While many programs faced cuts, we successfully defended several from being eliminated entirely or having funding reduced so significantly as to be ineffective. We were also able to make significant gains in reforming farm subsidies.

Congress was unable to pass a new farm bill in 2012. Instead, Congress attached a damaging farm bill extension to the so-called “fiscal cliff” deal enacted in January 2013. This farm bill extension stripped funding from many of the sustainable and organic agriculture programs that form the basis for better farm policy – including funding for farmers markets, value-added agriculture, rural microenterprise assistance, beginning farmers, minority farmers, organic agriculture, renewable energy, and specialty crop and organic research. The extension also failed to include reforms to farm subsidies at a cost of \$5 billion to taxpayers.

The past two years have seen a shift in the political alliances that traditionally dominated agriculture policy in the U.S. As partisanship has become more extreme and congressional gridlock has made even the most sensible bipartisan bills difficult to pass, NSAC has innovated its advocacy efforts. In tandem with our DC staff’s dedicated work and policy expertise, our extensive grassroots network has been able to quickly and effectively mobilize on key issues at critical moments throughout the reauthorization process. This more integrated effort with the grassroots farm and food movement has helped NSAC adapt to the changing political climate and is building power for future successes.

*We are unwavering in our efforts to achieve the best policies.*

Each of NSAC’s priority issue areas is an integral part of a fair food and farm system that conserves critical resources, supports small and midsize family farmers, and encourages innovation. In the past year, our coalition successfully moved several of our priorities towards an equitable food and farm system forward, while others remained stranded by congressional inaction.



## *Building the Movement*

To mobilize greater grassroots support for policy change, NSAC staff worked closely with member groups to identify and respond to key capacity building needs. We held in-person trainings on communications and media, including how to foster stronger relationships with reporters and how to place op-eds during critical periods.

In 2013, NSAC took further steps to strengthen our coalition and the sustainable agriculture movement through our Strategic Initiatives Grant program, awarding \$64,000 to member groups to build capacity.

In March of 2013, NSAC brought in 60 family farmers and farmer advocates from 24 states to meet with more than 105 legislative offices in Washington, DC – our biggest fly-in in several years. Participants met with lawmakers to stress the importance of restoring funding for critical sustainable agriculture programs and passing a farm bill that advances the sustainability of agriculture, rural communities, food systems, and natural resources. NSAC is incredibly proud of the hard work and dedication our staff and membership have put in, helping secure a more sustainable future in a challenging year.



## *Supporting Vibrant Local and Regional Food Systems*

NSAC strongly supports local food systems as a means to increasing access to fresh, healthy food for all communities and as an economic driver that helps create jobs and expand market opportunities for farmers. During 2013, NSAC continued to promote dozens of legislative policy proposals advancing local and regional food systems across the country. Many of the policy recommendations on local and regional food systems from NSAC's farm bill platform were compiled into the **Local Farms, Food, and Jobs Act (LFFJA)**, a comprehensive policy package that was championed by policymakers in both chambers of Congress. This bill was first introduced in 2011, and reintroduced with revisions and additions in 2013. LFFJA creates opportunities for farmers to meet the growing demand for locally and regionally produced food through channels such as farm-to-school programs, grants to support farmers markets, and funding and technical assistance to support local distribution and processing infrastructure. It encompasses many titles of the farm bill, from rural development to research and nutrition.

Many proposals from LFFJA were included in the House and Senate farm bills in 2012 and again in 2013. We hope to see the bulk of the provisions and funding included in one or both bills maintained in the final 2013 Farm Bill, assuming there is one.

Many provisions from LFFJA are currently in either or both of the current House and Senate farm bills, including increased mandatory funding for the critical **Value-Added Producer Grants** program, which helps farmers grow their businesses through value-added activities like creating jams and yogurt and growing and marketing certified organic produce.

NSAC was able to further robust local and regional food system growth through our work to expand and improve the **Farmers Market Promotion Program (FMPP)** in the new farm bill. Renamed the **Farmers Market and Local Food Promotion Program** in both House and Senate bills and funded at a significantly higher level than FMPP, this new program would not only provide grants for direct farmer-to-consumer market opportunities such as farmers markets, but would also support a more diverse range of local food projects and market channels, including institutions such as schools and hospitals.

NSAC worked to modify the **SNAP Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT)** program to cover the costs of technology and equipment for farmers' markets, roadside and farm stands, and community supported agriculture (CSA) programs to implement EBT. We were able to secure this provision in both House and Senate farm bills.

*These new programs will support a more diverse range of local food projects and market channels.*

In addition to our work to improve the Farm to School Grants program, NSAC worked to create **Farm to School pilots programs** to reform the two school food procurement programs (**USDA Foods and DoD Fresh**) in order to expand schools' ability to purchase fruits, vegetables, meat, and other products from local and regional farmers, ranchers, and processors. These provisions are currently included in the House farm bill.

NSAC increased funding for local food and organic programs, including **Community Food Projects**, which help build local self-reliance and access to healthy food in low-income communities. This program is included in both pending bills with an increased funding level in the House bill. NSAC also worked to increase funding for the **National Organic Certification Cost Share Program**, which helps producers afford the increasing costs required for organic certification. This provision is included in the pending Senate bill.





## *Creating Opportunity and Fostering Fair Competition*

A food and farm system that promotes fair competition, ease of access to markets, and lowers barriers for new farmers to enter into agriculture will be better able to address our nation's food and nutrition needs now and in future generations. In the past year, NSAC worked to produce, reintroduce, and move forward a set of legislative policy proposals aimed at creating a more equitable food and farm system.

In 2013, NSAC reintroduced the **Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act** (BFROA). This comprehensive legislative package includes many policy ideas and proposals from NSAC's farm bill platform aimed at removing barriers to entry into farming for beginners and ensuring the next generation of farmers have the resources they need to start a viable and sustainable farming operation. Many of these beginning farmers see opportunities in emerging local and regional food markets, so addressing the barriers they face helps to expand local and regional food systems and rebuild our rural economies.

The farm bill versions passed by the House and Senate this year include a number of provisions from BFROA, including a new microloan and cooperative lending program (House), mandatory funding for the **Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program** that trains new farmers (House and Senate), improved credit options in

general for new farmers (House and Senate), and a new position within USDA that would help connect returning military veterans with agricultural resources and new farmer training programs.

One of the biggest barriers new farmers face is accessing the capital needed to launch a new farming business. To address this issue, NSAC provided recommendations to USDA for how to use existing loan authority to meet the lower credit needs of small, beginning and diversified farmers. Earlier this year, USDA incorporated some of our recommendations and launched a new **microloan program** targeted to providing small loans to small farmers – including new and diversified growers serving local markets. To date, USDA has already made over 2,000 microloans in all fifty states across the country, with the vast majority of loans made to beginning farmers. NSAC has also worked with key policymakers to include several legislative improvements to the microloan program in the new farm bill. If adopted, these provisions would allow USDA greater flexibility in administering their existing microloan program and to be able to better target microloans to young, beginning and veteran farmers.



Photo Credit: USDA

Another critical facet to promoting fair competition and lowering barriers to entry is ensuring that our farm safety net is equitable for all farmers. Crop insurance and risk management options developed for and widely used by conventional farmers do not work for diversified farmers. This lack of viable risk management options for diversified farmers is a barrier to growth in local and regional food systems and promoting a more diversified, resilient, and sustainable farming system. In order to address this issue, NSAC provided recommendations for developing a new and improved **Whole Farm revenue insurance product** tailored to meet the unique risk management needs of diversified growers.

These recommendations led to a meeting in Kansas City with USDA Risk Management Agency product developers, NSAC and NSAC member organization staff, and some of our farmer leaders, where we provided recommendations on the direction of this new product. The outcomes of that meeting were presented to USDA's Federal Crop Insurance Corporation Board of Directors in August and approved for further development. We have continued to provide input through follow up correspondence with RMA, and expect an opportunity to review the product before it is finalized and made available to farmers nationwide, potentially in time for the 2015 crop insurance year.

*USDA has already made over 2,000 microloans in all fifty states across the country, with the vast majority of loans made to beginning farmers.*



## Conserving Our Natural Resources

In the past year, NSAC worked simultaneously on shaping the new farm bill, protecting conservation funding, and improving existing programs and policies at USDA. We continued to promote and work for improvements in the large working lands conservation programs, including the **Conservation Stewardship Program**, **Environmental Quality Incentives Program**, and the **Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative** (which will become the Regional Conservation Partnership Program in the new farm bill), to ensure that conservation dollars support sustainable agriculture to the maximum extent possible. We focused on retaining Wetlands Reserve Program funding within the wetland conservation portion of the pending new combined easement program (Agricultural Conservation Easement Program) and promoting good stewardship of land that is expiring from the Conservation Reserve Program.

We participated in briefings in the House and Senate to promote amendments we helped craft that would help producers conserve water, adapt to climate change, and protect at-risk species through EQIP and assist regional partners to deliver technical assistance to farmers and ranchers participating in partnership projects.

We continued to advocate for reattaching soil and wetland conservation requirements (known as conservation compliance) to crop insurance subsidies, and redoubled our campaign to preserve grassland through a national **Sodsaver** provision, which would reduce crop subsidies on native prairie that is plowed up for crop production. We worked with bipartisan cosponsors in both the House and Senate to introduce and generate support for placeholder legislation for both conservation compliance and Sodsaver.



## CSP enrollment is now at nearly 60 million acres nationwide.

In September, more than 100 members of Congress signed on to a letter in support of attaching conservation compliance to crop insurance subsidies; then, in November, NSAC helped secure nearly 300 organizational signatures on a letter calling for farm bill conferees to include both compliance and Sodsaver in the final farm bill.

That CR cut funding for the **Conservation Stewardship Program** to such an extent that no money was available for NRCS to enroll farmers and ranchers in the program. Fortunately, with strong public education work from NSAC, Congress reversed that cut in a second CR and allowed NRCS to move ahead with the FY 2013 CSP sign up.

With this sign up recently completed, CSP enrollment is now at nearly 60 million acres nationwide. The pending FY 2014 bills, moreover, do not include cuts to CSP, which is good news indeed.

In addition to our legislative work, we worked closely with USDA to improve existing conservation programs and agency policies. As part of an ongoing **Conservation Innovation Grant** project that we share with 10 additional NSAC member organizations, we began to work with USDA to implement our extensive recommendations on how to make conservation programs more appropriate for producers using organic and sustainable systems.

We continue to engage the Agency on the link between sustainable agriculture and climate change, most recently through meetings and conversations regarding USDA's methods for quantifying greenhouse gas emissions and carbon sequestration. Finally, 2013 saw USDA take significant steps toward ensuring that crop insurance rules do not undermine conservation efforts, specifically, the practice of cover cropping. We met repeatedly with senior leadership at USDA, to discuss the issue, and in late June, NRCS and USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA) released new guidelines that should significantly reduce barriers to conservation.

Crafting messages on conservation issues that speak to voters is key to achieving policies that support sustainable agriculture. In the past year, NSAC worked with Hattaway Communications and Lake Research Partners to develop a **communications manual** to better understand voter values on agriculture and conservation. This manual will help advocates better develop an effective communications strategy to reach policymakers and voters on key conservation issues. We expect to have the manual finalized by the end of the year and will share the results among the whole conservation community in January.



## Research and Innovation for a Sustainable Agriculture Future

In comparison to the enormous opportunity that sustainable agriculture represents for farmers and rural communities, federal investments in research, education, and extension geared for sustainable agricultural systems have been woefully inadequate. NSAC recognizes that without sufficient resources for relevant research, education, and extension, farmers and ranchers will be unable to access new and emerging innovations, information and markets that will help them expand their businesses, conserve natural resources, and address food and nutrition needs in their communities. Throughout 2013, NSAC worked to increase federal resources and funding for sustainable agriculture research, education, and extension in recognition of the critical importance that research plays in ensuring success and innovation across all sectors of agriculture.

In 2013, NSAC continued its efforts to secure increased funding and support for critical agriculture research programs, like the **Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program** (SARE). SARE, USDA's flagship program for sustainable agriculture, recently celebrated its 25th anniversary, thanks in large part to NSAC's continued advocacy over the years.

This year we also fought to restore and increase funding for critical research programs that are currently "stranded" due to the farm bill expiration last fall, including those programs that support research on organic production, specialty crops, and beginning farmer and ranchers, such as the **Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Program** and the **Beginning Farmers and Ranchers Development Program**.

The **Organic Production and Marketing Data Initiatives program** (ODI) is a valuable resource that provides policymakers, organic farmers, and organic businesses the data they need to make sound policy, business, and marketing decisions. This year, NSAC continued to advocate for this important annual funding stream, especially as USDA gears up to release its next comprehensive Census of Agriculture in 2014 and follow up survey of organic producers. NSAC also successfully secured a coveted spot on USDA's **National Agriculture Statistics Service (NASS) Advisory Committee**, which sets priorities and provides recommendations for future federal data collection efforts through the Department of Agriculture. By having a seat at the table, NSAC will more effectively be able to highlight the critical importance of collecting reliable data for sustainable producers including organic farmers and those growing for local and regional markets.

## We secured a coveted spot on USDA's National Agriculture Statistics Service Advisory Committee.

NSAC also worked with key champions on the Appropriations Committee to press USDA officials on their commitment to public plant breeding research and federal investments in producing regionally adapted public varieties that are suited to a grower's local farming needs, especially in the context of changing growing conditions due to climate change. These are critical research challenges that impact local and regional food system growth around the country as well as the ability of growers to diversify their cropping systems by having access to well-suited varieties. NSAC is continuing to move this work forward with the Administration, advocating that USDA include more support for public cultivar development within the **Agriculture Food and Research Initiative** (AFRI) – USDA's largest competitive research grants program.

In early 2013, **AGree**, an initiative to address critical challenges facing the food and agricultural system through long-term, collaborative engagement, published NSAC's policy paper on ways to strengthen USDA's research system to better support sustainable food and farming systems.



Photo Credit: Sean McGovern, SARE Outreach

We collaborated with academic researchers working in the sustainable agriculture field to develop several targeted policy recommendations highlighting how USDA could realign their research programs, priorities, and structure in order to invest in research that looks at agriculture in a sustainable, holistic, participatory and systems-wide approach. In the following months, NSAC had several meetings with AGree and other key stakeholders in the research community – including former Secretaries of Agriculture and Deans of agriculture schools from around the country – where we presented and discussed our recommendations.



## *Ensuring the Integrity of our Nation's Food System*

NSAC's Food System Integrity efforts broadly aim to increase transparency in the food system and reconnect consumers with farmers. Food safety is at the center of reconnecting consumers with the food they eat, and our goal is to make sure we can support sustainable food systems and thriving family farms while maintaining a safe food supply. We see food safety in the context of many other risks to our shared food systems – inherent risks that compromise the availability, diversity, quality, wholesomeness, and affordability of food, making it less safe, secure, or sustainable.

In 2013, NSAC's efforts focused keenly on one major effort: ensuring the correct interpretation and implementation of the **Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA)** by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. Congress passed FSMA – the first major overhaul to our nation's food safety laws in decades – at the end of 2010, and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) started to implement the law. NSAC won a number of key provisions to the law that will maintain a safe food supply while supporting sustainable food and farming systems.

In January, the FDA released for public comment two proposed regulations with significant impacts on sustainable farmers, on-farm food processors, and consumers who care about where their food comes from. NSAC's analysis of the proposed regulations showed that FDA's new proposed rules, as written, would unfairly burden family farmers, severely restrict sustainable and organic farming practices, and reduce the availability of fresh, local food in our communities.

A closely coordinated grassroots campaign by NSAC members and staff began educating farmers and consumers about FSMA. This effort included tools and resources for how to effectively comment on the proposed rules through NSAC's online FSMA Action Center.



NSAC member group Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture leads workshop on FSMA for farmers and the public



NSAC's FSMA campaign grew throughout 2013 to include farmer listening sessions and workshops, press and social media, and webinars and presentations. The campaign garnered attention and support from groups not always on the same side as sustainable agriculture, and culminated in thousands of comments being submitted before the late November deadline. Virtually every story in the media, from blogs to national publications, linked to NSAC's FSMA website, the gold standard for accessible information and action tools on FSMA.

NSAC's own organizational comments totaled over 300 pages of detailed, intelligent, and sensible recommendations to FDA on making FSMA's regulations work for sustainable farmers and food systems while maintaining a commitment to food safety.

NSAC's work on FSMA will continue as the Food and Drug Administration revises its regulations and begins to implement them. Given the widespread impact these regulations will have on food production, it is important that we get them right, and NSAC is leading the efforts to make sure we do.

*Virtually every story in the media referenced NSAC's website, the gold standard for accessible information and action tools on FSMA.*

## CELEBRATING 25 YEARS OF FEDERAL POLICY BREAKTHROUGHS

For the past 25 years, NSAC, and its predecessor organizations the Sustainable Agriculture Coalition and the National Campaign for Sustainable Agriculture, has advocated for federal policy reform to support and advance sustainable farming and food systems. We work for policies and programs that increase farming opportunities, support good stewardship of the land, lower barriers and level the playing field for sustainable and organic farmers, increase healthy food access for all communities, provide jobs through community and economic development, and support critical agriculture research. Some highlights of our victories, organized to reflect our five NSAC Issue Committees, follow.

## CONSERVATION, ENERGY, AND ENVIRONMENT

Farmers and ranchers are in the unique position to help provide healthy soils, clean water, wildlife habitat, carbon sinks to help mitigate climate change and other conservation benefits. Since our founding, NSAC has worked to ensure that farmers are given the support and resources they need to be good stewards of the land.

Among our successes:

- The Conservation Stewardship Program, a comprehensive working lands conservation program that rewards farmers for advanced conservation systems and practices and continual improvement, that from 2009 through 2013 has enrolled nearly 60 million acres of crop, pasture, range, and forested land, an area roughly the size of the state of Minnesota. NSAC was the lead national organization pushing for the program's establishment and continuation.
- The Environmental Quality Incentives Program, the major conservation cost-share program for basic conservation structures and practices. NSAC conceived the program in 1994, and assisted with its creation in 1996. Most recently, NSAC led the way to authorize an organic conversion program within EQIP in 2008 and helped coordinate outreach for the resulting EQIP Organic Initiative.
- The Wetlands Reserve Program, which restores agricultural wetlands and places them under long-term or permanent easements, through which, since its inception in 1991, over 11,000 farm owners have restored over 2.6 million acres of wetlands. NSAC developed the original WRP legislation, and has worked over the years to retain funding for the WRP.
- The Conservation Reserve Program's continuous sign-up option for Conservation Buffers, which provides payments to farmers to establish riparian buffers, filter strips, grass waterways, contour grass strips, windbreaks, wildlife and pollinator habitat, and other specific partial field conservation practices on land otherwise remaining in agricultural production. Nearly 5.8 million acres are currently enrolled, including 1.7 million acres of riparian buffers and filter strips that improve water quality.
- The Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative (and its predecessor the Partnerships and Cooperative Initiative, and its likely successor after the next farm bill is finished, the Regional Conservation Partnership Program), which supports targeted conservation projects in specific regions and localities, joining public and private efforts and focusing in on particular resource problems and innovative solutions.
- The Rural Energy for America Program, which supports on-farm and rural business energy efficiency and renewable energy production projects, is a program NSAC has assisted along the way through our advocacy efforts. From 2003 through 2012, REAP provided resources for more than 13,000 rural small businesses and agricultural producers and saved enough energy to power nearly 600,000 American homes for a year.

## FARMING OPPORTUNITIES AND FAIR COMPETITION

*The future health and vitality of agriculture, the food system, and rural communities depends on the family farm viability, the successful entry of new farmers, and restoring fair competition to the marketplace. NSAC has worked consistently over the past 25 years to ensure that family farmers, in general, and beginning and minority farmers, in particular, have access to the programs, resources, and training that they need to operate successful operations. Among our successes:*

- **Beginning Farmers** – NSAC was the lead organization advocating for the creation and ongoing funding for a wide variety of initiatives to help create new farming opportunities.
- The **Down Payment Loan Program** that combines the resources of the Farm Service Agency, a beginning or socially disadvantaged farmer, and a commercial lender or private seller to enable beginning, minority, and women farmers to make a down payment on a farm or ranch. Since 1994, the program has assisted over 8,000 new farmers purchase farms.
- The **Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program**, a competitive grant program that funds education, extension, outreach, and technical assistance initiatives directed at helping beginning farmers and ranchers. Outside of farm credit, this is the keystone USDA program for beginning farmers.

In addition, other NSAC victories include the targeting of FSA farm operating and farm ownership loans to beginning farmers and to socially disadvantaged farmers and the targeting of risk management education efforts toward beginning farmers and transition farmers, as well as the creation of a borrower training program, a USDA beginning farmer advisory committee, a land contract sales program, and special conservation incentives for beginning and socially disadvantaged farmers.

- **Access to Commodity and Crop Insurance Programs** – NSAC has made advances in making farm programs more accessible to sustainable and organic farmers.
- An early NSAC success was the creation of the **Integrated Farm Management Program Option** that between 1991 and 1996 allowed farmers to diversify through resource-conserving crop rotations without losing farm program benefits, which, at the time, was unprecedented. Later, in 1996 we led the charge to secure complete **planting flexibility** for cropland conversions to grass-based agriculture as well as longer crop rotations.
- Later NSAC succeeded in amending the “**good farming practices**” standard for crop insurance eligibility to include organic and sustainable practices, and helped push for a **revenue insurance pilot program** for diversified producers. More recently, NSAC is working with USDA on the development of a nationwide **whole farm revenue insurance** option for diversified farming systems. NSAC has also campaigned to remove **crop insurance barriers for organic farmers**, a work still in progress but making considerable headway.

- **Competition and Contract Reform** – NSAC joined with other progressive farm and ranch organizations to win a historic livestock and poultry fair competition and contract reform title within the 2008 Farm Bill. That win proved difficult to hold onto, though several important contract reform rules have become finalized, and the battle continues on other aspects of our competition and anti-trust work.
- **Farm Subsidy Reform** – NSAC has also labored long and hard on reforming farm subsidies to target support to family farms, eliminate program excesses, and improve program integrity. Though often stymied in these efforts, we have, most recently, led the charge to win historic payment limitation reform in the pending commodity titles of both the House and Senate farm bills.

## MARKETING, FOOD SYSTEMS, AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

*The surge in consumer demand for food and agricultural products from local farmers and regional markets form a unique set of opportunities and challenges. Rising demand for healthy foods is an important incentive for farmers and ranchers, but many still face obstacles such as the lack of processing and distribution infrastructure needed to enable a local or regional food system to emerge. Vibrant local and regional food systems can be bedrocks for economies around the country, supporting farmers, communities, and increasing access to healthy food. Among our successes:*

- The **Farmers’ Market Promotion Program** increases and strengthens direct producer-to-consumer markets. Once a new farm bill passes, the program will be expanded to also include larger local food markets beyond direct markets, including food hubs. The program has made over \$40 million in grants since 2006. NSAC won its inclusion in the 2002 and 2008 Farm Bills.

- The **National Organic Certification Cost Share Program** makes modest financial assistance available to help defray the costs of organic certification for producers and handlers of organic products. NSAC won its inclusion in the 2002 Farm Bill and worked with others to expand the program in 2008.
- The **Value-Added Producer Grants** program provides competitive grants to individual independent agricultural producers, groups of independent producers, and farmer or rancher cooperatives to create or develop value-added producer-owned businesses, including organic and local food products. NSAC has championed the program, which has now funded over 1,500 projects, since its inception in 2000.
- **Local and Regional Food Enterprise Loans** are a subset of the Business and Industry Loan program, that is part of USDA Rural Development. The food business loans were championed by NSAC in the 2008 Farm Bill, a provision that also codified a definition of local food.
- The USDA process verified Grass-fed Meat Label allows producers to market product with a USDA seal demonstrating that their animals are purely grass-fed. NSAC led the charge to get this meat label claim standard adopted through rulemaking after vigorously opposing an earlier watered-down USDA proposal.
- The Farm to School Grant program resulted from a successful NSAC campaign as part of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010. Awards are made to groups and school districts linking farms to local cafeterias and increasing hands-on nutrition education and farm and food awareness

## RESEARCH, EDUCATION AND EXTENSION

*Without funding for public research that supports sustainable production systems, science and innovation is stifled and U.S. farmers are unable to fully participate in and benefit from emerging markets. NSAC works to ensure that federal agriculture research to support robust sustainable farm and food systems receives appropriate funding.*

- The USDA **Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education** (SARE) program is, not coincidentally, celebrating its 25th anniversary along with NSAC. Authorizing and winning funding for SARE was the first major NSAC campaign. SARE was the first USDA program dedicated to sustainable agriculture and remains the keystone program. It provides competitive grants to researchers and educators around the country to foster highly productive and sustainable farms for the future.
- The **statutory definition** of sustainable agriculture and the **emphasis** on sustainable agriculture within other USDA competitive grants programs was also a product of NSAC's work on the 1990 Farm Bill.
- The **Small and Medium-Sized Farm Profitability** program within the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI), an ongoing competitive research and extension grant funding opportunity, was developed and won by NSAC.
- The congressional emphasis on **public, classical plant and animal breeding** within the AFRI program is an initiative that has been strongly endorsed by NSAC, with work continuing to try to ensure better USDA implementation.

- The **Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative**, the major competitive grants program dedicated specifically to organic farming issues, was supported by NSAC as it was created and has become a mainstay of our work, as is the **Organic Production and Market Data Initiative**, a interagency effort to compile critical data on organic farming to improve organic farmer access to USDA programs.
- The **Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program**, mentioned previously, is an REE program that extends research-based knowledge to new and beginning farmers through creative training partnerships.

## FOOD SYSTEM INTEGRITY

In 2010, Congress overhauled our nation's food safety laws with the Food Safety Modernization Act. Recognizing the profound impact these regulations could unintentionally have on local food systems and family farmers, NSAC worked to ensure that the new food safety measures worked for sustainable and organic farmers, and for consumers who wanted access to fresh, local food. Due to NSAC's work, FSMA includes key provisions that make sure we can both ensure a safe food supply and support sustainable food systems and thriving family farms, including --

- **Scale-appropriate regulations:** Rejecting a "one-size-fits-all" approach, FSMA includes options for small, mid-sized, and direct-market agricultural operations to comply with equivalent state regulations or modified, scale-appropriate federal regulation.

- **Conservation practices:** Recognizing that conservation practices have a number of public benefits, FSMA indicates that new regulations should not undermine beneficial on-farm conservation and wildlife practices.
- **Organic production:** Acknowledging that organic production and food safety go hand-in-hand, FSMA specifies that new regulations must complement, not contradict, regulations for certified organic production.
- **Value-added processing:** Supporting the development of new low-risk processing businesses, FSMA minimizes extra regulations for low-risk processing that is part of value-added production.
- **Paperwork reduction and unified approach:** Recognizing the burden on smaller operations, FSMA streamlines and reduces unnecessary paperwork for farmers and small processors, and requires a whole farm rather than a commodity-specific approach.

- **Farm identity-preserved labeling:** Accepting that identity-preserved marketing has built-in traceability attributes, FSMA allows farm identity-preserved marketing in place of government trace-back controls.
- **Farmer Training:** Supporting the importance of training and capacity building, it authorizes a new competitive grants program to train farmers and processors on food safety.

NSAC is currently engaged in a campaign to ensure that Food and Drug Administration rules, guidance, and enforcement activities live up to the promises of these critical provisions of the law, and that funding is provided for farmer and small processor training.



## The Organizational Council

Traci Bruckner, Chair  
Center for Rural Affairs

Bob Junk, Co-Chair  
Fay-Penn Economic Development Council

Jeff Schahczenski, Treasurer  
National Center for Appropriate Technology

Brise Tencer, Secretary  
California Certified Organic Farmers

Bonnie Bobb  
Western Sustainable Agriculture Working Group

Jeanne Merrill  
California Climate Action Network

Ricardo J. Salvador, Ph.D.  
Union of Concerned Scientists

Duane Sand  
Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation

Lydia Villanueva  
C.A.S.A. de Llano

Bill Wenzel  
The Izaak Walton League of America

## List of Funders

Agua Fund  
Annie's Homegrown  
The Blackie Foundation  
Blue Moon Fund  
Cedar Tree Foundation  
Clif Bar Family Foundation  
The Convergence Partnership  
Farm Aid  
The Firedoll Foundation  
The Food and Farm Communications Fund  
The W.K. Kellogg Foundation  
The McKnight Foundation  
The Nell Newman Foundation  
New Belgium Brewing  
The North Pond Foundation  
Organic Valley  
The David and Lucile Packard Foundation  
Patagonia  
Presbyterian Hunger Program  
Stonyfield Profits for the Planet  
Tikva Grassroots Empowerment Fund  
UNFI Foundation  
USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service  
The Walton Family Foundation

## Staff

Jeremy Emmi, Managing Director  
Ferd Hoefner, Policy Director  
Ariane Lotti, Assistant Policy Director  
Greg Fogel, Senior Policy Specialist  
Juli Obudzinski, Senior Policy Specialist  
Eugene Kim, Policy Specialist  
Sophia Kruszewski, Policy Specialist  
Sarah Hackney, Grassroots Director  
Shavaun Evans, Grassroots Advocacy Coordinator  
Emily Gilbert, Organizational Coordinator



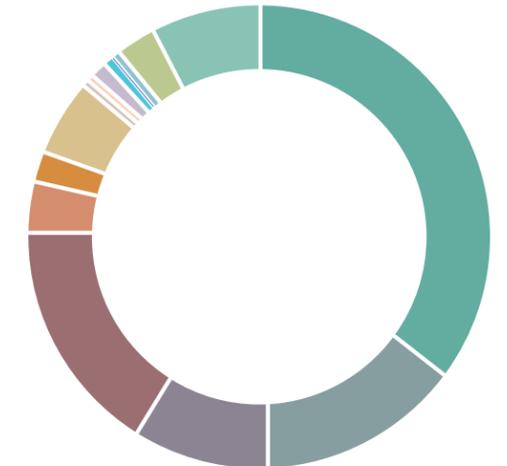
## Income Statement

Fiscal Year 2013 Income Statement  
September 2012 - August 2013



Revenue and Support

Donations	\$41,300
Fund Reserve	\$113,652
Grants Revenue	\$1,364,136
Registrations	\$37,746
Other Income	\$17,882



Expenses

Program Services:	
Salaries and Wages	\$526,028
Employee Benefits	\$210,381
Grants and Subcontracts	\$140,273
Consultants & Prof Svcs	\$240,380
Travel	\$52,337
Meeting Expenses	\$30,319
Occupancy	\$82,747
Supplies	\$2,977
Printing	\$3,427
Publications	\$20,449
Telephone	\$10,015
Postage	\$440
Staff Development	\$4,081
Miscellaneous Expense	\$45,796

Total Program Expenses	\$1,369,657
Administrative	\$115,292

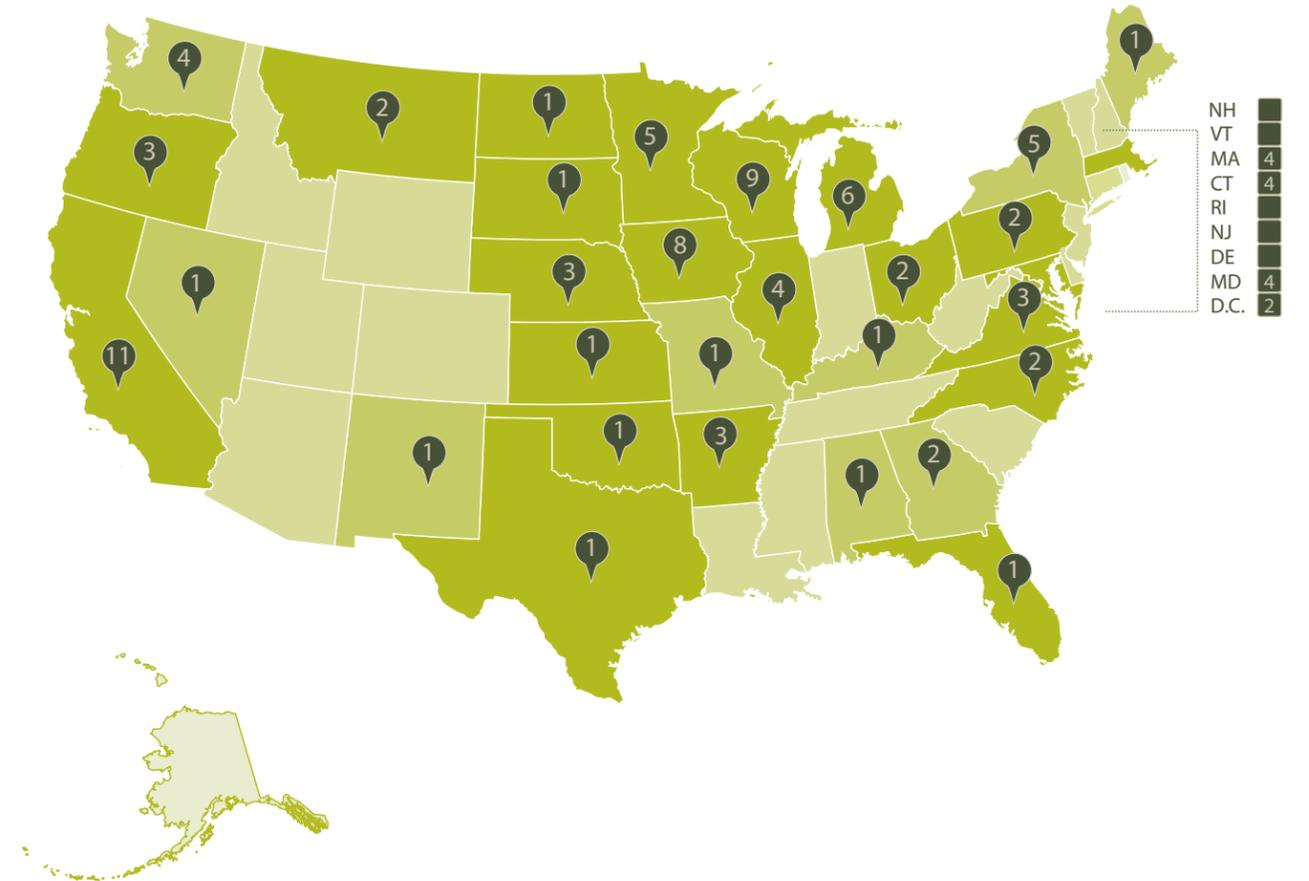
**Total Revenue and Support**      **\$1,574,717**

**Total Expenses**      **\$1,484,949**

## Represented Members

- Agriculture and Land-Based Training Association - Salinas, CA
- Alternative Energy Resources Organization - Helena, MT
- California Certified Organic Farmers - Santa Cruz, CA
- California FarmLink - Santa Cruz, CA
- C.A.S.A. del Llano (Communities Assuring a Sustainable Agriculture) - Hereford, TX
- Center for Rural Affairs - Lyons, NE
- Clagett Farm/Chesapeake Bay Foundation - Upper Marlboro, MD
- Community Alliance with Family Farmers - Davis, CA
- Dakota Rural Action - Brookings, SD
- Delta Land and Community, Inc. - Almyra, AR
- Ecological Farming Association - Soquel, CA
- Farmer-Veteran Coalition - Davis, CA
- Fay-Penn Economic Development Council - Lemont Furnace, PA
- Flats Mentor Farm - Lancaster, MA
- Florida Organic Growers - Gainesville, FL
- GrassWorks - New Holstein, WI
- Hmong National Development, Inc. - St Paul, MN and Washington, DC
- Illinois Stewardship Alliance - Springfield, IL
- Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy - Minneapolis, MN
- Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation - Des Moines, IA
- Izaak Walton League of America - St. Paul, MN and Gaithersburg, MD
- Kansas Rural Center - Whiting, KS
- The Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture - Poteau, OK
- Land Stewardship Project - Minneapolis, MN
- Michael Fields Agricultural Institute - East Troy, WI
- Michigan Food & Farming Systems – MIFFS - East Lansing, MI
- Michigan Organic Food and Farm Alliance - Lansing, MI
- Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service - Spring Valley, WI
- National Catholic Rural Life Conference - Des Moines, IA
- The National Center for Appropriate Technology - Butte, MT
- Nebraska Sustainable Agriculture Society - Ceresco, NE
- Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance - Deerfield, MA
- Northern Plains Sustainable Agriculture Society - LaMoure, ND
- Northwest Center for Alternatives to Pesticides - Eugene, OR
- Ohio Ecological Food & Farm Association - Columbus, OH
- Organic Farming Research Foundation - Santa Cruz, CA
- Rural Advancement Foundation International – USA - Pittsboro, NC
- Union of Concerned Scientists Food and Environment Program - Cambridge, MA
- Virginia Association for Biological Farming - Lexington, VA
- Wild Farm Alliance - Watsonville, CA

## Our Membership



- States with at least one Represented Member
- States with Participating Members only
- States with no state-based member presence (though some are affiliated regionally with other members)

Note: Many members listed in their 'home' state are national in scope

## *Participating Members*

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Alabama Sustainable Agriculture Network - Montgomery, AL  
 Angelic Organics Learning Center - Caledonia, IL  
 California Climate and Agriculture Network - Sebastopol, CA  
 Carolina Farm Stewardship Association - Pittsboro, NC  
 Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems – University of Wisconsin - Madison, WI  
 Center for a Livable Future – Johns Hopkins University - Baltimore, MD  
 Center for Sustaining Agriculture and Natural Resources – Washington State University - Puyallup, WA  
 Central Appalachian Network - Berea, KY  
 City Seed - New Haven, CT  
 Community Food Systems and Sustainable Agriculture Program – University of Missouri - Columbia, MO  
 Conservation Districts of Iowa - Earlham, IA  
 Fair Food Network - Ann Arbor, MI  
 Family Farm Defenders - Madison, WI  
 Farm Aid - Cambridge, MA  
 Farm to Table – New Mexico Food and Agriculture Policy Council - Santa Fe, NM  
 Farmers Market Coalition - Charlottesville, VA  
 Food Animal Concerns Trust - Chicago, IL  
 Food System Economic Partnership - Ann Arbor, MI  
 Friends of Family Farmers - Molalla, OR  
 Future Harvest – CASA (Chesapeake Alliance for Sustainable Agriculture) - Fairplay, MD  
 Georgia Organics - Atlanta, GA  
 Growing Power, Inc. - Milwaukee, WI and Chicago, IL  
 Heifer USA - Little Rock, AR  
 The Humane Society of the United States - Washington, DC  
 Innovative Farmers of Ohio - Cleveland, OH  
 Iowa Environmental Council - Des Moines, IA  
 Iowa Farmers Union - Ames, IA  
 Island Grown Initiative - Vineyard Haven, MA  
 Just Food - New York, NY  
 Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture – Iowa State University - Ames, IA  
 Maine Rural Partners – University of Maine - Orono, ME

Michigan Land Use Institute - Traverse City, MI  
 Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture – University of Minnesota - St. Paul, MN  
 MSU Center for Regional Food Systems - East Lansing, MI  
 National Farm to School Network - Chicago, IL  
 National Young Farmers' Coalition - Tivoli, NY  
 Nebraska Wildlife Federation - Lincoln, NE  
 New England Farmers Union - Shelburne Falls, MA  
 Northeast Organic Farming Association – Interstate Council NY, MA, RI, VT, CT, NH, NJ  
 Oregon Tilth - Corvallis, OR  
 Organic Farmers' Agency for Relationship Marketing, Inc. - Brussels, WI  
 Organic Valley - LaFarge, WI  
 Partners for Rural America - Nationwide  
 PCC Farmland Trust - Seattle, WA  
 Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture - Millheim, PA  
 Pesticide Action Network North America - Oakland, CA  
 Practical Farmers of Iowa - Ames, IA  
 Roots of Change - San Francisco, CA  
 Slow Food USA - Brooklyn, NY  
 Southeastern African-American Farmers Organic Network - Savannah, GA  
 Stone Barns Center for Food and Agriculture - Pocantico Hills, NY  
 Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota - Princeton, MN  
 Tilth Producers of Washington - Seattle, WA  
 Wallace Center – Winrock International - Arlington, VA  
 The Washington Sustainable Food and Farming Network - Mount Vernon, WA  
 Wholesome Wave - Bridgeport, CT  
 Women, Food, and Agriculture Network - Ames, IA

## *Affiliated Regional Programs*

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Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Working Group  
 Southern Sustainable Agriculture Working Group  
 Western Sustainable Agriculture Working Group



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[sustainableagriculture.net](http://sustainableagriculture.net)



National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition

*The National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition is an alliance of 100 grassroots organizations that advocates for federal policy reform to advance the sustainability of agriculture, food systems, natural resources, and rural communities.*



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