

Dear General Assembly Member:

Virginia Poultry Federation (VPF), representing family farms, poultry processing companies, and numerous businesses that provide products and services to the poultry industry, is pleased to share our views on state issues.

Poultry and eggs are Virginia's leading agricultural sector, creating thousands of jobs in rural areas and supporting the livelihoods of farm families that raise chickens, turkeys, and eggs. Farm income generated by poultry industry investment in Virginia helps conserve open spaces by keeping farmland in production. Without this industry, Virginia's rural landscape and character would give way to accelerated development and its associated environmental challenges.

Please continue to partner with us to ensure that poultry continues to be a farmland-preserving, job-creating industry for Virginia. We respectfully ask for your support on the issues described below. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you would like additional information about these issues or our industry.

Sincerely,



Hobey Bauhan
President

THE ISSUES

A Clean Environment

Agricultural BMP Cost-Share Program - VPF supports achieving state-wide water quality goals through a public-private partnership with the Commonwealth for implementation of voluntary best management practices over the next decade. In order to achieve these goals, consistent and dedicated funding of \$100 million per year over the next ten years is needed for implementation of agricultural BMPs and technical assistance by Soil and Water Conservation Districts.

Agricultural Stewardship Act - VPF supports strengthening the Agricultural Stewardship Act through the addition of personnel. This program will continue to be a success if it is adequately staffed, sufficiently funded, remains complaint-driven, and is managed by VDACS.

Biosolids - VPF opposes additional restrictions or increased authority to regulate bio-solids at the county or local level, and supports adequate state resources and enforcement to ensure environmental protection and public health.

Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act Expansion - VPF opposes the expansion of the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act to the western localities within the Bay watershed.

Development of New Markets for Poultry Litter - VPF supports state efforts to help develop new, environmentally sound markets for poultry litter, such as energy production and as fertilizer for phosphorus deficient soils.

- Initiatives could include grants, tax incentives, such as a credit for purchase of equipment used to recycle manures into value-added products or for energy pro-

duction, and state policies that encourage agencies such as the Virginia Department of Transportation to utilize poultry litter fertilizer products.

- VPF opposes mandatory, industry-funded litter transport subsidies, and favors cost-effective, sustainable long-term environmental solutions that capture the value of poultry litter.

Feed Nutrient Management - VPF supports education and incentives for feed nutrient management, consistent with animal health and welfare, and opposes mandates for use of the phosphorus reduction enzyme Phytase or other feed nutrient management strategies. VPF supports continued use of industry-state memoranda of agreement in this area.

Fish Kill Investigation - VPF supports state and federal funding to conduct scientific studies to determine the causes of recent fish kills in the Shenandoah and other Virginia rivers.

Nutrient Management Plan Writers - VPF supports adequate budget and staffing resources at the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation to develop nutrient management plans for farmers mandated to have a plan by state regulations.

Nutrient Management Program - VPF supports a nutrient management program that addresses nutrient applications through site-specific assessments, provides essential flexibility for agricultural operators, and seeks a balance between environmental stewardship and maintaining and improving the profitability and viability of agribusinesses.

Poultry Litter Management - VPF supports reasonable, scientifically sound, economically sensible solutions to any environmental issues concerning litter transferred by permitted poultry growers to other farmers.

Right to Farm Act - VPF supports Virginia's Right to Farm Act. The current law ensures that local government regulations treat farmers equitably through zoning ordinances. VPF opposes legislation that weakens the Right to Farm Act.

VDEQ Boards - VPF supports changes to the structure, process, and permitting authority within VDEQ's citizen boards in order to achieve consistency provided they continue citizen boards for air, water, and waste programs; streamline the regulatory process across all three boards; provide a consistent and predictable permitting process; and ensure meaningful and appropriate public participation processes for regulations and permits.

Water Quantity - VPF supports adoption of sound water policy that fairly and equitably addresses water uses, water rights of landowners, and water restrictions during drought. VPF opposes withdrawal regulations or laws that result in adverse financial or operational impacts.

Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

VDACS Funding - VPF supports adequate funding for the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services to support programs in animal health, including enhanced testing for avian influenza, poultry grading services, and other agency operations.

Virginia Tech

Land-Grant Universities - VPF supports adequate state funding for programs, initiatives, and capital projects that advance research, education, and extension at Virginia Tech and Virginia State University to benefit Virginia agribusiness.

General

Animal Care Standards - VPF supports responsible use of animals for human purposes, such as food and fiber, and believes animal care decisions must be based on scientific knowledge and professional judgment.

Cockfighting - VPF supports increased state penalties against cockfighting because this activity is not consistent with responsible animal care standards and is a biosecurity threat to the commercial poultry industry.

Eminent Domain (Rights of Private Property Owners) - VPF supports legislative action that prevents unreasonable restrictions, actions against, and unjust compensation for private property owners when eminent domain authority is exercised.

Energy Policy - VPF supports voluntary incentives for renewable energy production and opposes mandatory policies that threaten the availability of an affordable supply of crops for food production.

Freedom of Information - VPF supports amendments to the Virginia Freedom of Information Act that prevent disclosure of proprietary information, including: premise and animal identification, investigative reports, testing results, and records related to catastrophic events and losses impacting the agribusiness industry.

Immigration Reform - VPF supports policies that create an affordable and accessible workforce, including legal foreign workers, for the agribusiness industry. VPF opposes state and local employment requirements, procedures, or penalties that create additional burdens or duplicative processes for employers, exceed federal requirements or are pre-empted by federal law, or would adversely impact businesses acting in good faith to comply with federal immigration laws.

National Animal Identification System (NAIS) - VPF supports participation by the Commonwealth in USDA's NAIS provided that producer data and information is adequately protected.

Rail - VPF supports a viable, responsive rail transportation system that provides competitive rates for transportation of agricultural commodities, supplies, and finished products. VPF also supports state programs and investments that support Virginia's rail infrastructure.

Regulatory Reform - VPF supports a state program to ensure thorough analysis and consideration of the full economic costs of new regulatory legislation and agency regulations.

Truck Restrictions - VPF opposes unreasonable bans, restrictions, and selective tolls on commercial truck traffic. VPF strongly opposes tolls on Interstate 81, which could add substantially to the poultry industry's cost of operating in the Shenandoah Valley and threaten the Valley's viability as a poultry-producing region.

Tax Policy - VPF supports preservation of agricultural tax exemptions and credits, elimination of machinery and tools taxes, maintaining local land use taxation, and reducing localities' dependence upon real estate taxes.

Workers' Compensation - VPF supports the existing framework of Virginia's workers' compensation law and opposes any changes that will undermine the basic concept and sound balance of this law, such as broadening conditions not clearly arising out of and in the course of employment.

Youth Education - VPF supports Ag in the Classroom, 4-H, FFA, and the Governor's School for Agriculture.

Poultry and Egg Industry Facts

The poultry and egg industry supports the livelihood of about 1,200 family farms in 33 counties, helping to keep agricultural land in production and preserve open spaces.

Cargill, George's Foods, Perdue Farms, Pilgrim's Pride Corporation, Tyson Foods, and Virginia Poultry Grower Cooperative employ over 9,000 people. Each processing job is estimated to create over seven jobs outside the poultry industry. Poultry and eggs contributed \$834 million to Virginia's economy in 2006.

Virginia ranks 4th in turkey production, 10th in broiler chickens, and 27th in eggs. In 2006, Virginia family farms produced:

- 256.2 million broiler chickens
- 21.5 million turkeys
- 806 million eggs

The Shenandoah Valley is Virginia's top poultry region:

- Approximately 300 turkey farms
- Approximately 600 chicken farms
- More than 5,000 poultry company employees
- 8 poultry processing plants
- 5 poultry feed mills
- 6 hatcheries
- Nearly 12,000 rail cars deliver about 1.3 million tons of corn and soybean meal annually.
- Rockingham is the nation's 2nd ranked turkey producing county.

Processing plants, feed mills, hatcheries, and family farms that raise poultry and eggs can also be found in Central, Southside, Eastern Shore, and Southwest Virginia regions, giving the industry statewide importance.

The poultry industry creates economic opportunities in rural communities throughout much of Virginia. The industry gives a lot back to these communities through organizations such as the United Way.

Advances in breeding, nutrition and animal husbandry have helped the poultry industry gain efficiency over the years. Farmers in the early 20th century used more than five pounds of feed to produce a pound of chicken; today, they use less than two pounds. It once took more than 14 weeks to grow three pounds of chicken. Today's farmers produce a four-pound chicken in less than six weeks.

Per capita U.S. poultry meat consumption has risen

from 34 pounds in 1960 to nearly 100 pounds today. Virginia's poultry and egg industries produce an affordable, wholesome source of protein to help meet growing nutritional requirements in the U.S. and around the world.

Environmental stewardship is a priority in Virginia's poultry industry. The vast majority of growers operate with nutrient management plans, and most have voluntarily constructed poultry litter storage sheds.

Virginia Poultry Federation

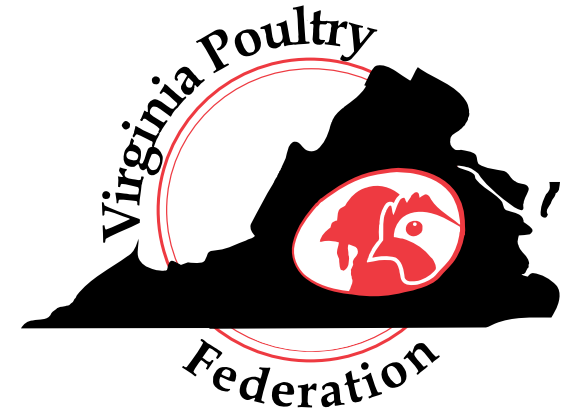
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Virginia Poultry Federation

*Positions on
State Issues – 2008*

