



Farm-to-Consumer  
Legal Defense Fund®

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Office Hours: 10 a.m. – 6 p.m. (Eastern)

# Policy Primer

By Farm-to-Consumer Legal Defense Fund

Last Updated: February 2025

A key part of Farm-to-Consumer Legal Defense Fund’s mission is policy work that seeks to move the needle forward on expanding food freedom and sovereignty laws around the country. We work with members, advocacy coalitions, organizational partners, legislators, and others to clarify existing rules and laws and to advance new federal and state legislation that supports the goals of small farmers, artisans, affiliates and other local food producers.

This primer seeks to not only provide further insight into our own policy work, but to also offer guidance to our members on how they can get involved and support the causes near and dear to their hearts and farms. You have made it clear to us that you want to do more to support the advancement of food regulation that helps instead of hinders food producers’ ability to grow the food they want and consumers’ ability to choose the foods they want to feed their families and communities. This primer will guide you through the process and support your grassroots efforts.

Let’s get started!

***Disclaimer: This resource is to be used by our members as a general guide and does not represent legal advice. To obtain targeted assistance on the local rules that apply to you, or to receive help if you have received notice of alleged zoning or other local violations, simply reach out to us and we can conduct research targeted to your needs and help you attain your food production goals.***

***Note: FTCLDF may not be able to provide legal assistance in formal local ordinance litigation or challenges that are currently before a court, but we can review the matter and assess what assistance we might be able to offer. We certainly can research your local ordinance and consult with you on the best steps for your specific operation.***



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## FTCLDF's Policy Work

Below is a high-level summary of the policy work we regularly conduct and will continue to expand upon:

- **Legislator partnerships:**  
We work with legislators to
  - help them better understand the needs of farmers, ranchers, food producers, and consumers in their state;
  - assist them in drafting food and agricultural bills;
  - provide sample legislation from other states;
  - supply scientific, financial and other data or experts to support their policy efforts;
  - provide access to member constituents who can offer valuable input.
- **Coalition partnerships:** We work closely with organizations like the Food and Ranch Freedom Alliance and the National Family Farm Coalition to strategize on policy solutions and garner partner and legislator support for bills important to our members and our mission.
- **Policy tracking:** We search for and track the progress of bills at the federal and state level across the country that seek to expand laws in meat processing, cottage/home food production, poultry, dairy production, agritourism, and many more.
- **Policy advocacy:** We submit comments or testimony at hearings lending our support to (or sharing concerns about) legislation we monitor; we issue action alerts that urge members to attend key bill hearings and submit comments, call their legislators, and provide information and talking points on key pieces of legislation; we contact legislator offices across the country alerting them to important food and agricultural legislation and urge them to join the effort.
- **Member support:** We support members who lead advocacy efforts in their communities by offering guidance, connecting them with legislators and allies, helping them craft bills, and preparing them for government meetings and hearings.



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### The Legislative Process

In most states, the legislative session begins early in the year. During these sessions, news bills are introduced and bills that did not pass into law the prior year are often resurrected.

As they prepare for these sessions to begin, legislators spend the months preceding (often in late summer and fall) preparing their legislative agenda, crafting the bills they plan to introduce or resurrect, and working both sides of the aisle to garner the support that will help get their measures passed. This is a key time for constituents to reach out to their local and state legislators to let them know about the challenges they're facing and encourage them to introduce bills that will advance food freedoms in support of farming livelihoods.

You can consult this legislative calendar to find out when your state's session will begin:  
<https://documents.ncsl.org/wwwncsl/About-State-Legislatures/sess2025%20111424.pdf>

Once introduced, the bills will make their way through both senate and house meetings and hearings over the course of weeks or months where they will be discussed, debated, studied, revised, and voted on. Some will then pass into law, others will be rejected, and still others will end up in limbo to perhaps be revived in a future legislative session. For the bills that remain in limbo at the end of the session, there are steps members can take to advocate for a bill to be reintroduced or become a policy priority in the next session. As noted above, FTCLDF closely tracks the progress of food freedom bills at the federal and state level and we participate in the process by submitting comments, testimony at bill hearings, and lending any other support needed to advance the bills we want to pass. We take similar steps relative to bills that are not in our members' best interests to try and **defeat bills that seek to restrict food freedoms**.

### How You Can Get Involved

We have seen our members achieve great success and make meaningful progress on policy change in their states and communities, so we know the process works and we urge you to get involved and to lean on us when you need support. Steps you can take:

- Build partnerships and coalitions: whether you are a food producer or a consumer, connect with other producers, consumers, advocates, and partners in your communities on issues of common interest and concern. Create an advocacy coalition, garner support, and grow your advocacy base! Then reach



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out to FTCLDF so what we can partner with you and your coalition to identify the actions we can take together to make meaningful policy change.

- Meet your legislators: go to legislator offices, town hall sessions, government meetings, pancake breakfasts, harvest fairs, community events – anywhere legislators visit to connect directly with their constituents. Share your story with them and tell them why improved food and agricultural policy is important to you, your family, your business, and your community. Establish a connection and then follow up with your ask – what improvements in law or policy are you seeking? Ask them to lend their support and follow up often, by emailing, calling their office, and seeking meetings.
  - As noted above, the months leading up to the opening of the legislative session in your state are a critical time for you to reach out to your local and state representatives, make your wishes known and ask them to push for bills that seek changes in the law that are most important to you. You want them to add your need to their policy priorities before the legislative sessions formally begin.
- Act: Make your voices heard! When legislation you support is being acted upon, engage! Call, email, or meet with legislators and tell them exactly how you want them to vote. Attend hearings to lend support and offer testimony if you can. To connect with legislators in your state and community, consult the Find Your Legislator links below. And be sure to contact FTCLDF if you have questions.

[Find Your U.S. Senators](#)

[Find Your U.S. Representatives](#)

[Find Your State Leaders](#) (including your state's agriculture commissioner)

## Contact FTCLDF!

If you want to support an effort but are unsure how to get started, reach out and we can guide you, provide talking points, share success stories, and offer other support. The best way to reach us is to visit the [Contact Us](#) page on our website, login, and complete the inquiry form. Your submission will be logged, and someone will be in touch!



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Each year, we track bills that have been introduced across the country. You can learn about the bills we're following and what stage each is in by consulting **our tracking database** [SOON TO BE RELEASED]. Be sure to let us know about food and agricultural bills important to you that we are not already tracking and we will add them to this database.

**Remember, it's easier to stop a bad law from being adopted than to repeal it** later so keeping on top of important bills and making sure your opinion is heard is crucial. Let's get to work together to move your policy needs forward!!

## YOUR FUND AT WORK

Services provided by FTCLDF go beyond legal representation for members in court cases. Educational and policy work also provide an avenue for FTCLDF to build grassroots activism to create the most favorable regulatory climate possible. In addition to advising on bill language, FTCLDF supports favorable legislation via action alerts and social media outreach. You can protect access to real foods from small farms by [donating today.](#)