

**THE FAMILY FARM**  
**A Resolution Approved By General Synod XV (1985)**

In recognition of the farm crisis and in solidarity with all who suffer because of it,

THEREFORE, the Fifteenth General Synod of the United Church of Christ recommends the following actions:

1. That educational resource materials and programs on the rural crisis be developed by the appropriate national instrumentalities for use in rural, urban and suburban churches of the UCC, with emphasis on:

the biblical understanding of land and justice, and the relationship of those understandings to the current crisis and control of land;

the economic relationship between rural and metropolitan people, and the importance of the agricultural economy for the rest of the nation;

the role of the family farm in providing food and fiber for this nation and the world;

the need for rural/urban cooperation in changing the policies and institutions that have helped engender the current crisis in rural America; and

the need to break down stereotypes and perceptions that culturally divide rural and urban people.

2. That local churches, associations, conferences and national instrumentalities of the United Church of Christ provide increased leadership and support for:

organizations and coalitions that are committed to the preservation and vitality of the family farm and which share the social values and policy goals of the Church;

local, state and national ecumenical programs and project designed to minister to farm families in crisis; and

programs, projects and organizations seeking to stop the loss of Black-owned land in the U.S. and enhance opportunities for Black farmers to make a living from agriculture.

3. That denominational and ecumenical public policy efforts on farm and rural community issues be focused and strengthened to:

ensure that adequate church resources are made available to support the Church's policy objectives in relation to family farm agriculture;

ensure that the Church's membership across the nation is informed and mobilized to support state and national policy objectives aimed at the survival and vitality of the family farm; and

ensure that the voices of family farmers and other rural people are heard and heeded in the development of public policy by legislators at both the state and national levels.

4. That the Congress of the United States be encouraged to enact legislation which will:

reform Federal tax laws in a manner which removes all elements that encourage unfair competition and the entry of tax-shelter motivated capital into family farm agriculture. Reform should include the elimination or restrictions of existing investment tax credit, accelerated depreciation, capital gains and other tax shelter mechanisms that unfairly penalize family farm operations;

target benefits of federal farm income support and credit programs toward small and moderate-sized farms;

increase income support levels to reflect cost of production, plus a fair profit, coupled with production goals which are met by mandatory and equitable management programs subject to a vote by the farmers;

maintain the Farmer's Home Administration's traditional emphasis on direct loan activity, resisting attempts to reduce the level of direct loans in favor of loan guarantees, and increasing the Limited Resources (LR) Loan Program for those farmers for whom the program is intended from 20 to 25 percent;

lower the existing cap of \$50,000 of Federal Farm payments with strict enforcement on any farmer or farm operator who participates in a government program currently in existence or enacted in the future;

encourage farmers to remove highly erodible land from production and reduce incentives to plow highly erodible land by cutting off farm support payments to farmers to do so;

provide for commodity reserves, isolated from the market, to be established at a level adequate to protect consumers and to meet domestic and global humanitarian food aid requirements;

establish debt relief and restructuring programs which are geared to family farm units only, and which are developed and implemented for the benefit of the owner-operator and not for the sole benefit of the lender;

ensure that all federally-supported programs of research and education in agriculture be required to focus on small and medium-sized family farm operations, and that such programs be especially targeted to minority farmers and land-owners in those areas where they constitute a significant portion of the population;

create comprehensive public policies that will assure the retention of Black-owned land in the U.S., and provide access to land ownership by all minority peoples; and

require that major new research initiatives and programs be undertaken by the federal government to ensure the development of long-term, sustainable agriculture in the U.S.

FURTHER, the Fifteenth General Synod requests the Secretary of the church to communicate this resolution and its recommendations to every local church of the United Church of Christ; the President, the Secretary of Agriculture and the Congress of the United States; and to the Governor and Secretary of Agriculture of every state in the Union, drawing attention to the crisis of the family farm and the need for immediate action at all levels of our society.