Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS)

Key Takeaways

- Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are a large group of man-made, fluorinated organic chemicals, with perfluorooctanoate (PFOA) and perfluorooctanesulfonate (PFOS) being the most wellknown chemicals within the group.
- The chemicals are used in many consumer goods and firefighting foam and are the main components of water, oil, and stain repellants.
- Recent science shows these compounds do not breakdown in water and are persistent in the environment – they are referred to as the "forever chemicals."
- The agricultural community does not produce PFAS however, these chemicals can be found in the water producers provide to their livestock and crops.
- In certain areas of the country, PFAS levels have risen in milk, beef and row crops.

Questions

1. **Should Tennessee Farm Bureau policy specifically address PFAS?**

Background

Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are a large group of man-made, fluorinated organic chemicals, with perfluorooctanoate (PFOA) and perfluorooctanesulfonate (PFOS) being the most wellknown chemicals within the group. The chemicals are used in many consumer goods and firefighting foam and are the main components of water, oil, and stain repellants. They are used in products such as Teflon, Goretex, and Scotchguard. Many everyday items such as clothing, cookware and food packaging materials contain PFAS chemicals.

Recent science shows these compounds do not breakdown in water and are persistent in the environment – they are referred to as the "forever chemicals." Due to their inability to break down, these chemicals have been identified as a source of water contamination. Unfortunately, some health studies suggest exposure to PFAS chemicals are associated with cancer diagnoses, infant development disorders, endocrine and cholesterol disorders. Federal and state governments are now attempting to create an extensive regulatory regime to limit human exposure.

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PFAS levels have risen in milk, beef and row crops. Another source of PFAS contamination on our nation's farms comes from soil amendments (biosolids, paper byproducts). For decades, farmers have been encouraged to used biosolids to support their soil health and as a result, may have been unknowingly spreading PFAS on to their property. As regulatory actions are developed, it is imperative agricultural producers not be held liable for passively receiving PFAS chemicals.

American Farm Bureau policy states landowners and producers, who passively receive PFAS on to their property, should not be held liable for any PFAS contamination.

AFBF OBJECTIVES

Farm Bureau's PFAS objectives are to:

- Ensure farmers are not held liable for PFAS contamination;
- Support funding for research into the health risks and strategies for mitigating risks associated with chemical contaminants in water and food;
- Ensure the best available science and appropriate risk assessments are used for the establishment of health goals or regulatory standards; and
- Oppose any legislation or administrative decision releasing the federal government (i.e., the Department of Defense) and their contractors and subcontractors from liability associated with pollution of their land, water, crops, livestock or products by chemical contaminants.