

# offer ag opinions



Japan's and Korea's beef markets. In the past, I have worked to provide farmers and ranchers across the country with disaster assistance funding and supported the Permanent Disaster Program in the 2008 Farm Bill. I will continue to work to ensure that livestock producers have assistance when events beyond their control adversely affect their operations.

It's also important that independent producers are protected against anti-competitive behavior. I will fight to ensure that farmers have fair access to markets, control over their production decisions and transparency in prices. I will work to ensure that the 1921 Packers and Stockyards Act is enforced and works to prohibit price discrimination against independent producers.

**McCain:** Our nation's future security and prosperity depends on the next president making the hard choices that will break our nation's strategic dependence on foreign sources of energy and will ensure our economic prosperity by meeting tomorrow's demands for a clean portfolio. I will make the necessary choices — producing more power, pushing technology to help free our transportation sector from its use of foreign oil, cleaning up our air and addressing climate change, and ensuring that Americans have dependable energy sources. I will lead the effort to develop advanced transportation technologies and alternative fuels to promote energy independence and cut off the flow of oil wealth to repressive dictatorships like Iran.

**AA: What steps might you take as president to stabilize fertilizer prices, which have doubled and tripled?**

**Obama:** A major key to stabilizing fertilizer prices is addressing the skyrocketing costs of natural gas. Through my policies for continued domestic production combined with investments in efficiency, we will take some of the pressure off the resource and increase supply, bringing costs down.

**McCain:** I believe in promoting and expanding the use of our domestic supplies of natural gas. When people are hurting, and struggling to afford gasoline, food, and other necessities, common sense requires that we draw upon America's own vast reserves of oil and natural gas. Within the United States we have tremendous reserves of natural gas. The Outer Continental Shelf alone contains 77 trillion cubic feet of recoverable natural gas. It is time we capitalize on these significant resources and build the infrastructure needed to transport this important component of electricity generation and transportation fuel around the country.

**AA: As we author trade agreements, are there ways to level the playing field in regard to individual countries' regulations, such as employee conditions and chemical use?**

## Analysis

### What factors sway voters?

**E**ARLY this year, *American Agriculturist* polled 467 Northeast farmers, asking: "If the 2008 presidential election were held today, which of the following would you vote for?"

Their answers stacked up this way:

- Hillary Clinton: 17%
- Mike Huckabee: 17%
- John McCain: 30%

**Obama:** For too long, Washington has put the interests of free trade ahead of broader concerns about our economy and American workers. I will break from the failed trade policies of the last eight years. As president, I will ensure that our trade agreements include strong, enforceable labor and environmental provisions in the core of the agreements. And I will direct the U.S. Trade Representative to aggressively protect intellectual property rights, monitor our trading partners to ensure they are complying with the terms of agreements, and take action when violations are found.

**McCain:** I believe that globalization is an opportunity for American workers today and in the future. Ninety-five percent of the world's customers lie outside our borders, and we need to be at the table when the rules for access to those markets are written. To do so, the U.S. should engage in multilateral, regional and bilateral efforts to reduce barriers to trade, level the global playing field and build effective enforcement of global trading rules.

**AA: What commitment would you make to improving the U.S. waterway infrastructure used to transport commodities for global export?**

**Obama:** Unfortunately, maintenance and upgrades to our waterways have been chronically underfunded. As president, I will increase funding so that we can upgrade and maintain our waterways as they are a vital component of our rural infrastructure and enhance the competitiveness of our homegrown products. I also supported the Water Resources Development Act, which authorized major upgrades to our waterways infrastructure, including the Upper Mississippi River and Illinois Waterway System. As president, I will work to provide the funding necessary to advance these new projects, as well.

**McCain:** Did not answer this question.

**AA: What would be your policy concerning greenhouse gases? How would it affect farmers? Would you pursue approving the Kyoto Treaty?**

- Barack Obama: 17%
- Ron Paul: 7%
- Undecided: 12%

### Recasting the vote

Leaving the undecided on the fence, let's theoretically restack votes, assuming die-hard party affiliation. That puts John McCain's rural vote at 47% and Barack Obama's at 34%.

If all of Ron Paul's advocates cross to the Obama camp, as some political pundits contend, that narrows the rural race to 47% to 41%. If die-hard Clinton supporters desert the Obama camp, McCain still gets the nod and the margin among rural voters.

**Obama:** As a result of climate change, the polar ice caps are shrinking, causing sea levels to rise; extreme weather is wreaking havoc across the globe; droughts are becoming more severe; tropical diseases are migrating north and numerous species are being threatened with extinction. To address this challenge, I support implementation of an economy-wide cap-and-trade system to reduce carbon emissions by the amount scientists say is necessary: 80% below 1990 levels by 2050. This market mechanism has worked before and will give all American consumers and businesses the incentives to use their ingenuity to develop economically effective solutions to climate change.

I will use some of the revenue generated from this cap-and-trade permit auction to invest in climate-friendly energy development and deployment. This will transform the economy, especially in rural America, which is poised to produce more renewable energy than ever before, creating mil-

Keep in mind, that was seven months ago. Neither candidate had offered clear policy direction on agriculture.

We'll soon find out whether \$1.06 billion of campaign spending — even before the home stretch of this presidential sweepstakes — swayed voter opinions. Or, will most voters choose the candidate they like as a person and feel they can trust?

*By John Vogel*

*Catch the full answers from the candidates to all our agricultural questions on the Web at [www.AmericanAgriculturist.com](http://www.AmericanAgriculturist.com).*

lions of new jobs across the country. I will also develop domestic incentives that reward forest owners, farmers and ranchers when they plant trees, restore grasslands or undertake farming practices that capture carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, creating new opportunities for rural America to help solve the climate crises.

**McCain:** I will propose a cap-and-trade system that would set limits on greenhouse gas emissions while encouraging the development of low-cost compliance options. A climate cap-and-trade mechanism would set a limit on greenhouse gas emissions and allow entities to buy and sell rights to emit, similar to the successful acid rain trading program of the early 1990s. The key feature of this mechanism is that it allows the market to decide and encourage the lowest-cost compliance options.

*For the complete set of questions and answers, visit [www.AmericanAgriculturist.com](http://www.AmericanAgriculturist.com).*

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