Summary
For decades, advanced algae research and commercialization projects have been supported by programs at the US Department of Energy. Today, as a new generation of algae producers are beginning to impact markets far beyond biofuels, it has become clear that agricultural policy will also play a vital role in how this industry expands.

Coordinating with a broad, bipartisan coalition, the Algae Biomass Organization (ABO) worked with Congress to build provisions into the 2018 Farm Bill that recognize algae as a crop under US agricultural policy for the first time. The US Department of Agriculture is now set to provide new pathways for algae-related research, market development, crop insurance programs, and carbon capture initiatives.

A New Agricultural Revolution
The algae industry is now expanding into markets beyond the biofuel opportunity. New products and services based on algae are demonstrating great potential in aquaculture, animal feed, human nutrition, advanced materials, wastewater treatment and related markets.

Yet a new revolution of algae agriculture will not meet its full potential unless algae cultivation is supported by US agricultural policy alongside traditional crops like corn, soy or wheat.

A New Path for Algae in Farm Policy
Programs that provide robust support for algae farmers at the US Department of Agriculture could only be implemented with Congressional engagement.

The Farm Bill, a massive piece of legislation only negotiated once every five years, was seen by leaders in the algae industry as the ideal venue for policy initiatives that could drive research, develop new markets, and support the expanding number of algae producers in the United States.

An Algae Coalition in Action
ABO helped organize a coalition that could prioritize algae for the 2018 Farm Bill. A bipartisan group of Congressional leaders convened educational meetings, ABO members provided data on the challenges that could be addressed with USDA assistance, and partner organizations collaborated on legislative efforts with complementary interests.

Dozens of briefings and draft legislative proposals helped build support for policies that could begin to make algae a new pillar of American agriculture.

The Outcome: Algae Wins Recognition as a Crop
Thanks to the efforts of a broad coalition, the 2019 Farm Bill mandates unprecedented support for algae producers at the USDA, similar to policies that have supported traditional crops for decades. This support will complement efforts at the DOE and other agencies, helping algae producers around the country enhance US agricultural competitiveness, diversify rural economies, and provide more sustainable products and services for billions around the world.
“We now sit at the beginning of a new chapter for the algae industry.”
Dr. Rebecca White, VP of Operations at iWi and ABO Board Member

Algae in the Farm Bill

• **Crop insurance for algae**
  – The Farm Bill explicitly includes algae an “agricultural commodity” for the purposes of federal crop insurance programs, paving the way for risk management strategies that can attract more investment to the industry.

• **A new Algae Agriculture Research Program**
  – This new research program will address challenges in farm-scale algae production and support the development of algae-based agriculture solutions.

• **Eligibility for the Biomass Crop Assistance Program (BCAP)**
  – BCAP provides financial support to farmers for the establishment, production and delivery of new biomass crops. The 2018 Farm Bill ensures that algae producers can qualify.

• **Credit under the Biobased Markets Program (BioPreferred)**
  – Current USDA methodology excludes biobased products from this program if they are made from recycled carbon. This is a major barrier for algae feedstocks, which can absorb massive quantities of CO₂ from industrial sources. The 2018 Farm Bill directs the USDA to develop a new methodology that will provide full credit for this type of biobased content.

• **New products qualify for the Biorefinery Assistance (9003 Loan Guarantee) Program**
  – Section 9003 of this loan guarantee program will now allow algae-based and other biorefinery projects that manufacture renewable chemicals and biobased products to qualify regardless of whether biofuels will be produced.

• **Carbon Capture and Use (CCU)**
  – The 2018 Farm Bill includes several provisions expanding CCU research, education and outreach at the Department of Agriculture. Algae producers offer one of the most potent methods for CCU.

Join the Algae In Agriculture Coalition
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