The Western half of the United States is as unique as it is vast. Federal policies and programs have played a major role in developing “The West” from acquiring (part of the Louisiana Purchase), settling (Homestead Act), facilitating commerce (development of the first transcontinental railroad (1863-1968) and Federal Highway Act in 1956) to facilitating agricultural production (Reclamation Act in 1902 and Colorado River Compact) to protecting the natural resources (Federal Regulation of Grazing and Endangered Species Act). This issue is designed to capture the interaction between Federal Policy and the U.S. West through the lens of three distinctly different federal policies and programs, the first, focusing on animal diseases is regulatory in nature, the second focuses on legislative priorities in the 2018 Farm Bill and the last details both regulatory and legislative impacts on agricultural trade.

In this issue we focus on how three national policy programs effect agriculture in the West. Amy Hagerman and Tori Marshall look at Animal Disease Preparedness and Response in the West. They provide an insightful and interesting overview about disease outbreaks that have “rocked” livestock industries, including African Swine Fever, Avian Influenza, Foot and Mouth disease (FMD), and Newcastle disease. While many of us know that these diseases hurt US farmers, industry and consumers, most of us living in the West probably don’t know how we are unique. What lessons do we take from the past to prepare our unique agriculture for future outbreaks? Hagerman and Marshall discuss three issues in preparedness: resource limitations; public perceptions; and business continuity. The need to be prepared is clear. One study showed that a simulated FMD outbreak in a Kansas feedlot could result in culling more than half of cloven-hoofed animals in the surrounding area. Another study found that an FMD outbreak beginning in California could lead to losses between $8.5 million and $13.5 billion. The authors discuss multiple ideas where preparedness could be improved in the West.

In our second contribution, Bart Fischer and Brandon Willis discuss Western Priorities in the 2018 Farm Bill. Every five to seven years, a massive farm policy bill is passed, traditionally called the Farm Bill. The last one was passed in 2018 and was called the Agricultural Improvement Act of 2018. About 3 quarters of the funding goes to nutrition programs. About 16% goes toward commodity programs and insurance, and about 7% goes toward conservation. But western agriculture is very different from the Midwest, South and the East. So, Fischer and Willis help us understand those specific impacts on the west. Several changes to crop insurance and commodity programs effect the west. For example, a change in payment acres could mean an increase in revenue for farmers that move out of the commodity policies and into the conservation stewardship program. On the flip side, land, in the conservation reserve program, and payments, will be reduced, where 65% of contracts are in Western states. Western states are likely to benefit from increased funding for the Regional Conservation Partnership program. Funding was also increased for the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program and for watershed protection and flood prevention. Changes in forestry provisions make it easier to pursue activi-

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ties to protect, restore and improve habitat for greater sage-grouse and mule deer. Funding for Trade promotion was also increased. Finally, the West will benefit from a program for specialty crops research and farmers markets and local food promotion.

Finally, Luis Ribera and Mechel Paggi look at Recent Agricultural Trade Issues and Their Impact on Exports from US Western States. Ribera and Paggi discuss how several trade policy actions in the past few years, such as withdrawal from the Trans Pacific Partnership and renegotiation of NAFTA, have hampered trade. Western states accounted for almost half of US agricultural exports in 2018, mainly tree nuts, fruits, cotton, vegetables, wheat and beef. As a result of retaliatory trade policies, western state agricultural exports to China declined by over 40% in 2018. Farmers lost almost $4 billion in 2019. A changing portfolio of trading reduced potentially harmful losses with China and returns rebounded in late 2019 with new trade deals. The US gov’t instituted the Market Facilitation Program to help producers endure reduced sales. Payments were made to the tune of 50% of 2018 production. In a second round, the US government paid $15-150 per acre depending on the county, adding up to about $20 billion. Western states got about 37%, or about $4 billion, of this relief. This was about 2% of cash receipts for agricultural production.

The uniqueness of the U.S. West dictates that Federal policies and the programs that carry them out have to be tailored to the region. That is, both regulatory and legislative policies need to be crafted in a manner that recognizes the unique characteristics of the region from its vastness, to its unequaled resource endowment and natural beauty.