



2025

ANNUAL REPORT

INDIGENOUS FOOD AND AGRICULTURE INITIATIVE



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Remarks	01
Quarter 1	05
Quarter 2	11
Quarter 3	17
Quarter 4	27

Executive Remarks



This has been a year of change for many across Indian Country. Changing leadership at the federal level brings new policies and perspectives that Tribal Nations and Tribal producers must navigate, all while investing in their communities and working hard to grow, raise, and harvest the food, fiber, and fuel that support healthy people and economies. Through it all, IFAI staff have worked hard to continue the mission we have carried out since our founding: to enhance the health and wellness of Tribal communities by advancing healthy food systems, diversified economic development, and Tribal food traditions in Indian Country.

Our team has had an incredibly productive year. We have worked one-on-one with Tribes across Indian Country, providing support and technical assistance in the planning and building of Tribally led food sovereignty efforts. We have tracked, analyzed, and explained the numerous federal policies changes this year impacting Tribal food and agriculture operations. We have delivered food safety training for Tribal producers and food businesses, traveled across the country to meet with stakeholders, and provided subject matter expertise to Tribal, federal, and state policymakers upon request. We also hosted our 11th annual Native Youth in Food and Agriculture Leadership Summit, welcoming a new cohort of Indian Country's next generation of agriculture professionals to our campus for a week of intensive learning and connection.

As we closed out the year, we released a new resource, "Tribal Governance Guide to Food and Agriculture," to support Tribal governments investing in and securing food and agriculture systems. We hope that this practical guide is useful for Tribal Nations to explore the pathways to self-governed tribal food systems, economies, and communities through agriculture. We know there's no "one size fits all" solution to Tribal food sovereignty. Our goal with this guide is to offer clearly defined, navigable pathways able to be tailored to each Tribes' individual and community needs and goals. If Tribes are investing in food systems, we stand ready to assist.

All this work, and more, can be found in this year's annual report. To our partners, supporters, and stakeholders across Indian Country, thank you for another year of collaboration and growth. We look forward to continuing our work together in 2026!

Wado,

**Carly Griffith Hotvedt, J.D., M.P.A.
(Cherokee Nation)**

IFAI Executive Director

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carly Griffith Hotvedt". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Carly" being the most prominent.

Quarter 1 - Fall Conferences

October 1 - December 31, 2024





Q1

October 1 - December 31, 2024

Policy & Legal

The first quarter was busy for the Policy and Legal teams. IFAI presented an Agricultural Finance, Tax and Asset Protection (AgFTAP) training to attendees from around the country, including producers, Native Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) employees, and Tribal leaders. IFAI was pleased to partner with colleagues at the University of Arkansas School of Law's Masters in Agricultural and Food Law to develop curriculum and tailor to a Tribal audience.

IFAI staff also attended the Indian Nations Conservation Alliance (INCA) conference in Las Vegas, Nevada. IFAI staff presented information on the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Regional Tribal Conservation Advisory Councils (RTCAC). There they discussed with attendees the opportunities RTCAC engagement represents to engage USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) leadership on critical matters relevant to land stewardship in Indian Country. At INCA, IFAI Policy staff also made new connections with Tribal leaders and shared IFAI's foundational legal resource, the Model Tribal Food and Agriculture Code.

In addition to the INCA conference, IFAI attended both the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) Winter Conference and the Intertribal Agriculture Council's (IAC) Annual Conference. At both gatherings, IFAI shared insights about supply chain issues impacting the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDIPR).

Events and Outreach – Policy and Legal

- Indian Nations Conservation Alliance (INCA) Conference
- Agriculture Finance Tax and Asset Protection (AgFTAP) Tax Training
- Guest Lecture, Oklahoma State University, Agriculture Economics, Dr. Thapa
- National Association Food Distribution on Indian Reservations (NAFDPIR) Annual Conference
- Native Food and Nutrition Resource Alliance/ National Association Food Distribution on Indian Reservations (NFNRA-NAFDPIR) Board Meeting
- National Congress of the American Indian (NCAI) Winter Session
- Growing Power: A Climate, Nutrition and Food Sovereignty Summit
- Food Distribution on Indian Reservation (FDPIR) Tribal Consultation
- Intertribal Agriculture Council (IAC) Annual Conference





Next Generation

IFAI's Next Generation team focused on youth outreach, attending the National FFA Convention held in Indianapolis, Indiana. IFAI staff teamed up with the Tribal Agriculture Fellowship (TAF) staff while at the event, strengthening relationships with FFA chapters and the National FFA organization. IFAI staff spoke with over 1000 individuals at National FFA this year, promoting the Native Youth in Food and Agriculture Leadership Summit and Native student support offered by IFAI. Staff connected with multiple organizations, including the National Chapter of Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Related Sciences (MANNRS), and identified future opportunities to collaborate.

On-campus Outreach

November is Native American Heritage Month and a very busy time for the Native American Student Services (NASS) Director Greg Jones (Shawnee). For the Indigenous People's Day celebration in Fayetteville, Arkansas, NASS hosted a memorial walk to the Trail of Tears marker on the University of Arkansas campus. At the site, Fayetteville Mayor Lioneld Jordan proclaimed the day as Indigenous People's Day Proclamation event, and guests were treated to a musical performance by Gabby Nagel (Eastern Band of Cherokee).

Additionally, NASS hosted a stickball exhibition featuring Native youth from the University of Arkansas. There was also a Native American dinner hosted at the Fullbright Dining Hall followed by the Fish Game, otherwise known as traditional stickball. The month's on-campus festivities culminated in an exceptional performance by the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Youth Outreach Program at the annual Native American Heritage Women's Basketball.

Events and Outreach – Next Generation

- National FFA Convention
- Oklahoma Conservation Districts' Farm to School Summit
- Intertribal Agriculture Council (IAC) Annual Conference
- Indigenous People's Day Celebrations
- Stickball Exhibition Game
- Native American Heritage Women's Basketball Game
- University of Arkansas Food On The Hill (FOTH) Native Dinner Event



Tribal Enterprise Development

IFAI maintains a longstanding partnership via cooperative agreement with USDA-NRCS to facilitate and support the Regional Tribal Conservation Advisory Councils (RTCACs), bodies of Tribal leaders and duly appointed Tribal representatives who work with USDA-NRCS staff to discuss opportunities to improve Tribal access to federal land stewardship and conservation programming. The Central Region TCAC Tribal representatives and NRCS staff gathered in Minnesota in October to discuss ways to improve NRCS programs and service to Tribes and Tribal producers. IFAI coordinated travel, minutes, indexed topics and action items, and updated stored documents for RTCAC use.

The week featured fruitful discussion, and a memorable Tribal tour of the Mystic Lake Cultural Center on the lands of the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community (SMSC). Next to the cultural center, the SMSC has a prairie restoration project in progress.

They have been restoring prairies for over 20 years along the Minnesota River. The tour offered NRCS staff and Tribal representatives a first-hand look at Tribal land stewardship practices in action.

The tour also included a stop at the Dakota Prairie Composting Facility. While the Tribe has been composting since 2011, the new facility now has three times the capacity of the original facility, allowing the Tribe to increase composting activities which aligns with Dakota values of caring for the Earth.

The week concluded with a full day of discussion, which served as an opportunity for Tribal participants and NRCS to build rapport and find pathways to future success.

Events and Outreach – Tribal Enterprise

- Central Regional Tribal Conservation Advisory Council (RTCAC)
- RTCAC Joint Meeting at IAC Annual Conference

Publications

Press Releases, Blogs and Media Mentions

- In the News: The Menu
- IFAI Hosts Indian Country Tax and Asset Management Training
- IFAI Releases Summary of Senate Farm Bill
- IFAI to Facilitate Tribal Briefing Dec. 4 – FDPIR
- The Rich History and Resilience of Native American Agriculture – From Past to Present
- Farm Bill Update November 2024
- Comment Template Letters: Tribal Input needed on FDPIR Study
- In the News: Today
- In the News: Center for Nutrition & Health Impact
- Griffith Hotvedt Selected to Lead the Indigenous Food and Agriculture Initiative
- In the News: 89.9 KBOB
- The 2025 Dietary Guidelines Scientific Report Provides Historic Inclusion of Indigenous Nutritional Needs
- IFAI Releases Annual Report
- Congress Extends 2018 Farm Bill for second time
- In the News: Bloomberg
- USDA Office of Tribal Relations Celebrates Decade of Service
- Rooted Wisdom: Episode 8, Season 1 – Shaping the Next Generation of Tribal Agriculturalists
- Rooted Wisdom: Episode 9, Season 1 – Native Heritage Explored #2



Quarter 2 - Winter Changes

January 1 - March 31, 2025





Q2

January 1 - March 31, 2025

Policy & Legal

The second quarter also saw a volume of activity as the new year began with a new presidential administration and the release of the USDA/ DHHS Scientific Report of the 2025 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee. The presidential administration also immediately issued new policies, rescinded some federal contracts and froze funding which impacted Tribes. The Policy team held a webinar to discuss what these changes meant for Indian Country.

Our Executive Director, Carly Griffith Hotvedt, was interviewed by Tulsa World, The Menu, and the Associated Press. She discussed policy and offered her own perspective as a Tribal citizen on the legal nature of Tribal citizenship as a protected political class.

IFAI continued to monitor any potential Farm Bill developments, creating an informational resource that discussed the Farm Bill process, key deadlines, funding, and program breakdowns. This resource supported Tribal leaders, staff, and producers, helping them to keep up to date with the ever-changing Farm Bill landscape.

IFAI staff also attended the USDA's Tribal Advisory Committee (TAC) Meeting in February. The TAC, created by the 2018 Farm Bill, provides advice and guidance to the Secretary of Agriculture on matters related to Tribal and Indian affairs. During this meeting, the committee discussed lessons learned from calendar year 2024 and deliberated on priorities and a workplan for calendar year 2025. The various subcommittees also provided updates.

Additional Events and Outreach – Policy and Legal

- Statement on Executive Orders pausing program funding
- NCAI Reservation Economic Summit
- Webinar over EOs Impact on Indian Country Food and Ag
- Blog Post over Rural Development
- Webinar over EOs Impact on Indian Country Food and Ag
- NCAI Winter Session
- 2025 Organic Seed Growers Conference
- Healthy Eating Research (HER) Conference
- LLM Guest Lecture for the University of Arkansas
- Ithana Lunch and Learn at the Chickasaw Nation





Next Generation

The Next Generation program at IFAI welcomed Youth Coordinator, Whitney Nelson, to the team in January. Whitney hit the ground running when she took her position, leading the planning and delivery of the 11th Annual Native Youth in Food and Agriculture Leadership Summit.

As part of the outreach to generate interest in the Summit and encourage applications, Whitney attended the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC) conference held in Rapid City, South Dakota. Over 1,000 students from Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) attended. IFAI staff were able to facilitate 10 applications for the Youth Summit from this event. Additionally, IFAI's communications intern and College of the Muscogee Nation student, Arvcuken Noquisi, participated in AIHEC's student competition, taking first place in Informative Speech and second place in Web Design.

On-campus Outreach

The Native American Student Services (NASS) offices officially moved to the Multicultural Center in the University of Arkansas Student Union in January. This new space gives students access to a central hub for student services and collaborations. NASS Director Gregory Jones (Eastern Shawnee) said, "I am glad we were able to get into our new space and provide a welcoming environment for the students."

Additional Events and Outreach – Next Generation

- University of Central Oklahoma (UCO) Graduate Planning Event
- Oklahoma State University (OSU) Spears School Tribal Summit

Tribal Enterprise Development

The Miccosukee Tribe in Florida invited the IFAI Enterprise Team to their lands for a one-on-one consultation to further develop their agriculture and natural resource programs and enterprises. During the trip, IFAI staff were able to tour the Tribe's three islands in the Everglades, a place of cultural significance for the Miccosukee people. Additionally, staff toured the Miccosukee Health Center, a state-of-the-art, four-story facility that offers comprehensive, enhanced medical services and life-saving care for the community. The tour also included Alligator Alley, a ceremonial and ecologically significant place that the Tribe used to run livestock.

The Enterprise Team performed an analysis of information shared and provided a report to the Tribe detailing options, funding sources, and resources available to support the Tribe's efforts.

Tribal Department of Agriculture Consultations

- Miccosukee Tribe



Food Safety

The Food Safety team attended two events during the second quarter. Director of Tribal Enterprise, Steven Shedd (Muscogee Creek Nation) and Tribal Enterprise Specialist, Satara Fountain, attended the Southern Regional Integrated Produce Safety's Annual Conference in Montgomery, Alabama. At the conference, Steven and Satara connected with growers, gaining insights on current initiatives and updates in the region. Some topics of discussion include a review of Produce Safety Alliance (PSA) Module 5.1 Pre-harvest Water, Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) Audits, Biological Soil amendments of animal origin, and agritourism, among others.

In March, IFAI's Tribal Enterprise Manager, Will Seeley, traveled to California to attend the Community Alliance of Family Farmers Alternative Produce Safety Rule Grower Training Curriculum Pilot training. He took part in a small farmer food safety training pilot at the Center for Land Based Learning. He also offered feedback on the curriculum and considerations of the produce safety rule for small producers. As IFAI continues to work with the Tribal Food Safety Alliance to develop a Tribally focused curriculum, this was an invaluable opportunity to comparatively analyze alternative curriculums.

Publications

Policy & Legal Analysis

- Farm Bill Tracker
- January Farm Bill Update
- 2025 Dietary Guidelines
- Feds Request Indian Country input on new Child Nutrition Programs Tribal Pilot Projects
- IFAI Releases Farm Bill Comparison Summary



Press Releases, Blogs and Media Mentions

- What is Rural Development, Why Does it Matter to Indian Country?
- UPDATE: USDA cancels LFPA25 funding, will honor LFPA and LFPA+ agreements
- IFAI to Host Webinar on Executive Actions and Impacts on Tribal Food and Agriculture
- USDA Announces SUN Bucks 2025 Benefit Levels for Tribal Programs
- Indigenous nutritional gets a voice in Federal Dietary Guidelines — The Circle News
- Collective memories, shared future: Gathering of Indigenous artists and scholars in Fayetteville meant to encourage dialogue across generations, cultures — The Arkansas Democrat-Gazette
- Friday, February 28, 2025 – The Menu: Trump’s executive orders on tribal ag, a new children’s book, and conserving an endangered fish in NC — Native America Calling
- Trump administration cuts major talking point at tribal economic summit — AP News
- Spears Business hosts 3rd annual Tribal Summit with record attendance — Oklahoma State University
- Carly Griffith Hotvedt: Tribes cannot be truly sovereign without food sovereignty – Tulsa World
- People to Watch in 2025 – Tulsa World



Quarter 3 - New Resources

April 1 - June 30, 2025





Q3

April 1 - June 30, 2025

Policy & Legal

Between outreach, developing new resources, and the celebration of 100 years for the University of Arkansas Law School, our team was extremely productive.

Our lawyers were also working on their continuing education this quarter. Whether they were attending the Sovereignty Symposium or the National Native Bar Association's Annual Conference, both held in Oklahoma, IFAI's attorneys kept pace with legal changes impacting Tribal governments and Native farmers and ranchers. Executive Director, Carly Griffith Hotvedt, (Cherokee Nation), spoke on a panel at Sovereignty Symposium discussing Tribal agriculture economic development.

Rooted Wisdom, IFAI's podcast, highlighted IFAI's partnership with the North Central Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Center for May, which is Mental Health Awareness Month. This episode featured a discussion on agricultural mental health initiatives with Josie Rudolphi, Assistant Professor and Extension Specialist at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, and Kaycee Captain, Tribal Outreach and Policy Specialist at IFAI.



Rooted Wisdom's special three-part mini-series, *Makin' Scratch*, focused on the effects of the avian influenza outbreak from three different perspectives. Dr. Fred Clark, Associate Director of the Center of Excellence for Poultry Science and Extension Poultry Health Veterinarian at the University of Arkansas, discussed the emergence and potential impacts of the outbreak. In episode two, two current and one former IAC specialists—Katherine Minthorn, Amelia Evans-Brown, and Carrie Freeman—shared their personal journeys and professional insights into the challenges and successes of poultry farming in Tribal communities. Finally, in episode three, we interviewed Founder and CEO of Makoce Agriculture Development, Nick Hernandez. The episode highlighted the beginnings of Makoce, how it has grown, and where Hernandez hopes to see it go in the future. Makoce offers technical assistance to those who want to become poultry producers in Indian Country.





Events and Outreach – Policy and Legal

- North American Bison Summit
- Tribal Self-Governance Conference
- North Central Region Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) Annual Conference
- Cherokee Producer Meeting
- Society of Environmental Journalist Conference Session
- Western Region National Association of Food Distribution on Indian Reservations (NAFDPIR) Conference
- National Farm Bill Coalition (NFBC) Fly In
- United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Tribal Advisory Committee
- Kead Regional Coordination Center Food Safety Outreach Program (LRCC FSOP) Project Director's Meeting
- Sovereignty Symposium
- National Native American Bar Association (NNABA) Annual Conference
- Buffalo to School Lunch Training
- Muscogee Nation Festival
- Eastern Regional Tribal Conservation Advisory Council (RTCAC)
- National Association of Food Distribution Programs on Indian Reservations (NAFDPIR) Midwest and Eastern Region Conference



Next Generation

Events and Outreach – Next Generation

- Minorities in Agriculture, Nature Resources and Related Sciences (MANRRS) Conference
- Oklahoma FFA Convention



Tribal Enterprise Development

Tribal Enterprise began the quarter by providing strategic guidance to enhance the Tribe's cattle and bison operations for the Iowa Tribe of Oklahoma. Our recommendations focused on improving herd genetics, addressing nutritional deficiencies, and strengthening overall herd management practices. To support these efforts, IFAI shared relevant chapters from the Model Food and Agriculture Code, organizational charts, funding resources, and information on developing an ARMP tailored to the Tribe's agricultural goals.

In support of the Comanche Nation's agricultural development, IFAI delivered a suite of resources to aid in the creation of codes for greenhouses, distribution centers, and the establishment of a Tribal Department of Agriculture (TDA). These resources included a Department of Agriculture template, a resource banking document, a summary and selected portions of the Model Food and Agriculture Code, job descriptions for key roles within TDAs, organizational and structural charts, and infographics illustrating the benefits of TDAs for Tribal producers, farmers, and ranchers.

They then wrapped up the quarter by visiting the Kiowa Tribe in June to discuss model code development and identified a code priority list of prescribed burns, regulation and control of animals and livestock, and land-use regulations. We briefly discussed setting up an ARMP, but the Tribe was most interested in focusing on code development. Since this visit, our attorneys have been in regular communication with Kiowa Tribe as they work together on developing language code.

Tribal Department of Agriculture Consultations

- Iowa Tribe of Oklahoma One-on-One Consultation
- Comanche Nation One-on-One Consultation
- Kiowa Tribe Consultation

Additional Events and Outreach – Tribal Enterprise

- North Central Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Center Impact Collaboration Conference
- Wisconsin Tribal Conservation Advisory Committee`



Food Safety

Episode 7 of Rooted Wisdom features IFAI's Director of Tribal Enterprise, Steven Shedd J.D., citizen of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation. Listen to this insightful episode on our website to hear how IFAI's Tribal Enterprise team helps Tribal Nations navigate food and agricultural development opportunities and offers free food safety training and education across the country.

The Indigenous Food and Agriculture Initiative's Food Safety team launched an online hub that provides a one-stop shop for all of IFAI's food created content, including infographics, webinars, demonstrations, and more. Access the resource hub at bit.ly/IFAIFSR.

Our Food Safety team also launched a needs assessment specifically targeted for Native agriculture operations engaging in the growing, harvesting, holding, or packing of sprouts for human consumption. The results of this assessment will help IFAI, and the Tribal Food Safety Alliance partners determine how to best meet the food safety compliance needs of Indian Country's sprouts growers through training, technical assistance, outreach, and education.



Work also included educating Tribes and Tribal producers on the Good Agriculture Practices (GAPs) program and guiding fresh produce farms in risk assessment and safety practices. This training is held every quarter and helps to equip Tribal participants with valuable knowledge to improve safety and reduce the risk of foodborne illness.

Events and Outreach-Food Safety

- Annual Northeast Center to Advance Food Safety Conference
- Southern Regional Integrated Produce Safety Conference
- North Central Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) Annual Conference
- Food Safety Training for the Nottawaseppi Huron Band of the Potawatomi (NHBP)
- Food Distribution on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) Produce Handler Training
- Annual Western Food Safety Conference
- Low Risk Foods Good Manufacturing Practices
- Food Safety Training at the Wind River Reservation

Publications

Press Releases, Blogs and Media Mentions

- Tribal Aquaculture Investments Spur Industry Growth
- The Next Frontier in Expanded Tribal Self-Determination and Self-Governance Authority
- Rooted Wisdom, Season 2, Episode 1 - Rural Roots: Why Rural Development Matters to Indian Country
- Tax Tips and Guidance for Tribal Agriculture Operators
- In the News: Grist
- Rooted Wisdom, Season 2, Episode 2 - Cultivating Resilience: NCFRSAC and IFAI's Role in Supporting Tribal Mental Health
- Secretary's Memorandum Clarifies USDA Commitment to Tribal Trust Responsibility
- Tribal Consultation – Indian Affairs Workforce Efficiency and Productivity (EO 14210) and Emergency Permitting Procedures to Strengthen Domestic Energy Supply
- In the News: Winds of Change
- Rooted Wisdom, Season 2, Episode 3 - Special Series: Makin Scratch with Dr. Clark
- Tribal SNAP Comment Letter for Recission of Final Rule
- Rooted Wisdom, Season 2, Episode 4 - Special Series: Makin Scratch with Tribal Producers
- Farm Service Agency County Committee Elections- Why It Matters
- Rooted Wisdom, Season 2, Episode 5 - Special Series: Makin Scratch with Nick Hernandez
- 11th Annual Native American Youth in Agriculture Leadership Summit



Quarter 4 - Summer Learning

July 1 - September 30, 2025





Q4

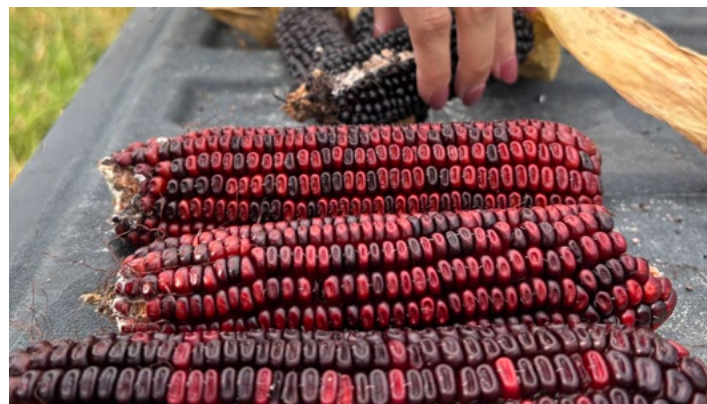
July 1 - September 30, 2025

Policy & Legal

During this quarter, IFAI's Policy and Legal team participated in several key events and consultations on Tribal food and agriculture policy. Highlights include the USDA Tribal Advisory Committee (TAC) meeting on September 18, where staff provided updates on federal policy developments.

The team also attended the National Association of Food Distribution Programs on Indian Reservations (NAFDPIR) Annual Conference. We were able to meet with many of our Indian Tribal Organization (ITO) and federal colleagues and explore the Ak-Chin Indian Community's impressive farming operations.

IFAI Policy staff spoke at *Sustainable Agriculture: Discovering Conservation Practices to Create Success for You and Pollinators, Too!* Conference at the Euchee Butterfly Farm in Bixby, Oklahoma, September 17–18, 2025. Tribal leaders, agricultural experts, and community members came together to share knowledge and practices that strengthen Tribal food sovereignty and conservation.



The two-day event featured sessions on Tribal agriculture initiatives, soil health, pollinator support, cultural programming, and entrepreneurial success stories from Native farmers and ranchers. Participants also toured the Euchee Butterfly Farm's greenhouses and pollinator gardens, enjoyed cultural presentations, and explored resources to support sustainable and eco-friendly agricultural practices.

IFAI released several publications, including a new analysis of the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, P.L. 119-21, and its impacts on federal food and agricultural policies for Tribal Nations, producers, and citizens. This law consolidates a wide range of provisions that reshape how food access, agricultural support, and nutrition education are funded and administered across Indian Country as well as the rest of the United States, making this policy analysis a significant undertaking for our team.

IFAI also posted a blog about the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) FY2026 Patrick Leahy Farm to School Grant Program, which is offering up to \$18 million to support local food systems and agricultural education in schools across the country.

Additionally, we published a new report analyzing the USDA's reorganization plan and its potential impact on Indian Country, particularly on producers and the elders, families, and children that rely on FDPIR each month. The report highlights risk to agricultural services, nutrition programs, as well as concerns about centralizing Tribal relations functions at USDA.

Our legal and policy teams were also in the news this quarter. Kelli Case (Chickasaw), Senior Director of Strategy, shared insights on the intersection of Tribal food sovereignty and organic agriculture with *Fields of Possibility*. Additionally, Carly Griffith Hotvedt (Cherokee), Executive Director, highlighted the expanding economic footprint of Tribal Nations across Oklahoma in a piece from *The Tulsa World* that underscored how Tribal governments are driving growth through strategic investments and partnerships.

Finally, throughout the quarter, IFAI released several new podcast episodes on policy and legal issues. We featured Executive Director of Akiptan, Skya Ducheneaux (Cheyenne River Sioux), and talked about how Community Development Financial Institutions, or CDFIs, are reshaping access to agricultural capital in Indian Country. We spoke to Dr. Browning Neddeau (Citizen Potawatomi Nation), a professor at California State University, Chico, about his research into Native American imagery on agricultural crate labels used to market fruits and vegetables to advertise brands, quality and origin of product and their impact on the way we see Native people.



Events and Outreach— Policy and Legal

- Soil and Water Conservation Society Conference
- OK NRCS Nation to Nation Annual Meeting
- IAC Northwest Regional Conference
- Economic Mobility and Wellbeing Conference
- NAFDPIR Annual Conference
- Mvskoke Loan Fund Vendor Fair
- Native Nutrition Conference
- IAC Rocky Mountain Conference
- Great Lakes Tribal Economic Summit
- Tribal Advisory Committee Quarterly Meeting





Next Generation

Native Youth in Food and Agriculture Leadership Summit

IFAI hosted the Native Youth Leadership Summit from July 10–18, welcoming nearly 40 Native youth from across the country for a transformative experience centered on leadership, cultural knowledge, and career exploration in Tribal agriculture.

This cohort of Summit attendees was our most diverse yet. 30 Tribal Nations were represented including Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, Navajo Nation, Oglala Sioux Tribe, Eastern Pequot Tribal Nation, Mi'kmaq Nation and Eastern Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma just to name a few.

As part of the Summit, youth participated in themed educational tracks of Food and Nutrition, Tribal Agriculture Policy, Tribal Agribusiness, Land and Natural Resource Management, and Animal Science. Our newest track, Animal Science, offered experiential learning focused on sheep and goats, including a special session where youth discussed the importance of traditional ecological knowledge with University of Arkansas faculty. Participants discussed the cultural significance of Navajo Churro Sheep, a heritage breed, and demonstrated how to weave blankets using Churro wool, connecting Indigenous practices with academic dialogue.

Summit attendees were especially excited for this year's field trip to the Muscogee Nation. This field trip, organized in partnership with the Muscogee Nation Secretary of Interior Affairs, Trenton Kisse, featured four key stops. The first destination was the Looped Square Meat Company in Beggs, OK. This facility harvests and processes livestock raised at the Looped Square Ranch that is owned and operated by the Muscogee Nation as well as livestock from local Tribal and non-Tribal community producers. Looped Square then sells product in the store front along with other items from local Tribal producers or Indigenous-owned companies. Most of their meat items are sold to community members. Participants spent several hours touring these facilities, observing operations, and asking questions.

The next three destinations were in Okmulgee, OK, where we toured the College of the Muscogee Nation's (a 1994 Tribal college) school garden overseen by extension staff and student workers. Chris Azbell and Courtney Natseway led the tour where students were able to learn about 1994 Land Grant Extension Services, how the college has utilized the school garden to grow traditional food and how they have been able to distribute the extra produce to Tribal members in the community.





The third stop on the trip was to the Food Distribution Center which is one of three distribution facilities the Muscogee Nation has on their reservation. The Food Distribution Center is part of the Food Distribution Program (FDPIR) on Indian Reservations administered by the Muscogee Nation. Summit participants were able to see how the food items arrive at the facility, are sorted, stored and displayed for FDPIR participants to shop and select. The group discussed how having a FDPIR facility has impacted access to food on the reservation.

The final stop was the Eco-Park where participants saw how the Wildlife Department is in the process of converting a golf course to the original land status by introducing native species back into the area while removing grass types and other forages that are harmful and not native to the area. The group also learned how two ponds on the property are used to introduce local fish breeds and aquatic plants. This led to a discussion of how the Tribe also uses the ponds as a way for young people to learn how to fish and connect them with the Wildlife Department and the opportunities they provide for Tribal youth.

General Youth Outreach

Beyond the summit, IFAL staff attended the National Sustainability Society Conference, where Youth Programs Coordinator Whitney Nelson co-presented on Indigenous knowledge systems in STEM, highlighting the importance of integrating traditional ecological knowledge into modern scientific frameworks.

Outreach continued at the Citizen Potawatomi Nation College & Career Fair, where IFAL connected with hundreds of Native students to share opportunities in Tribal agriculture, education, and leadership development.

Events and Outreach—Next Generation

- 11th Annual Youth Summit
- Citizen Potawatomi Nation College and Career Fair
- Absentee Shawnee Tribe Education Fair
- National Sustainability Society Conference

Tribal Enterprise Development

The Tribal Enterprise team conducted a robust series of one-on-one consultations, training, and outreach activities this quarter, supporting Tribal producers and agricultural departments across the country.

In September, staff participated in a presentation at the Euchee Butterfly Farm, where they explored sustainable agriculture and regenerative practices. The session highlighted innovative approaches to land stewardship and pollinator conservation, emphasizing the intersection of ecological health and Indigenous agricultural knowledge.

The team also attended the Economic Mobility and Wellbeing Conference contributing to discussions on Tribal economic development, food sovereignty, and workforce pathways in agriculture. This engagement reinforced IFAI's commitment to supporting holistic well-being through economic empowerment and sustainable food systems.

Additional outreach included participation in the RTCAC Central Meeting, where staff collaborated with regional partners and USDA representatives to discuss strategic priorities and funding opportunities for Tribal agriculture.

The Enterprise team conducted one-on-one consultations with several Tribal Nations:

- At Taos Pueblo, the team met with the Agriculture Department to provide tailored support and discuss the development of an Agricultural Resource Management Plan (ARMP). This consultation focused on long-term planning, land use, and integrating traditional ecological knowledge into resource management.

- At the Nottawaseppi Huron Band of Potawatomi our enterprise team worked with food sovereignty staff to develop a 5-year strategic plan for the NHBP. Staff discussed ARMPs and other strategies to steward the Tribe's natural resources.

These engagements reflect IFAI's ongoing commitment to strengthening Tribal agricultural enterprises through culturally responsive training, strategic planning, and collaborative partnerships.

Tribal Department of Agriculture Consultations

- Kiowa Tribe
- Nottawaseppi Huron Band of Potawatomi
- Taos Pueblo

Additional Events and Outreach – Tribal Enterprise

- IAC Northwest Regional Conference
- Tribal Advisory Committee
- IAC Regional Western Region

Food Safety

At the Wind River Produce Food Safety Training, held July 28–30, IFAI staff provided hands-on education for Tribal producers focused on food safety protocols, compliance, and best practices for farm-to-market operations. This training helped strengthen local food systems and empowered producers with practical tools to ensure safe, high-quality products.

Events and Outreach-Food Safety

- Wind River

Publications

Policy & Legal Analysis

- Comments requested by Sept. 15 on Native Children's Commission Implementation Act
- One Big Beautiful Bill Act – Indian Country Food and Agriculture Implications
- Comments requested by Sept. 15 on Native Children's Commission Implementation Act
- USDA Announces SUN Bucks 2025 Benefit Levels for Tribal Programs
- USDA to host two consultations on proposed departmental re-organization on Oct. 14 and Oct 16
- USDA's FY2026 Farm to School Grant Program open to Tribes and Tribal Organizations
- Indian Country Impacts from USDA Final Rule on Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers
- IFAI Releases Analysis of USDA Reorganization Plan – Comment Period Ends Sept. 30
- Food Research and Action Center Summer Electronic Benefit Transfer Report 2025

Press Releases, Blogs and Media Mentions

- Rooted Wisdom, Season 2 Episode 6
- Rooted Wisdom, Season 2 Episode 7
- Rooted Wisdom, Season 2 Episode 8
- Rooted Wisdom, Season 2 Episode 9
- How one tribal nation in Oklahoma is combating uncertainty in federal support for food
- Fields of Possibility: Tribal Food Sovereignty and Organic Agriculture
- Carly Griffith Hotvedt: Tribal leadership continues to make improvements benefiting us all
- Eleventh Annual Native American Youth in Agriculture Leadership Summit
- 11th Annual Native American Youth in Agriculture Leadership Summit
- Tribally-administered Summer EBT improved food security, study finds
- Recent case study shows impact of tribes' summer EBT program
- IFAI Executive Director Carly Griffith Hotvedt Crowned Ms. Agriculture USA
- How Chickasaw Nation Implemented Their Inaugural Summer EBT Program







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Enhancing the health and wellness of Tribal communities by advancing healthy food systems, diversified economic development, and cultural food traditions.