

# Farmers' reform movements

Times were desperate for farmers in the late 1800s

Crop prices falling

Merchants, banks, and railroads getting richer -- farmers were in debt

Farmers organized to help themselves

First major group of farmers: Order of Patrons of Husbandry, known as the National Grange

First political goal was to persuade state legislatures to regulate railroad rates

Railroads challenged these laws in court

Supreme Court first upheld the laws but later ruled the federal government, not the states, could regulate traffic across state lines

Led Congress to pass the Interstate Commerce Act in 1887, which called for reasonable railroad rates

First time that the federal government had passed a law to regulate an industry